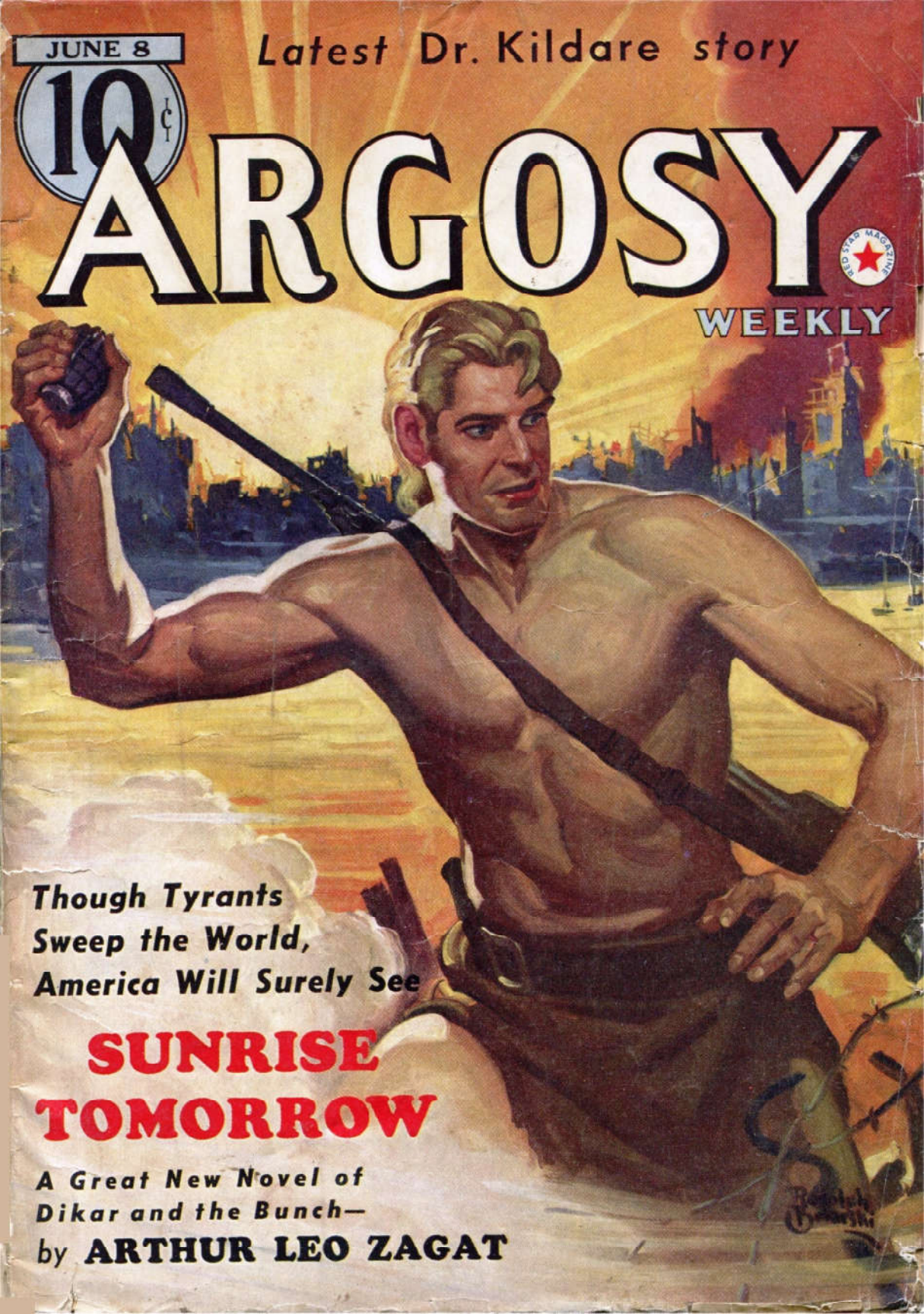

JUNE 8
10¢
Latest Dr. Kildare story
ARGOSY
RED STAR MAGAZINES
WEEKLY
Though Tyrants
Sweep the World,
America Will Surely See
SUNRISE
TOMORROW
A Great New Novel of
Dikar and the Bunch—
by ARTHUR LEO ZAGAT

YOUR FAVORITE SNAPSHOT ENLARGED

TO 8 x 10, HAND-COLORED AND FRAMED → $1.00 EACH

Now enjoy a new pleasure from your photographic treasure. You will be astonished at this offer! Here's why! We offer you a photographic bargain that presents a double feature. (1) The quality of the work is so magnificent —so artistic and so life-like you will almost expect to hear the subject speak. (2) The price is so low you will wonder how we give so much for so little . . . Customers write and tell us that this hand colored 8x10 enlargement in the exquisite simulated leather frame compares favorably with other offers that sell for two or three dollars. **HERE'S our offer . . .** Send us any photograph or snapshot . . . We will enlarge it, have our own artists hand color it with fadeless colors and frame it in a new style modernistic black and white easel back simulated leather frame . . . all for $1.00 plus postage. **WE GUARANTEE TO RETURN ORIGINALS IN PERFECT CONDITION,** when we ship your order . . . there are no extras . . . nothing more to pay.

YOU MUST BE 100% PLEASED OR NO COST

We specialize in enlarging photographs. Our artists are especially trained to hand color and give life likeness to the subjects. **Careful study and selective work is our motto.** So positive are we you will be delighted . . . so sure are we the work will exceed your expectations that we dare to make this startling guarantee. **YOU DON"T RISK A SINGLE CENT**—You must be 100% pleased or you can keep the hand colored enlargement, return the frame and we will refund your dollar. Could anything be fairer? You are to be the judge. Don't hesitate—ORDER TO-DAY—We take the risk because we know in advance you'll be enthusiastically pleased.

GET OUT THE FAMILY ALBUM AND ORDER YOUR DELIGHTFUL PICTURE BARGAIN—Use Coupon

Send us any clear snapshot, negative, photograph, candid-shot or tintype. Perhaps you have a photo of a dear one you want to preserve or send to an out of town friend or relative. Send bust pictures, full length, groups, scenes, baby, mother, dad, sweetheart, baseball and football teams, animals, pets or any subject—all at the same price of $1.00 each; enlarged to 8x10, hand colored and framed. Send negatives or prints—it makes no difference just so they are clear and unmarked. Use the coupon now and get your money saving photographic bargain while this special offer is open. A superb piece of art—you get quality at a bargain price.

Miniature FREE in DeLuxe Metal Frame

Here's another surprise. We'll hand color and furnish a 3½x4½ miniature in an expensive lookin' gold color metal frame FREE with this offer. Order three 8x10 hand colored and framed enlargements for $3.00, plus postage three different subjects or three of one subject whichever you desire, and we include this DeLuxe Miniature colored and framed without extra charge. The miniature makes this a multiple bargain offer. Genuine miniatures usually sell from $5.00 up. Here's your chance to secure this rich possession FREE. When ordering be sure to state which picture is to be made into a free miniature.

SEND NO MONEY!

Don't send a cent now! Just send a clear snapshot, negative or photograph, any size of the subject you want enlarged to 8x10 and hand colored. We put your photo to wo k immediately and ship promptly. When your postman delivers package containing hand colored enlargement and frame, pay him $1.00 plus postage. Your originals will be returned in the package . . . then examine your hand colored enlarged photo . . . you will enjoy a great surprice because of the high quality work and the exceptional value . . . so positive are we that we guarantee to refund your $1 if you are disappointed . . . and you can keep the hand colored enlargement or accept our special $3.00 offer (same guarantee) . . . rush coupon now while this sensational offer is open to readers of this magazine.

IMPORTANT Send clear snaps or negatives so we can do our best work. DO NOT MARK FRONT OF PICTURES. When negatives are not sent, price is 5c extra for making negative. Print or Write Name Plainly.

IDEAL PORTRAIT COMPANY
P.O. Box 748G, Church St. Annex, New York.

Please send me the offer checked below. I'll pay postman price plus postage on arrival. It is understood that if I am not 100% pleased I'll keep the enlargements and return the frames and you will refund my money. Also return my originals with this order.

- ☐ One 8x10 hand colored enlargement in simulated leather frame, $1.00 plus postage.
- ☐ 3 hand colored enlargements in simulated leather frames. Include FREE 1 hand colored miniature in gold color metal easel back frame, $3.00 plus postage.

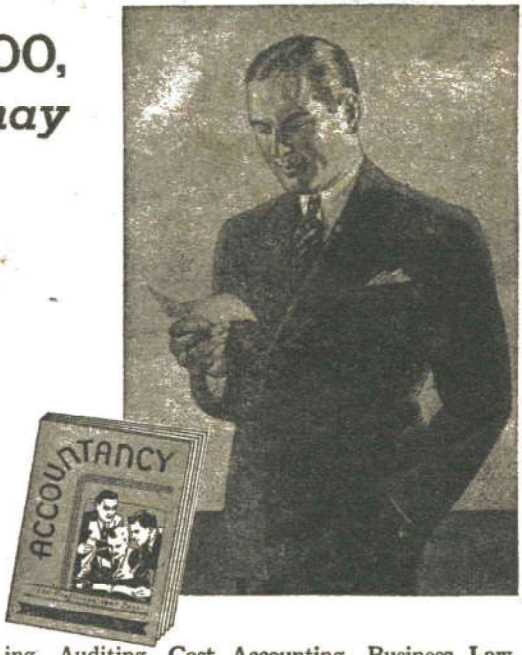
Name .....

Address .....

Note—Outside of U.S.A. price is $1.50 each, cash with order. Miniature only, $2.00 cash with order.

How Big Is YOUR PAY-CHECK?

If you earn under $3,000, Higher Accountancy *may be the answer for you*



"THE size of my pay-check? What business is it of yours?" Perhaps that's the first reply that comes to your mind.

But—stop a moment. It really *is* our business—to help men just like you. In fact, it's been our business here at LaSalle for 30 years.

If your pay-check isn't all that you'd like it to be, why not consider accountancy? Why not become a member of this well-paid and respected field? Why not, in short, prepare yourself to earn real money—insure a good home for your family—a new car—an education for the growing youngsters—a bank account for a rainy day . . . these and many more of the precious things in life?

Maybe you're one of those ever hoping for "breaks" that will give you a higher standard of living. Yet that's precisely what most of 30,000,000 other employees in this country are doing.

Not all of them, of course. Here and there you find ambitious men who aren't depending on luck to carry them ahead. They're following a tested path to increased earnings—leaving nothing to mere chance. They're *training* themselves for better jobs —every week spending a few hours in serious but interesting study at home.

Some day, as expert bookkeepers and later as accountants, these determined men will have standing and a considerably larger income—in a profession that pays and pays well.

Why don't *you* do as they are doing—take advantage of LaSalle training? Even though you do not know the fundamentals of bookkeeping now—you nevertheless may have an excellent opportunity to master accountancy. Many others have done it.

Perhaps you're asking yourself, "But don't these others possess natural ability that I lack? Don't I need a special talent for all this?"

Ask rather, "If I do my part, won't *I* get results, too?"

You will! For all it takes is intelligence, serious study and work —not genius. Under the LaSalle system you solve problems by simple steps . . . from day to day, as an expert accountant does. You use the same basic principles. And when these problems become difficult and puzzle you, you get counsel that could be matched only through personal coaching by a battery of experts in a big accounting house.

In a comparatively short time, you train yourself in Elements of Accounting, Principles of Accounting, Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Organization, Management and Finance. The training—complete and intensive all the way—takes you right into C.P.A. coaching if you desire.

Later, when you're an accountant, it may be possible to go into business for yourself as a public accountant and be independent. Or, if you choose to work for someone else as an executive accountant, it well may be for a salary several times that which you draw now.

Write for this FREE book

If you're tired of pinching pennies, investigate accountancy and LaSalle training. There isn't a faster, less expensive or more convenient method to master accountancy. Fill in the coupon and mail. We'll send you our 64-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays."

Then, when you read all the facts, you yourself will be able to judge best whether you have the will to study and apply your best efforts—toward a more secure future.

LaSalle Extension University

A Correspondence Institution

Dept. 658-HR **Chicago, Ill.**

I want to earn a bigger salary—through accountancy training. Send me, without cost or obligation, your 64-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays."

Name .....

Present Position ..... Age .....

Address ..... City .....

ARGOSY

America's Oldest and Best All-Fiction Magazine

Volume 299 CONTENTS FOR JUNE 8, 1940 Number 5

Cover by Rudolph Belarski
Illustrating Sunrise Tomorrow

This magazine is on sale every Wednesday

A RED STAR *Magazine*

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 Broadway, NEW YORK, N. Y.
WILLIAM T. DEWART, President & Treasurer WILLIAM T. DEWART, JR., Secretary
PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE. 111 Rue Réaumur
LONDON: THE CONTINENTAL PUBLISHERS & DISTRIBUTORS, LTD., 3 La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C. 4

IF RUPTURED

TRY THIS OUT—MODERN PROTECTION PROVIDES GREAT COMFORT AND HOLDING SECURITY WITHOUT TORTUOUS TRUSS WEARING!

30 DAY HOME TRIAL GIVES YOU OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE IT

An "eye-opening" revelation in sensible, comfortable and dependable reducible rupture protection may be yours for the asking, without cost or obligation. Simply print your name and address on coupon below and mail to W. S. Rice, Inc., 62-F Main St., Adams, N. Y., and full details of this new and different Rice Method will be mailed you FREE. Without hard flesh-gouging pads or tormenting pressure, here's a Support that has brought joy and comfort to thousands—by releasing them from Trusses with springs and straps, that bind and cut. Designed to securely hold a rupture up and in where it belongs and yet give freedom of body movement and genuine comfort. For complete and confidential information, sent you in a plain sealed envelope, act at once! Mail coupon with name and address today.

FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE COME WORDS OF PRAISE FOR THE RICE METHOD

REVEALING FREE TREATISE YOURS FOR THE ASKING

MAIL COUPON TODAY.→

W. S. RICE, Inc.,
62-F Main St., Adams, N. Y.

Without cost or obligation to me, please mail FREE TREATISE and full particulars regarding the new Rice Method for reducible rupture protection.

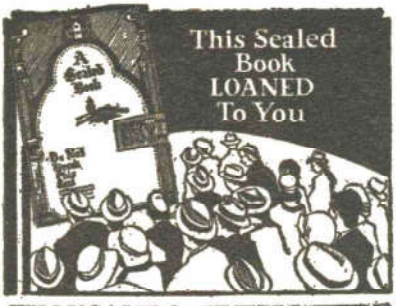
Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State .....

Please indicate type of truss you now wear.

Spring ☐ Elastic ☐



THOUSANDS EVERYWHERE ACCLAIM THIS

New Psychology Of Life!

Have you unrealized hopes? Are the better things of life always just beyond your reach?

Times have changed—but have you? Adopt a new psychology of life and MASTER YOUR PROBLEMS. It takes no greater mental effort to achieve results when you know how.

Let the Rosicrucians show you how, by the use of simple laws, you can apply the powers of your mind to bring about startling changes in your life. If you are sincere in your desire, write for the free Sealed Book. It will point out how you may obtain this most helpful information. Address: Scribe P.R.Y.

The Rosicrucians
-AMORC-
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA.

Perpetuating the Ancient Rosicrucian Secret Teachings

BENJAMIN AIR PISTOL WITH HAND PUMP

For Target—Small Game—Camping—Etc. Guaranteed — Accurate — Practical — Economical — Safe—Clean—Quiet. Adjustable Force—Amazing Maximum Velocity. No Smoke or Fumes. Bolt Action—Hammer Fire—Hair Trigger—Safety Lock—Hand Pump. Single Shot BB $8.50; Single Shot cal. 177 or 22 with rifled barrel $8.50; BB 8-Shot $10.00; Holster $2.00. Also a complete line of Benjamin Genuine Compressed Air Rifles for BB and cal. 177 or 22. No license required from dealer or factory. Write today for complete specifications and free targets.

BENJAMIN AIR RIFLE CO., 887 Marion St., St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

BACKACHE?

Try Flushing Excess Poisons And Acid Thru Kidneys And Stop Getting Up Nights

35 CENTS PROVES IT

When your kidneys are overtaxed and your bladder is irritated and passage scanty and often smarts and burns, you may need Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules, a fine harmless stimulant and diuretic that starts to work at once and costs but 35 cents at any modern drugstore.

It's one good safe way to put more healthy activity into kidneys and bladder — you should sleep more soundly the whole night through. But be sure to get **GOLD MEDAL** — it's a genuine medicine for weak kidneys — right from Haarlem in Holland. Don't accept a substitute.

TRAIN FOR ELECTRICITY

I'LL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING All practical work on real electrical machinery and equipment. No advanced education or experience needed. Lifetime employment help after graduation.

Get training first, then pay tuition later. Write for all details of my "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" plan and how many earn while learning. H. C. Lewis, Pres., Coyne Electrical School, Dept. A0-52, 500 S. Paulina St., Chicago.

AGENTS WANTED!

CLERKS and WORKERS in FACTORIES, MILLS, C.C.C. CAMPS, OFFICES, NAVY, ARMY, MERCHANT MARINE, ETC. Rare Opportunity. Earn EXTRA MONEY. 50% commission selling our new Red, White and Blue Enameled Metal Etched, Lifetime SOCIAL SECURITY and IDENTIFICATION PLATES in leather Billfolds. Money and Postage Refunded on demand. For Salesmen's Outfit, print clearly your name, address and S. S. Number and mail with 25c cash or stamps to the largest concern in this line.

WM. HAMENT, 605 W. Lexington St., Baltimore, Md.

Suffer Varicose LEG SORES?

IF you suffer pain and misery of Varicose Ulcers, or Open Leg Sores, send away at once for FREE Booklet "THE LIEPE METHODS FOR HOME USE." Tells all about this 40-year-old method, praised and endorsed by thousands. Liepe Methods, Dept. 35-F, 3284 N. Green Bay Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

CASH for UNUSED POSTAGE

U. S. Stamps wanted at 90% of Face Value. Money Order, check or cash sent on receipt. Send Stamps Registered Mail.
United Trading, Dept. M5—1470 Broadway, N.Y.C.

Send for FREE CIRCULAR of PHOTOSTAMPS. Your favorite picture on stamp at 1c each in lots of 100. *Agents wanted.*
NATIONAL PHOTOSTAMPS—Dept. M2—152 W. 42nd St., N.Y.C.

OLD LEG TROUBLE

Easy to use Viscose Home Method heals many old leg sores caused by leg congestion, varicose veins, swollen legs and injuries or no cost for trial if it fails to show results in 10 days. Describe the cause of your trouble and get a FREE BOOK.

M. S. VISCOSE METHOD COMPANY
140 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois

EARN EXTRA MONEY *at Home*

Increase your income at home by new, simple Wentworth Tempera Color method. We instruct you and supply you with work. Write today for FREE BOOKLET.

Wentworth Pictorial Co., Ltd., Dept. 186 Hamilton, Ont.

PILES

If YOU are troubled with itching, bleeding or protruding Piles, write TODAY for a generous Sample of Page's Wonderful Combination Pile Treatment **FREE**

E. R. PAGE Co., Dept. 404-E-4 Marshall, Mich.

HAVE YOU READ
FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES
the magazine of stories you couldn't imagine?

RUPTURED?

Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to worry along with trusses that gouge your flesh—press heavily on hips and spine—enlarge opening—fail to hold rupture? You need the Cluthe. No leg-straps or cutting belts. Automatic adjustable pad holds at real opening—follows every body movement with instant increased support in case of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Light. Waterproof. Can be worn in bath. Send for amazing **FREE** book, "Advice To Ruptured" and details of liberal truthful 60-day trial offer. Also endorsements from grateful users in your neighborhood. Write:
CLUTHE SONS, Dept. 28, Bloomfield, New Jersey.

Here's A Real
POCKET RADIO

Leatherette case, 6½ ozs. 4½" x 2¾" x 1½". No batteries or tubes, no electricity needed. No extra phone to carry. Everything enclosed in case. Take it with you to the ball game, picnic, fishing, in bed. Reception positively guaranteed. Not a toy, but a practical radio. Sent complete, ready to use and nothing more to buy. Send only $1.00 (check or cash) and pay postman $1.50. We pay postage.
SHEESS MFG. CO.
6954 Greenview Ave. Chicago, Ill.

BE A PASSENGER Traffic Inspector

Let Us Help You to a Good Job

Write for Free Booklet describing our 21 years' experience in securing jobs for our graduates that pay up to $135 per month, plus expenses, to start. Opportunities in Railway and Bus. Easy, home-study course will train you in a few months. **STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE, Div. 5006, Buffalo, N. Y.**

25c for Sensational KEY CHAIN GADGET

YOUR OWN LICENSE PLATE IN Miniature

ALL STATES—The latest novelty. A perfect Miniature of your own license plate, iridium frame and key chain for 25c, coin or stamps. Actual reproduction of your license in exact colors—just as it appears on your car. Practical too, because FREE service returns lost Keys to you. Also with 24 Karat gold plated frame only 50c. LIMITED QUANTITY—ORDER NOW—AGENTS WANTED.
IDENTIFICATION CO., Dept. AM, 1560 Bway., N. Y. C.

LAME PEOPLE

Need my extension shoe no matter how short one leg may be. Worn in ready-made shoes from the store. Cork and iron lifts are the past. Write for booklet.

A. M. C. SINN 748 Bergen St. Newark, N. J.

U. S. GOVERNMENT JOBS!

START
$1260 to $2100 a Year

Get Ready Immediately.
Men—Women
Thousands appointments every year.
Mail Coupon today sure.

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. E251 Rochester, N. Y.
Sirs: Rush to me without charge (1) 32-page book with list of U. S. Government jobs, salaries, duties, ages, etc. (2) Tell me how to qualify for one of these jobs.
Name.....
Address.....

I-J Champion

SEND FOR FREE BOOKLET

MODEL 822 $21.25

8 SHOT
.22 Target
Single Action Revolver

More bull's-eyes! — Unbeatable value. Weight 28 oz.; length 10¾ inches. Sport Model. Perfect balance; extremely accurate; hard hitting; full target adjustable sights; excellent trigger pull; nicely fitting stock; adjustable finger rest. Send for Free Booklet A20.

IVER JOHNSON'S ARMS & CYCLE WORKS
63 RIVER STREET, FITCHBURG, MASS.
New York: 85 Chambers Street

GUARANTEED TIRES!

GOODYEAR · GOODRICH
FIRESTONE · U.S. and Other Standard Makes

$2.15 29x4.40-21

World's Lowest TIRE PRICES

Tire users by the thousands all over the U.S.A. vouch for the Long Hard Service of our Standard Brand tires reconditioned with high grade materials and latest methods by our tire experts. Our 21 years experience makes it possible to offer tires at lowest prices, with legal agreement to replace at ½ price any tire that fails to give 12 Mos. Service.

FREE! LANTERN With Every 2 Tires ordered

Complete with batteries and newest type reflector bulb. Ready for instant use. Strong, steady light. Useful everywhere. Order now.

EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED!

BALLOON TIRES

Size Rim	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$2.15	$1.05
29x4.50-20	2.35	1.05
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.25	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.45
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.45
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.65
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.25	$0.95
31x4	2.95	1.25
32x4	2.95	1.25
33x4	2.95	1.25
34x4	3.25	1.35
32x4½	3.35	1.45

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES
(High Pressure)

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$4.25	$1.95
32x5	2.95	1.75
34x5	4.25	1.95
32x6	7.95	2.95
36x6	9.95	4.45

Size	Tires	Tubes
33x4½	$3.45	$1.45
34x4½	3.45	1.45
30x5	3.65	1.65
33x5	3.75	1.75
35x5	3.95	1.75

Size	Tires	Tubes
34x7	$10.95	$4.55
38x7	10.95	4.55
36x8	11.45	4.95
40x8	13.25	4.95

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.00-20	$3.75	$1.45
8.25-20	4.45	1.95
7.50-20	5.95	2.95
ALL OTHER SIZES		

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
8.25-20	8.95	4.95
9.00-20	10.95	5.45
9.75-20	13.95	6.45

DEALERS WANTED

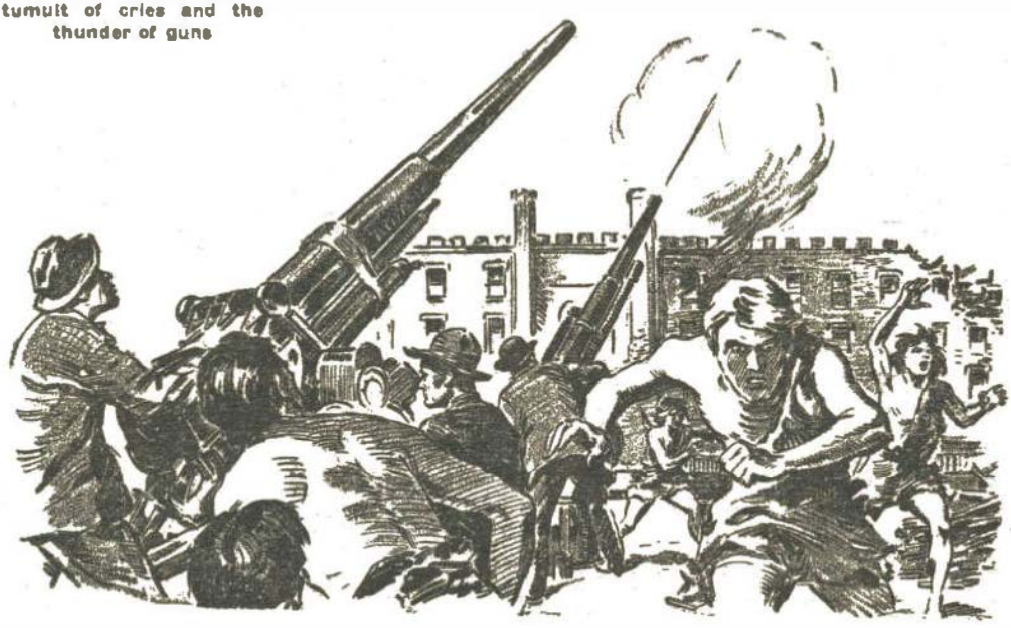
SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct 5 per cent if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.
2328-30 S. Michigan Av., Dept. 4561-A, Chicago, Ill.

Sunrise Tomorrow

By ARTHUR LEO ZAGAT
Author of "Thunder Tomorrow," "Bright Flag of Tomorrow," etc.

Dikar shouted a warning, and West Point was a tumult of cries and the thunder of guns



CHAPTER I

'WARE PLANE!

"WHY don't they come, Normanfenton?" Diker asked the tall, loosely built man beside him. "What are the Asafrics waitin' for?" They were standing in front of a gray, grim building and it rose almost as high, it seemed, as the Mountain that, till two nights ago, had been all the world Dikar and the Bunch knew.

"Why don't they come to punish us for what we have done?"

Two nights ago the Boys and Girls of the Bunch, with the Beast Folk from the tangled woods below the Mountain, had fought to take from the Asafrics this great gray building and the other gray buildings that made up West Point.

A pitiful few against the black- and yellow-faced many, with bows and arrows and knives against rifles and huge guns, they had fought and won. But the loom of these walls was now a gray weight overhanging Dikar, and a heavy dread of what brooded beyond the hills had taken the place of the blazing joy of that victory.

The road to liberty is long and perilous, but Dikar must lead his warrior Bunch down it swiftly—if America is to see again the bright sunrise of her matchless heritage

"Maybe they don't quite believe we have done it, son." Normanfenton's massive head, black-bearded, lined with worry and sadness, did not turn to Dikar. "Or maybe they're waiting to find out how we did it, how strong we are and what weapons we have."

From under the dark, bushy brows thoughtful eyes watched the bustle on the grassy, flat field that stretched before them, ten times as big as the Clearing on the Mountain. "From what the farmers who have been flocking in here have to say, not many of the black soldiers who escaped us can have gotten through to New York. All over the countryside they were waylaid that night, their throats cut, their bodies hidden."

"At least we have accomplished that much, sir," Walt put in from the other side of Normanfenton. "Our people

would not have dared even to scowl at an Asafric, much less lay a finger on one, before we pulled this thing off. At least we have given them courage."

"Courage?" Normanfenton's gnarled hand, bigger even than Dikar's, closed slowly into a fist. "God grant that it does not turn out to be only rashness we have inspired in them, that we have not merely brought on them even worse cruelties than they already have had to bear.

"I am not at all sure, this morning, that this adventure of ours is anything but sheer madness. We are still without news from beyond the circle of cannon and machine-gun nests that give us a little safety here."

"We ought to hear something pretty soon." Walt came only to Normanfenton's shoulder. "I've just come from where Colonel Dawson and his men have been working to rebuild the radio."

When Dikar first brought him to the Mountain from the woods below it, Walt had looked and smelled more like an animal than a man, his rags crusted with dirt, his eyes, somehow both frightened and fierce, peering out of a mask of matted hair. "They hope to have it in shape very soon now, and then we'll be able to get in touch with the Secret Net." Now he had scraped the hair from his hollow cheeks and lean jaw, and in West Point had got new clothing to wear, gray-blue with shiny buttons. "But the waiting is hard, I'll grant you that."

"Yes," Normanfenton sighed. "The waiting is hard." He too was dressed in one of the gray-blue uniforms great piles of which had filled a stone house at the other end of the big field that was called the Plain. "But I have a notion that it is a good omen—to be waiting here."

"A good omen, sir?"

"If history does repeat itself." The big, gnarled hand gestured to the scene before them. "Look at the men drilling out there. More than two hundred years ago other men marched and countermarched on that very Plain, their commander-in-chief a man named George Washington.

"Look at the women and children and old men crowded around watching, no longer sodden with despair, hope dawning in haggard faces that so long have known no hope. Just so must the Colonials have looked who watched Washington's men."

"I see what you mean, sir," Walt's face lit up. "The parallel is amazing. Look. The Continentals had their Indian allies and we have Dikar's Boys from the Mountain, strolling about half-naked, knives in their belts, mows in their hands and quivers slung over their shoulders."

WHEN they'd first found the store of gray-blue clothes, the Beast Folk, throwing away the rags that hung rotting from their starved bodies, had sung and danced with joy in their brave, new dress.

But not so the Boys and Girls of the Bunch. They had liked the shining buttons and the color of the uniforms, but the stuff had itched their skins and cramped their limbs, and they had torn it off again, refusing to have any more to do with it.

"Yes," Normanfenton agreed. "Do you recall, Walt, that Washington once wrote about this fort where we are starting our own rebellion? 'It is the key to America.'"

The Bunch had wanted to stay the way they'd always been on the Mountain; the Girls wearing only thigh-length reed skirts and circlets woven from leaves to cover their deepening

breasts, the Boys only small aprons of twigs split and deftly plaited. Dikar could not yet quite understand why Normanfenton had said no, but Normanfenton was the leader and he must be obeyed, and so they'd worked out what Walt called a compromise.

In the little stone house there far across the Plain that had been given the Bunch for their own the Girls took from their beds soft, white cloth and cut this into short lengths and wound the strips about themselves. When he saw one of these wrappings on Marilee, Dikar's gray-eyed mate, Normanfenton had called it a sarong, but Dikar knew only that Marilee was no less beautiful than before, and that she thrilled him as always.

He himself had led the Boys up on the wooded hill beyond which curved the farthermost line of pillboxes, and had brought down a fawn with a single arrow. Scraping the hide clean, he had draped it up over his right shoulder and about his trunk and thighs.

"'The key to America,'" Walt repeated. "Yes, I recall reading that."

Dikar's broad brow furrowed. He had learned since they came here that a key was a little iron that would make a door open, but he couldn't figure out how West Point could be that.

Biggest of the three, broad-shouldered, his spread legs stalwart as two saplings, his lean belly plaited with flat muscle, he was a puzzled youth trying to understand the talk of two oldsters.

The fawn's fur lay golden-brown against the living bronze of his skin, sun-dusted with gold. His thick mop of hair and silken young beard were bright-golden, and the clear, deep blue of his eyes was gold-fringed by their long lashes.

"And you recall that those who held this key," Normanfenton was saying, "were as poorly equipped, as meagerly trained as we are, that they faced an enemy as powerful. But they won liberty for America."

"They won it, yes." Though there was sunlight upon it, a shadow darkened Walt's gaunt face. "But their descendants lost it. America had grown great, so great that we were certain none would dare to attack us. We forgot the warning that 'eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.' And so, when the black and yellow hordes swept up from under the round of the world, we were unprepared, and though we fought desperately we were beaten, and liberty was dead in the land."

"Not dead, my boy," Normanfenton said softly. "Only chained. If they who once gathered here were not dismayed by the appalling odds against them, why should we be? With faith in God and ourselves—" A cry broke in on him.

IT WAS a deep-toned howl that filled the air with fear, that rose and fell and rose again and broke the gray lines of marching men, broke the close-packed border of watchers into dark fragments scurrying toward the gray buildings like brown leaves driven by some sudden storm wind.

"'Plane!" Dikar sent his deep-chested shout ringing across the field. "'Ware plane!" Someone of the Bunch might not know, might have forgotten what the siren meant. "'W-a-a-re plane."

The other two dived into the safety of the great building behind them but Dikar leaped out into the rushing crowd. He was threading deftly through it, was running lithely toward the long, low House, far across the wide and open field, that was the dwelling of the Bunch.

Beneath the siren's howling a little

girl whimpered in fright. A little boy cried out, thinly, "Mom! Where are you, Mom?"

Dikar's throat went dry and he was cold all through, remembering, out of a Long-Ago vague as the memory of a dream, a little boy that was himself crying, 'Mom! Where are you, Mom?' as Dick Carr ran through a city's night-swallowed streets, cries of other little children all about him, over him a siren's howl, rising and falling and rising again and filling the dreadful night with the last alarm that city was ever to know.

All of a sudden the Plain was empty except for Dikar loping across its wide green. The wail of the siren was fading and Dikar heard now a new sound somewhere in the over-arching blue, a low hum such as the wild bee makes.

As he ran, Dikar looked up to find the thing that made the sound. He saw long black fingers lift above a jagged roof-edge to point slantingly southward, saw in the sunny south sky a tiny black speck that grew even in the instant he saw it. It grew and became a black hawk soaring on outstretched, motionless wings, became a black and threatening plane small-seeming enough to be held on his two spread hands.

And Dikar remembered, out of a long-ago Time of Fear, just such planes flying high over a doomed city, remembered the death that had dropped from their bellies, the thunder of death that had shaken the city beneath him. And Dikar was young, and he did not want to die.

CHAPTER II

HUNTSMEN, WHAT QUARRY?

THUNDER boomed in the sky as Dikar ran. The thunder came from the guns on the rooftops. Little puffs of white cloud spotted the blue around the black plane, but it came on.

It was climbing upward on a long slant. More cloud-flowers blossomed in the sky. Soft and white, they trailed the black bird across the blue, but the plane was lifting itself above the reach of the guns.

Dikar felt the coolness of shadow about him and knew he had reached the little House toward which all this time he'd been running. He stopped, stood staring upward.

"Dikar!" a clear, sweet voice cried his name from inside the House. "Dikar, you big silly, stop standin out there. You'll get hurt."

"No, I won't, Marilee." A white pole rose straight and proud out of the middle of the Plain and from its high top waved a bright flag, striped white and red, and star-spangled on deep blue. "The plane's too high up to hurt anybody."

Circling now in the sky above the flag, the plane looked no bigger than when Dikar first saw it, so he knew it must be awful high. The guns, too, knew it was so high there was no use their trying to reach it and so they had stopped thundering. "It's just flyin around and around, like the baldy eagle that has its nest on the dead pine at the Mountain's tip-top."

"The little birds hide when the baldy eagle's in the sky." Marilee's voice was very near. "But you haven't the sense of a sparrow."

Dikar turned and saw her coming out of the House's deep stone archway, her brown hair sweeping down over her shoulders, sweeping down about her warm, brown slimness to her sandaled, tiny feet. "Come inside, you big ninny." The sun made red glints in Marilee's hair, and anger made red glints in the gray of her eyes.

"Get inside yourself," Dikar exclaimed, his throat suddenly tight with fear for his mate. "Get back inside, you little fool!" He had hold of her and was half-pushing, half-carrying her into the dark inside the House. "You're a nut, comin out—"

She twisted loose from him, was a slender shadow in the shadows. "I thought the plane was too high to hurt anybody," she panted, "or am I wrong thinkin I heard you say it is?"

"I said it is." Dikar tried to grin, but his lips were still stiff. "An I'm sure it is." He could see her better now. "But it might swoop down, an— Gosh, Marilee! You're beautiful when you're mad." His arm slid around her warm, soft body, drawing her to him and all of a sudden she was trembling against him and there was a sob in her breast.

"Oh, Dikar," Marilee sobbed. "When I saw you runnin across the Plain, all alone . . . Why did you do that, Dikar? Why didn't you go right inside the Big House where you were, like all the others did when the siren started?"

"Because you weren't in the Big House, there across the Plain where I was. You were here, and if the danger came true, I wanted to be here with you, to protect you if I could or to die with you if I couldn't, because without you I do not want to live."

Very simply he said this. In that long-ago Time of Fear when the Old Ones hid the Bunch on the Mountain from the Asafrics they were little children—Dikar, the oldest of them, only eight.

Soon after, the Old Ones were buried under the fall of the slanting hill along whose top had run the only way to reach the Mountain without help. The Boys and Girls of the Bunch, growing up without any older person among them, had kept the simple ways, the simple speech, of their childhood. Its simple frankness. There had been no one to teach them to be ashamed of speaking out their thoughts, their deepest feelings.

"I wouldn't think life worth livin, Marilee, with you dead."

"I know that, Dikar." Marilee's head lifted from Dikar's chest and her eyes were brilliant. "But you have no right to risk losin your life just for me. You don't belong to me any more, or even to the Bunch of which you were Boss so long. You belong to the Far Land now, to the land for which that flag stands."

She pointed out through the doorway into the brightness. "You are too important to America to risk losin your life just on account of me."

THE black plane was no longer circling the sky above the flag. It had flown over the hills to the west and even its hum was gone from the sky. Doors were opening all around the Plain, and people coming out.

"No, Marilee," Dikar answered, and his tone was low, troubled. "I am not important to America at all. Look. The guns kept that plane so high that it could do us no harm. Could our bonarrers have done that? Of course not. That is how little use I am now, in all that has to be done before America is freed."

"But Dikar, you were a fine Boss on the Mountain, a wise leader—"

"Wise enough as Boss of the few Boys and Girls I knew as I know myself, on the Mountain whose ways I know. But the people of this Far Land are strange to me, the ways of this land strange ways. The beginnin of bein wise is in knowin, and it's Normanfenton who knows the ways of the people, of the land. It is Normanfenton who must

be wise for us now, Normanfenton who must lead us. Don't you see that, Marilee?"

"I can see that you can't be boss any more, but you can fight."

"With what? My hands? This knife in my belt? I am not needed any more."

"No." Marilee laid her little hand on his arm, her face very serious. "But I've got a feelin there still is work only you can do, an'—Oh!" Her eyes widened, looking suddenly past Dikar to where there was a sudden shuffling football in the doorway. "There's a man."

One of his legs was stiff and dragged after him as he shuffled in. He stopped in front of them, blinking the outside brightness out of his eyes. Dikar made out on his forehead a healed burn in the form of a star, the mark the Asafrics made with hot iron on the brows of those whom they let out of their concentration camps.

"I be lookin for someun called Dikar," the man mumbled, peering. Deep within his eyes a glow smoldered like that which shows in the ashes of a dying fire.

"I am Dikar."

"Yeh be? Then I'm ter take yeh ter th' Commissary. He needs yeh."

"He needs—" Dikar looked at Marilee, muttered, "It would be funny if you turned out to be right." Then he was saying to the stooped-over man, "Come on. What are we waitin for?"

In a little while, Dikar was striding back in again through the arched doorway of the house that had been given the Bunch to live in, and he was smiling as he had not smiled since the morning after the fight that took West Point.

Noise met him in the narrow, stone-lined, stone-floored passage, laughing cries of young voices and a quick pat-pat of running bare feet on stone; and then he was in the big, sunny room that was between the room where the Boys slept and the one where the Girls slept.

A slight, beardless youngster darted in and out among the tables and chairs, dodging a red-bearded bigger Boy who doggedly chased him.

"Go it, Carlberger," the other youngsters shrilled, and deeper voices yelled. "Get him, Timohare. Grab him!" choking with laughter. The Girls, brown-limbed and sparkling-eyed, impartially cheered both or gave tiny squeals of alarm as Timohare crashed into a chair Carlberger threw in his way, or Carlberger twisted just in time to escape Timohare's clutching fingers.

The youngster jumped on a long table, jumped down on the other side. Timohare stopped, panted, "I'll wring your little neck, you rabbit. I'll teach you not to sneak up an stuff prickleburrs down the back of my fawn-skin."

"Sticks an stones," Carlberger chanted, thumbing his nose, "may break my bones, but words will never hurt." A sudden vault took Timohare clear over the table, and he had his tormentor in his big-pawed grip.

"Fins," the youngster gurgled. "Fins, Timohare. I promise I won't do it again."

"You betcha you won't," the bigger Boy grunted. "Not when I get through with—"

"Hold it!" Dikar called. "Hold it, you two. Come here, all you Boys, I've got somethin to tell you."

THE laughing and the yelling stopped all of a sudden, and there was only the sound of feet as the Boys gathered eagerly around Dikar. The Girls crowded up behind the Boys, their long-lashed eyes anxious.

"What is it, Dikar?" Marilee asked, low-voiced, somehow alongside him. "What's happened?"

"You'll hear in a minute." His arm slid across her shoulders, and then he was talking to the Bunch. "Listen, fellows," he was saying. "I was just called to the Commissary, the man Normanfenton has put in charge of givin out food to all the people here in West Point. He told me that there's hardly any food left. With so many people crowdin in here, most of the Asafrics' store is used up already."

"Phew-w-w," someone whistled. "That's nice." Johnstone it was, thin, his square jaw darkly stubbled. "That's very nice."

"The Quartermaster," Dikar went on, "has put it up to us to get more. Over beyond the hill behind this row of houses and past the woods other side of it, there are a lot of cows, those animals like fat, clumsy deer with unbranched horns that these people kill an eat."

"Dikar!" Marilee interrupted. "That's way outside the line of pillboxes."

"Right," Dikar smiled tightly. "It's way outside the fort, so if anyone goes out to get those cows an is attacked by the Asafrics, the big guns couldn't protect em because they'd shoot our men as well as the blacks.

"Besides, the cows can't be driven to the fort because they'd have to be driven through the woods, and they're so full of brambles an thorny bushes the cows won't go that way. That means they have to be killed right out there an cut up an carried in.

"Now, if a bunch of men was sent out with rifles to shoot em, the sound of the firin would surely bring any Asafrics that are skulkin around. It's all got to be done very quiet, an that's where we come in. Our arrows don't make any sound—"

"Hurray!" Carlberger yelled. "That's goin to be fun. Let's—"

"Wait," Dikar snapped. "Wait a minute an listen to me. It won't be fun. If we're spotted out there by the Asafrics, we'll stay out there, dead. That's why the Commissary didn't order me to take you Boys out there, only asked me, and that's why I'm only askin you to come with me, not orderin you. I don't want anyone to come unless he really wants to. Now. Who's comin?"

He stopped talking. Feet shuffled, and there was a hiss of indrawn breath, but nobody said anything. Not for a long minute. Then Timohare, grinning no longer, said very quietly: "We're all comin, Dikar. You knew that. You didn't have to ask."

"I knew you all would," Dikar smiled. "But I had to ask. All right, fellows. Get your bonarrers an your knives an let's get started."

THE other side of the hill was all tall grass; there were no trees. Up out of the grass, midslope of the hill, rose half-balls of dirty-white stone each big enough to hold four or five men. There were men in each of these pillboxes, and guns that could lay down on the grassy hillside a chattering hailstorm of death.

A gentle wind rustled the tall grasses sloping down from the pillboxes to the edge of the woods that made shadowy the foot of the hill. The grasses moved scarcely more than they had moved all day in the soft breeze, but all of a sudden a new shadow glided among the shadows just within the edge of the woods. It was a lithe-limbed Boy who had crept there down the slope of the hill.

Another Boy appeared, and another, till eighteen of them were gathering around Dikar, and so silent were they that a rabbit nibbling a tender green shoot not ten paces away was not disturbed at all.

The Boys had left behind their fawnskins, were naked except for their little twig-aprons, but they had their bows, and their quivers of arrows hung from their shoulders, and their sharp hunting knives were in their belts.

"You each know the number I gave you before I started," Dikar murmured. "I'll go ahead a little. If everything's all right I'll point to the cows, one after the other, an Number One will aim at the first one I point to, Number Two at the second, and so on, but you won't shoot till I lift my arm above my head, and then you'll shoot all together. Everyone understand?"

He looked at each one in turn, and each one nodded. He turned to the gray trunk of the tree under which he stood, lifted his arms and sprang.

Leaves rustled. The rabbit flipped his stub of a tail, looked around. Only the tree trunks and the dappled shadows of the foliage were between him and the sun and the tall grasses beyond the edge of the woods.

Dikar ran easily through the tops of the trees, leaped from the swaying bough to bough as easily as though he ran on firm ground. The green smells of the leaves were in his nostrils, the sharper smell of tree bark, and dark, damp smell of the ground beneath. No man smell, no man sound, came to him. He might have been in the woods on the Mountain, the two nights and days just past only a dreadful dream from which he had wakened.

The treetops were suddenly brighter ahead of Dikar and blue sky was shining through. He stopped and crouched on a thick limb, and peered out of the woods and down into a rolling, flower-dotted field.

Brown of body, white-faced, the ungainly beasts of the Far Land that were called *cows* cropped grass everywhere in the field or drank noisily from a little stream that wandered through it. A low wall of tumbled stone closed off one end of the field, the stream running under it, and beyond the wall Dikar could see another field of tall yellow grass rippling in the breeze. It sloped gently up and over the top of a low hill.

The woods curved around the other end of the cows' field till it came to the low wall of tumbled stone and swallowed this and ran on up the hill. The breeze came across the field to Dikar. He sniffed it, his nostrils wide, his eyes half-closed, the corner of his mouth twitching. There was only the smell of the woods in the breeze, and the smells of the flowers and the cows, and a faint tang of wood-smoke.

Dikar swung down to the ground, took two or three steps into the field. He felt the eyes of the Boys upon him, though there was no hint in sound or sight that they were in the treetops, watching him.

A COW lifted its head, looked at him with great, friendly eyes, its jaws moving from side to side, greenish spit dribbling from the corner of its mouth. Dikar pointed at it, pointed at the one next to it, at one lying down. He pointed at fourteen cows; there were no more.

That was fine. When one of them had been skinned, its head and legs cut off and its insides cleaned out, as he'd told the Bunch to do, it would be no heavier than a grown deer. Each of the bigger Boys could carry a deer on his shoulders, but Dikar had been worried about the weaker youngsters. Now eight of the kids would only have to carry half a cow apiece.

Dikar lifted his arm above his head. Bowstrings twanged in the treetops and arrows zipped across the field, almost too fast for the eye to follow. Cows

thudded down, all the cows, an arrow in the eye of one, in the flank of another, in the breast of a third. Brown Boys dropped down out of the trees, darted to the dead cows, knives flashing.

It had all been done almost without a sound, certainly without any sound that could have been heard a hundred paces away, but Dikar suddenly was uneasy.

Carlberger ran up to him. "You didn't point out one for me." The youngster sounded as if he was ready to bawl. "I was number eighteen an so I didn't get a chance to shoot."

"I'm sorry, kid." Dikar put his arm around the Boy's shoulder. "There just weren't enough to go around, but I'll see that you're Number One next time, so you'll surely get a chance."

A queer prickle was running up and down his back and his hair was tightening on the top of his head. "Look. You take care of somethin for me. I'm goin into the woods a ways, so tell Johnstone to take charge. Tell him an everyone that if they hear a crow caw in the woods three times, they're to drop what they're doin quick an get up into the treetops an wait to hear from me."

"Dikar!" Carlberger stared at him, round-eyed. "You don't think the Asafrics—"

"No," Dikar grinned. "I just think we ought to take care. We're awful far from the fort, you know. Now run along and do what I said."

Carlberger ran off and Dikar turned back to the woods, and his grin was gone. As he went up again into the treetop out of which he had dropped, he had found out what was bothering him.

The direction of the wind had changed a little and it was faintly tainted with the smell of an Asafric.

Dikar moved into the wind now, more silently even than before, in the same direction as the nearer edge of the field ran and toward where the woods curved around it. The smell was still faint, but it was growing stronger, ever so little. Now there was another smell, a man smell, but not the smell of an Asafric.

So there were two.

The leaf shadows deepened about Dikar, so that he knew he had passed the end of the field where the cows were. He kept going. Then he flattened suddenly along the bough he was on, making himself a part of it.

He'd heard a murmur of voices in the green brush, below and ahead of him. Now that he'd stopped moving he made out words. "Yoh be big fella careful." The thick-mouthed voice of an Asafric Black. "Yoh not let rebels cotch yoh gettin' back inside fo't." And then he heard a rustle of movement in the bushes.

The smell of the Asafric and the smell of the white separated, trailing on the wind from different directions. The white was going away through the bushes, toward the fort.

He was a spy on the Americans inside the fort, had met the Asafric here to tell him what was going on in West Point, was going back to find out more. Dikar had to see who he was. He started moving toward that rustle in the bushes, very fast.

So fast that he stepped on a rotten limb, started falling, snatched at another to save himself. "Who dar?" a startled cry burst out beneath him. "Who dat?" And then the thick-mouthed voice was grunting, "Ah see yoh!"

It was too late to escape.

Dikar saw a black hand lifting out of the green brush, a little gun in it lifting to aim at him.

CHAPTER III

SALUTE THE PRESIDENT

GUN crash was loud in the hush of the woods. A brown body hurtled down out of the tall tree, pounded the Asafric to the ground. Someone shouted. Underbrush threshed about the two tossing bodies, brown and naked, black and green-uniformed.

Dikar's strong fingers clamped a black wrist. That hand clutched the gun; the black's first bullet had missed Dikar. Plunging down, Dikar had snatched his knife from his belt, but now the Asafric seized his arm, and a green-clothed knee dug into his chest, pinned him down on the ground.

Foul breath stank in Dikar's face. Tiny, animal-like eyes glared down at him. The purplish lips twisted, said thickly, "Yoh one big fella fool try fight Jubal. Jubal not kill you now. Yoh strong, not die quick, but yoh wish youse'f daid befoh Cap'n Tsi Huan get t'rough wid yoh."

"You'll have to take me to him first," Dikar grunted. "Think you can?"

"Know I can." The Boys in the field would hear Dikar if he cried for help, but there might be other blacks near. They could be as quiet in the woods as the Boys. His call might bring them too. "Jubal neber see no 'Merican he no can han'le."

"Here's one!" Dikar heaved up, tore his knife-hand free, slashed the blade across the black throat, all in one sudden, irresistible movement. Blood gushed out over Dikar and the Asafric rolled off of him, was very still on the ground.

Dikar was on his feet, breath clamped in his throat, all his nerves strained for sight or smell or sound of other Asafrics.

The silence of the woods closed about him, a hush alive with leaf-rustle, with the buzz of insects, the peeping of birds and the whirr of their wings, but empty of all human noises. Even the white spy was already too far away to be heard.

Lids half-closed. Dikar's blue eyes roamed the brush, found a bent twig, a brushed bit of moss. Dikar got moving, and where he passed there were no bent twigs, not even a leaf turned wrongside out, to tell which way he had gone.

The trail of the spy went toward the fort, and to Dikar it was as broad and plain as though it were the stone-paved path that circled the Plain. He followed it swiftly, till he came to the stream that he had seen curving across the fields where the cows were, and there it ended.

Dikar's quarry had waded up or down in the water, and there were trees leaning across by way of which he might have left it. If he knew woodcraft at all it would take hours to find where, and by that time he would be back in the fort and his spoor would be mixed with all the many others. Most likely he was a Beast Man, Dikar thought, to be so apt in the ways of the woods.

He washed himself in the stream, washed his knife, and went back to the field. The Boys had finished their butchering and were ready to start lugging the great red and white loads of meats back to West Point.

DIKAR went ahead to find a path for them through the thorn-choked woods, tight with watchfulness till at last they were all over the hill and safely past the line of pillboxes. Then he sped across the Plain to find Normanfenton and tell him about the spy.

"The pattern holds," the leader sighed. "Two centuries ago West Point had its Benedict Arnold, and now— Thanks, my boy," he broke off. "I shall

have Walt warn the outposts to keep a sharper watch from now on, and to do what he can to track down the spy, but I fear, what with all the strangers here, that it will be almost impossible."

It seemed to Dikar that his story had touched only the surface of Normanfenton's mind, that other matters filled it more deeply. "By the way, Dikar," the older man went on. "In half an hour I want you to be at Headquarters."

The room called Headquarters was very big and its roof, of dark wood laid on huge, rough-axed beams, very high, but even though the late afternoon sun came in through a window that took up all one end of it, it was dim as the deeps of the Mountain's forest.

Coming into it, Dikar decided this was because the wood of the walls swallowed the sunlight in their quiet, dark glow, and because the ragged flags hanging from poles that stuck straight out from the walls, high up, threw slow-swaying shadows over the long, heavy table that ran down the room's middle, and over the men who sat around it.

"You're the last, son," Normanfenton said from the end of the table. As he pointed to an empty chair, his sleeve pulled back and uncovered the scabby ring on his wrist where the Asafric's iron cuff had rubbed raw the prisoner's flesh.

Dikar went to the chair, the thick stuff that was laid over the floor tickling the bare soles of his feet, and sat down. Johndawson was on one side of him, the gray-haired, thin man with old pain lined into his face who was the first of the people from the Far Land that Dikar brought to the Mountain.

The only other man here whom Dikar had known before he came to West Point was Walt, who sat up there next to Normanfenton, making marks on a paper with a round little stick.

Dikar knew the marks Walt was making had a meaning, but he did not know how to make out the meaning. The marks were called writing, and making out their meaning was reading.

A narrow-faced, pale man across the table asked, "Are we ready to begin, now, General?" That was what they all called Normanfenton. It meant the same as Boss. "We're anxious to hear what you have on your mind." His name was Paine. He wasn't one of the Beast Folk who had helped to take West Point, but had come here the morning after the fight, from a place called Newburg. "Do you mind telling us?"

"I don't mind at all." Normanfenton's slow, sad smile stole over his face. "Since that is why I called you together." Of the three others in the room, the one called Morgan was the leader of the Beast Folk, while Holton and Gary were farmers who had joined up later, like Paine.

"Colonel Dawson has finally got in communication with the Secret Net, that league of devoted patriots who for all these years have worked in constant peril of torture and death to keep alive some small measure of resistance to the Asafrics.

"It is because of them that America still lives in the hearts of men, and the secret radio network they operate is the authentic voice of that America."

"We know all that," Paine growled. "What's the idea of making a speech about it?"

"You will find out soon. But first I want you to hear what we have learned. John, please."

JOHNDAWSON fumbled with a paper on the table in front of him. "Word of what we've done here," he began, "has spread through the country like wildfire. I've been talking with

National Prime himself, the anonymous chief of the Net, and I give you my word, gentlemen, that the very dots and dashes his hand hammered out crackled with his joy and excitement.

"There is new hope in the land, my friends—this land that hasn't known hope for more than a decade. There is a new spirit of defiance."

He stopped, shrugged shoulders scrawny even in the new gray-blue that covered them. "What I've learned has me so worked up myself, that I'm making a speech. It amounts to this. Our people everywhere, inspired by our example, are rising against the Asafrics.

"The workers in a Nevada silver mine bashed in the heads of their guards and have barricaded themselves underground, sworn to die rather than surrender. In Seattle, longshoremen set fire to a half-dozen ships loaded with lumber for the Orient and fought off the black soldiers till the cargoes were altogether destroyed.

"A riot has started in Chicago and is still going on in spite of the machine guns with which the Asafrics are mowing down the mob. In Pittsburgh—"

"For the love of God, man!" Gary broke in, "you don't think that sort of thing's good news, do you?" He was grizzled, hollow-cheeked, stooped under a weight of toil and sorrow. "Those poor damn fools won't get anywhere that way. They'll be murdered by the Asafrics, and that will be the end of everything. It's got to stop. We've got to stop them, somehow."

"You are right, of course," Normanfenton said quietly. "These unarmed, unorganized outbreaks will be quickly and ruthlessly put down, and will have accomplished nothing. I have already instructed National Prime to have the operatives of his Net quiet the people of their districts and then set about organizing them into semi-military bodies, prepared to act as and how we shall direct."

"Just a minute, General," Paine drawled. "What makes you think anyone is going to do as you instruct?"

Normanfenton's deepset, somber eyes moved to him. "Your question is very much to the point, Captain Paine. I shall ask Colonel Dawson to answer it."

Everyone looked at Johndawnson. He picked up a paper from the table, and Dikar saw that his bony hand was shaking a little. "This," he said, "is the first message I received from National Prime. It is addressed to General Fenton.

"It says: 'Upon learning of your exploit and pending establishment of communication with you, I have had operatives of Secret Net reach all Americans possible to reach. I now have reports speaking for all sections of country. They unanimously authorize me to request that you assume Provisional Presidency of New America born today, and appoint whomever you may select as Provisional Congress.

"'I am further authorized to pledge loyalty of all patriots, their obedience to your proclamations and laws of your Congress, until the battle now beginning ends in victory or annihilation. Every American joins in prayer that you and the Second Continental Congress will lead us anew to the freedom that our forefathers of First wrested from other tyrants two hundred seven years ago. Signed: National Prime, for the People of the United States.'"

JOHNDAWSON'S voice rang out clear in the dim hush of the flag-hung room, thrilling even Dikar, who had understood very little of what he was reading. And then for a long time no one moved, no one made a sound.

Though there was no wind, it seemed to Dikar that one of the flags, a faded old one with a picture of a coiled snake on its tattered folds, fluttered as if ghostly hands were waving it over Normanfenton's massive head.

A murmur went through the room, like the murmur of the dawn wind in the trees, and the room awoke as the forest awakes in the dawn.

"You've accepted, of course," Holton said, a small man with tight, thin lips and eyes like two polished stones. "It's a great honor, General, and—"

"I've accepted." Normanfenton's head lifted. "But it is less honor than a heavy burden that has been laid upon me. I have asked my Maker to give me the strength to bear it, and it would be well, I think, that you gentlemen also appeal to Him for strength and wisdom, for I am constituting you the Second Continental Congress of the United States of America. . . .

"No!" He put up his hand to stop the words that were springing to the lips of his hearers. "No talk, please, and no meaningless ceremony. We must get to work at once. The plane that flew over us this afternoon was only one warning that the enemy is gathering his forces to move against us."

"Only one!" Gary exclaimed, sharply. "It's clear enough them flyers was sent to spy out how strong we are, but what else has happened?"

"It is more what has *not* happened that is ominous. From National Prime we learn that he has heard nothing from the Net's agents in the region bounded roughly by the Delaware and Housatonic Rivers on the west and east, north by a line drawn through Kingston, south by one through New York."

"We're just about in the center of that."

"Exactly. Somehow, the Asafrics have succeeded in silencing all the Net's secret radio stations in exactly the territory through which they must come to attack us."

"Another thing, General," Walt spoke for the first time. "There have been no newcomers in camp since dark. The last one has had to dodge some of the enemy's armored scout cars."

"Jehosaphat!" Holton's hand slapped down on the table. "The men in my company who were on duty in the pillboxes last night thought they heard firing in the distance. Since we have no patrols out, I paid very little attention—"

"Hold on!" Gary interrupted. "I saw —Look here. Me an' my boys was on the roofs standin' by the anti-aircraft guns. The sky was kind of red, all around the horizon, like as if there was some big fires burnin'."

"Yes." A sort of grayness was spreading under Normanfenton's skin. "Yes. Knowing Viceroy Yee Hashomoto's usual procedure in dealing with any defiance of his authority, we can come pretty close to guessing what the Asafrics are about. I—"

"Not me." Morgan's face was almost black, the look in his narrowed eyes frightening. "I don't have ter guess. I saw 'em do it ter my—our little town uh Cornwall th' night I split open th' head of th' yaller dog thet drug off my Janey.

"Hidin' out on Storm King, I saw 'em whup ter death every tenth white man in town an' ship all th' rest, an' every woman an' child fer a mile aroun', off God knows whar, arter fust makin' 'em set fire ter their own houses. That's whut they're doin' now, from Esopus Crick ter th' Narrows, ter get even fer whut we done here."

"There can be no doubt of that," Paine murmured, half-smiling. "You

should have known that would happen when you started this. If you sow the wind, you must expect to reap the whirlwind."

Gary twisted around to him. "It don't seem to be botherin' you none, *Captain* Paine." His voice was a growl in his throat. "No more'n if you was a Mudskin."

MEN looked swiftly to the two, muscles twitched in startled faces. Dikar knew why this was. Mudskin was the Far Land name for yellow-bellied whites who knuckled under to the Asafrics and did their dirty work, and so it was a fighting name that Gary had called Paine.

But nothing happened. Paine just kept smiling, said smoothly, "I don't think you really mean that, Gary." Dikar noticed that his pale eyes were not smiling. "In case you do, may I point out that if I were a renegade I should hardly have hastened here to volunteer my services."

"Mebbe not," Gary growled. "Or mebee you was sent here to spy on us." Spy! Could Paine be the spy who'd met Jubal in the woods? "It would be kind of nice for the Asafrics if they knew our plans quick as we know them ourselves." There was no way for Dikar to tell, he hadn't seen the spy, hadn't heard his voice.

"Have you any proof of that accusation?" Two white spots had blossomed either side of Paine's thin nose. "If—"

"Course I ain't got proof. How kin I? But I promise you right now I'm goin' to watch you every minute from now on, an' if I ketch you steppin' off the straight an' narrow by so much as an inch—"

"Mr. Gary!" Normanfenton's face was black as his beard. "Captain Paine!" His eyes flashed lightnings. "I want this stopped at once. We're not a bunch of boys here, squabbling over some childish game. We are men who have undertaken the responsibility of leading a people.

"If we waste ourselves in petty bickering we are as much traitors to that people as any Mudskin. If we do not trust one another, how can we be worthy of the trust of others. If we cannot govern ourselves, how can we expect to govern a nation? We will have no more of that sort of thing. . . . Our first business—"

"Look, Normanfenton," Dikar interrupted. "Before you get started, I want to say somethin."

"What is it, son?"

"I don't belong here." Dikar pushed himself up out of his chair, swallowed and went on. "Somethin you just said shows me that. You—you said that we're not a bunch of boys here. Well, I am a Boy."

He knew what it was he had to say, but it was hard to know how to say it. "Maybe I'm not much younger than Walt there, but all I know about anythin is what the Mountain has taught me, the ways of the green growin' things, the ways of the birds an the rabbits an the deer.

"I love America as much as any of you, but I am not fit to be one of its Bosses. I thank you for askin me to be here, but I should only be in the way if I stay an so I am not stayin."

Dikar was going away from the table. He was going across the room to the door and voices behind him were saying things but he did not understand what they said. He went out of the door and closed it behind him and he felt awful bad.

Dikar felt bad because he knew that the names of those in that room would be remembered in this land long after

they were all dead, and now his name would not be among them.

CHAPTER IV

PERIL FOR A PATRIOT

BACK in the House of the Bunch, Dikar told Marilee what he bad done, and she said he had done right.

"On the Mountain," Marilee said, "every mornin after Brekfes, you would tell us what jobs were to be done that day, and to do each job you would pick the one who could do that job best. An at Evenin Council, it was not *what* a Boy or Girl had done, whether choppin wood or washin dishes, or bossin some big job, that brought them praise or blame from the Bunch, but *how* they had done it.

"Now you keep sayin that the ways of this Far Land are different from our ways on the Mountain, but I cannot believe that in this the way of the Far Land is different.

"When your last Evenin Council is over, Dikar, an you are sleepin your last sleep, it will not be havin your name remembered by those who live after you that will matter, but whether you will have done as best you could the job you could do best, whether that job was a big one or a little."

And then Marilee went back to helping the other Girls get Supper ready, but Dikar felt a lot better.

It started to get dark, so Dikar pulled down black cloths over all the windows and went to the wall and pushed a little button that stuck out of the wall. He jumped a little as all the bulbs in the roof filled with light, and a great "Ah-h-h" came from the Bunch, but their eyes widened.

This was a magic that still frightened them a little, though Walt had showed them, in a building down by the River, great wheels turned by a downrushing waterfall and told them that the wheels were making a something called electricity that filled the bulbs with light and did other wonderful things.

Just a supper was finished and the Girls were starting to clear the tables, Walt came into the room. Dikar went to him, smiling welcome. "We are going to have a sing, Walt, like we used to around the Fire under the great Oak in the Clearin. It will be nice to have you sing with us."

"Some other time, Dikar." Walt's answering smile was grave, his eyes shadowed. "Tonight . . . But you'd better come outside with me, where we can talk without being overheard."

Outside the House it was very dark, because it was an order that the black cloths be pulled down over all the windows in the buildings at night and that no one show a light where it could be seen from the sky. In the sky, of course, were the stars, but they were high up and far away and all around the black hills crouched, the hills over which at any moment might come the terrible planes of the Asafrics.

"Listen, fellow." Walt put his arm around Dikar's shoulder. "I've been sent to ask you whether you're willing to attempt something the chance against whose success is a thousand to one, and failure in which means death or worse."

"It is for the Cause?"

"Naturally."

"Tell me," Dikar said softly, "what it is I am to do."

Walt's arm tightened on his shoulder, fell away. "Come. I have something to show you. I'll explain on the way."

THEY started walking across the Plain. "We have decided that the Asafrics have so far left us alone only because they are busy putting down the

people's uprisings all over the country.

"By cooling our heels here till they are free again to concentrate a strong force against us, we are playing into their hands. If what we've done is not to peter out into just another futile foray, we've got to make a move very soon."

"Yes. But what can we do?"

"We can strike, swiftly and unexpectedly, where we can do a lot of damage and return to the comparative safety of this fort before they recover from their surprise and cut off our retreat. This will sting them into withdrawing troops from other sectors in order to attack us in force.

"Thanks to what their engineers have accomplished here, we can stand a long siege. While it is going on, our people will attack the strong points whose garrisons have been weakened, overwhelm them, and use them as bases for other raids similar to ours. That will either relieve the pressure on West Point, or compel Yee Hashamoto to weaken other strong points, further away, where the same tactics will be repeated.

"In this way the rebellion will spread, like ripples from a stone thrown into a pond, all over the country, and there is a chance that before reinforcements can arrive from their homeland we can defeat the Asafric Army of Occupation and drive it into the seas. A slim chance, but a chance, nevertheless."

"That's grand!" Dikar exclaimed. They'd reached the other side of the Plain but instead of going into one of the buildings there, Walt was guiding him through a space between two of them. "It's a grand plan."

"It is the best we could work out." Beyond the buildings, bush-covered ground fell steeply down toward the River. "But it depends entirely on the success of our first raid." They started clambering down through the rustling dark. "We can't go wandering around aimlessly looking for Asafrics to fight, nor dare we risk tackling a force so strong that we'll be defeated or so many of us killed that we can no longer hope to hold West Point. We've got to know exactly where to go, what we'll find when we get there. That's what we need you for."

Through the bushes, starlight glinted on black water. "You want me to go out and look for—"

"No." The ground leveled out, became the road that ran along the River. "What we want you to do is more dangerous even than that."

Walt's hand on Dikar's elbow turned him so that they were going along the road. A little ahead, a blacker bulk against the black was a little House between the road and the River. "Dikar, since you've been in West Point, you must have heard a lot about Benjamin Apgar."

"I sure have," Dikar growled. "They say he's the worst Mudskin of them all."

"A white man who cast in his lot with the invaders," Walt agreed, "almost before their conquest was completed, who toadied and licked boots, and made himself so valuable to them that Hashamoto commissioned him a major and put him on his personal staff. Execrated, reviled through the length and breadth of America as its foulest renegade—Benjamin Apgar is perhaps its most devoted patriot."

"Huh!" Dikar stopped stockstill in front of the little House. "He's *what?*"

"You're no more astonished than we were when we radioed National Prime for advice and he told us that Apgar for years had been acting as a super-spy for the Secret Net. He's saved count-

less lives—but you can figure out yourself how much he could do, in the Viceroy's confidence, constantly at Headquarters in New York."

The road had been cut into the hill here, so a high, steep earth bank made it velvet black, but Dikar could hear that Walt was fumbling at the door of the little House. "Major Apgar can tell us what we need to know, and he's the only one who can, but Z3, the station through which he communicated with the Net, is one of those that has been silenced. We've got to reach him. You've got to reach him, Dikar, and get the dope from him, and get it back to us."

A CREAK of hinges, a gust of warm air thick with the smell of the armored trucks they had captured from the Asafrics, told Dikar the door was opening.

"Come on in," Walt said and rough wood sagged under Dikar's weight as he obeyed. "You will have to go into the city, into Asafric Headquarters, teeming with enemies. Death, certain but not quick, will be the price of discovery." The door closed behind them. "We all volunteered to attempt it, but General Fenton decided that you were the best bet to pull it off."

"Me?" Dikar was puzzled. "Why me?"

A click. Sudden light blinded him. "Your skin is as brown," Walt's voice came out of the dazzle, "as that of certain Asafrics, not true Blacks but a race called Abyssinians who are supposed to be descendants of the lost tribes of Israel."

Dikar's eyes cleared. The floor of the room ended abruptly, and beyond was water, closed off by a wall that was a big door. The truck-smell came from a big hollow something that floated in the black and greasy water. "You can easily pass as one of them." Walt went on, "except for your blond hair and beard —they wear beards, luckily—and I've got dye here to take care of that."

Walt took a bottle and a little brush from a bench near the door. Dikar saw a green Asafric uniform lying on the bench. "Even if I look like an Ab-Abyss —what you said—I can't talk like one. They'll know I'm a faker as soon as I open my mouth."

"No." Walt opened the bottle, poured black stuff from it on the brush. "The Abyssinians talk a different language from the other Blacks, and so to the yellow officers they use pidgin English. You've listened to our prisoners enough to imitate that, haven't you?"

"Me t'ink so." Dikar made his voice come out of the back of his throat. "Me good mak' talk lak black fella boy." He grinned delightedly at his success. "W'at yoh say, 'Merican?"

"You'll do." Walt grinned back, starting to brush the black stuff into Dikar's hair. "Especially when you get into that uniform. What a time I had finding a prisoner big enough for his clothes to fit you! Yes, you'll do, unless you run into a real Abyssinian and they're so few there's little danger of that.

"Now here's the plan: (Lift your head so I can get at the underside of your beard.) Gary's meeting us here in a few minutes and he'll run you down the River in that motorboat." Walt pointed to the big thing in the water. "He'll try to get you to the ruins of Yonkers unobserved, land you there and hang around to pick you up, but it's too much to hope that things will go as smoothly as that.

"If you're stopped by a river patrol, you'll have a pass with you—Paine's faking one now on one of the Army

forms we found here—that ought to take care of you, and you'll say that Gary's a deserter with valuable information for Major Apgar's ears alone; you'll insist on being taken to him.

"If you do manage to get to land before you run into any Asafrics, you'll pull the same story, except that it will be you who will have the important information that can only be told to Apgar. After that—well after that, you'll have to depend on Apgar to get you out of New York.

"All right. That's all I can do. It's a good job, if I do say so myself. Now get into that uniform."

Dikar sat down on the bench, got all tangled up in the green cloth. Walt helped him, said, "Good thing a lot of the Asafrics don't wear shoes, so you can get away with going barefoot. Otherwise the clumsy way you'd walk would give you away. You sure you understand what you're to do?"

"I understand," Dikar answered, standing up. He felt all bound up, uncomfortable. "Look, Walt. If I don't come back, will you tell Johnstone to be Boss of the Bunch? An—an tell Marilee I tried my best to do the thing I was best fitted for, an that I was happy to have the chance to try."

"I won't have to tell her anything," Walt said, but Dikar could see by the look on his face that wasn't what he was thinking. "You'll do all the telling yourself, when you come back. . . . Gary ought to be here by now. Wonder what's keeping him. I'd better take a look outside."

He touched a button in the wall next to the door. Sightless darkness swallowed him, the room.

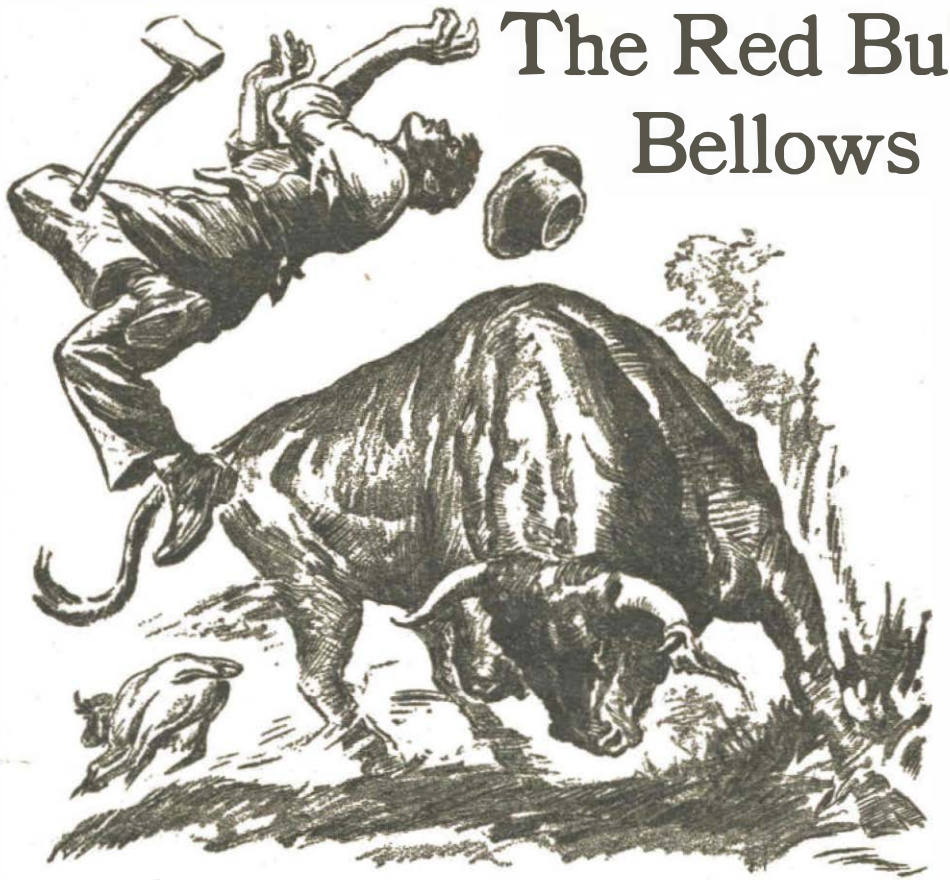
Hinges creaked. The darkness paled, where the sound came from. The green smell of outdoors was in Dikar's nostrils, the cool night wind. Somewhere above, not far away, the bushes threshed loudly.

"Here he is," Walt said. Then Dikar was suddenly alert. There was a dull, crunching sound up there. A curious gurgle ended abruptly. Light leaped out from something in Walt's hand, a slender shaft of light. It struck the steep leafy bank, caught in its brightness a sprawling black thing that came over the top of the bank and fell, and thudded on the road below.

The crumpled heap did not move. Dikar saw a face, bloody, misshapen. Gary's face! It was Gary who lay there, and the top of his head was crushed in by some terrific blow.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK

The Red Bull Bellows



In a single lunge, the monster flung him into the brush

There'll be a fine herd for Grant Logan, and an abundant crop, and a home for all time—all because he had a job to do and did it. And that job included licking the toughest thing that ever came across the valley

By JIM KJELGAARD

Author of "The Lieutenant's Horse," "Where Wild Goats Drink," etc.

FAR up the valley Grant Logan found what he sought. The bull had stopped. There was a great space where the snow had been beaten down and pawed away. Grant looked at it eagerly.

Moss! That was what had kept the wild bull alive through the winter. Grant cut a branch from a pine tree and fashioned a rude sweep with which he swept the snow away from the top of the moss.

Under the snow the moss was a foot deep, a great, wonderful cushion. Grant pulled out long streamers of it, and watched with delight as it trailed from his hands into the snow.

Packing the moss almost to rock-like consistency, he picked enough of it to fill the sack he had brought with him. When the sack was filled Grant swung it to his wide shoulders. Singing, he

started back to the Big Jolly and the saddle that led home.

It was dark when he arrived. The snow was deep, and the saddle had been hard climbing with the heavy pack on his shoulders.

His two spotted cows lowed expectantly when he went to the barn, and looked at him with eyes that had been troubling Grant's sleep for the past fortnight. Grant roared with happiness and relief when he entered their stanchions, and punched them in their gaunt ribs.

He tossed a great pile of the moss before each, and the bag was scarcely a third empty. He had enough for three days, and in those three days he would be able to gather more. The cows were munching contentedly when he left the barn.

The tracks of the wild bull were all around his fence and barn again the next morning. Grant shook his head grimly. He had built the fence after the bull had been there the first time. It was made of saplings and enclosed five acres.

The bull might lead the cows into the woods with him.

Grant had worked a year and a half for those cows, worked a year and a half for John Severance so that he might be his own master and provide for Anne. He could not risk the cows now.

The next day he found another patch of the same kind of moss less than a mile from his house. There were acres of it. Working all day, he gathered three sacks full, and emptied them in the bare haymow in his barn.

That was enough for nine days; and now that his cattle were in no immediate danger of starvation he could attend to his own wants.

Winter wore on. Each passing day Grant encircled with a red pencil on the calendar. Anne Severance was teaching school at Garfield, forty miles away, and would understand why a man with no money to hire help to look after his stock could not make the long trip on snowshoes too often.

But her school wuld be out in a few weeks and she would be back on John Severance's farm.

ONE day the little stream in front of Grant's house was sheathed in its inscrutable cloak of ice, and the next water was running over the ice. For hours Grant stood by the side of the creek watching it change.

Before night the top of the ice had become a spongy mass. In some places there were holes, and through these the water bubbled furiously, as if it would sweep the ice away all at once and so take a fine revenge for being held prisoner for so long.

The honking of geese awakened him next morning. Grant dressed hurriedly, and went outside to watch the flock pass over his house. It was a sure sign. Yesterday's thaw must have been the real herald of spring, and not just a temporary break.

Before noon some of the knolls in his pasture were bare of snow. Grant walked among them, and throwing his coat off, lay digging his hands into the still frozen earth. He dug out and ate whole handfuls of tiny grass roots. He had never tasted anything better in his life.

In two weeks the only snow that lingered was that found in sheltered places and in the deep woods.

It was with the going of the snow that Grant realized the bull was also gone. It had been to his farm only once since the day he had followed it to find out what it was eating.

Grant hastened to the barn and released the cows. The ground was soft yet, and the pasture would probably be ruined. But with the bull gone he no longer needed the pasture. His cows might have a thousand acres to forage on.

He watched the spotted cows as they escaped from the barn into the spring sun. They must have been as weary of the winter as he was. Tails stiff over their backs, heads high, they careened crazily back and forth across the pasture lot. Finally, half exhausted, they fell to cropping furiously at the short grass.

Grant sat proudly on the top rail of the fence. He was still a little amazed, still a little overawed, at what a man could do if he wanted to. He, Grant Logan the hired man, had cut himself adrift from all help, all jobs and the security those jobs offered, to build a home to which he might ask Anne Severance to come as his wife.

And he was building it. By hard work and sacrifice he had made a start, and could go on. He foresaw the time when his frame house would be replaced by a clapboard mansion, his patched wooden barn would give way to a huge barn with steel stanchions and silos.

The two cows would increase to a herd of dairy cows. He would have blooded horses, droves of hogs, flocks of poultry. That was the future.

The present—if he kept on as well as he was doing, in two more years he would be able to ask Anne Severance to leave her father's home for his. It would be his, and he could be justly proud to give it to her because no hand other than his own had had a part in its making.

Grant was stirred from this pleasant reverie. The two cows had gone to the far end of the pasture, and were running back and forth erratically, stopping at intervals to press their muzzles against the rails.

Grant jumped from the fence. As fast as he could he ran toward the cows. He shouted as he ran, but the red bull that stood on the other side of the fence merely pawed the ground with his front hoof and rumbled ominously in his throat. A mighty fear seized Grant.

He scrambled up the fence and wrenched the top rail loose. It was a pitiful weapon against such a monster, but it was all he had. There was no time to run to the house for an ax.

The bull was swinging his head now, preparing to charge. Grant raised the rail. He brought it down futilely across the red bull's back as the bull crashed through the fence.

The next instant they were gone, the bull and the spotted cows. Gone into the hills and the forest that covered them.

GRANT stood with open mouth, both hands pressed against his cheeks. With the fleeing cattle he saw all his dreams gone too, all his hopes of asking Anne Severance to become his wife. A man couldn't ask a girl to marry him when he had nothing to offer her.

Heartsick, Grant trudged back to the house. With a single sweep of his right hand he wiped a tear from each of his eyes. He took his furs from the garret where he had stored them, and packed them in his pack basket. He placed a few pounds of dried venison on top and set off across the hills.

In four hours he reached Kinsley. It was dark, but the few houses and the store were lighted. The storekeeper stirred from behind his desk.

"Why, Grant!" he exclaimed. "I expected you a month ago! Have a drink?"

Grant grunted. His arrival in Kinsley was so different from what he had expected it to be. He had wanted to wait with his trading until he was sure Anne would be home, so that he might go from Kinsley to Severance's ranch to see her. But probably she was still in Garfield.

Grant was in Kinsley four days earlier than he had expected to be. He spread his furs on the counter. The storekeeper eyed them blandly.

"Well now," he beamed. "They're just a mite rubbed and poor, but because you're a friend of mine I'll give you seventy-five dollars for the lot."

"Hundred and twenty-five," Grant said.

The storekeeper whistled. "Phew! You must think they are worth something! I'll give ninety and that's all."

"Hundred and twenty-five," Grant repeated doggedly.

"A hundred and ten if you take twenty in trade," the storekeeper said flatly.

Grant nodded his assent. "Give me a box of shells for a 38-55," he ordered. His eyes roved the counter to light on a row of canned asparagus. For a moment he hesitated; then, "Give me two of those, fifty pounds of flour, five of coffee, and ten of sugar. Credit me with the rest."

THE door of the stoor opened to admit a middle-aged man. Ignoring Grant, the storekeeper hurried to this new customer.

"Two tons of feed," the newcomer said casually. "Deliver it tomorrow. I didn't have quite as much as I thought I did." The feed buyer turned on his heel, and came face to face with Grant, who had stepped into the background.

"Grant Logan!" he exclaimed, and there was no mistaking the warmth in his voice. "How's things?"

Grant brushed a hand across his shaggy hair. "Going good. How's it with you, Mr. Severance?"

"Rotten," the other said ruefully. "I lost the best bull I ever had, and ain't seen a track of it since. Glendale Scott out of Glendale Rex—and he never even hit my barns. Nine hundred dollars for that critter down at Haverly. But tell me about things."

Severance's face glowed enthusiastically. Most people had forgotten that he had started the way Grant was starting.

Grant said with sinking heart, "Was it an Ayrshire, mostly red?"

"That's what it was," Severance assured him. "Why? You seen it?"

"He's in the woods around my place," Grant said tonelessly.

Severance's face fell. "I was afraid of that. He gored the herder that was bringin' him home and took to the woods. When they go wild they're wilder'n deer. Be hard catchin' him—if we ever get him again. Keep your cows fenced, Grant."

"He's got 'em now," Grant admitted.

"Oh pshaw!" Severance's face reflected the sympathy he felt. "That's tough. Want your old job back?"

"No."

"Watch that bull. He's got a mean streak in him."

Grant patted the box of cartridges. "I'll get the cows," he said quietly.

Severance regarded the gesture thoughtfully. "Maybe it's the only way," he conceded. "But don't shoot unless you have to." He brightened. "Anne rode down with me, Grant. She's goin' to meet me here. I know she'll be glad to see you."

Severance's eyes rested on Grant's face, and missed nothing of what took place there. He saw tremendous disappointment and knew that Grant had wanted to tell Anne of his cattle, his farm, his prospects.

Severance reserved judgment. The test of a man was not how he acted when he was winning, but what he did when he lost.

The door of the store opened again. Grant turned, and came face to face with Anne Severance.

"Anne!"

FORGETTING John Severance and the storekeeper, he walked toward this girl whose image had been part of his every thought and act. He stretched forth his hands, laid them on her shoulders, and tightened them as if fearful that she would again fade into nothingness, become again the image that drew far from him when he was almost able to touch it, as she had on so many nights when he had sat alone in his house and wished her near.

But she did not. At last his vision had become reality, his picture come to life.

The sharp spring wind had tumbled her ebon hair and brought warm color to her tawny cheeks. Her tweed skirt and checkered jacket did not hide the suppleness of her body, her long legs.

There was a freshness about her, a tang not unlike that of the wind, as if part of it had clung to her. Her smoky gray eyes wrinkled at the corners as she smiled.

"Grant! A pleasant surprise to see you here tonight! How did you ever tear yourself away from your farm?"

The words jarred him back to things as they were. He drew a little away from her, remembered that Severance and the storekeeper were still in the store. He thought of how he had wanted to tell Anne that he was doing well, had planned on asking her to marry him in two years.

He had no right to ask her anything like that now. But he was glad that he was not alone with her because the dammed-up weight of his desires might burst and lead to recklessness.

"I came in for a few groceries," he said. "But I thought you were still in Garfield."

She laughed. "I was lucky. School closed four days early. I got home yesterday afternoon."

"Well— Well, that's nice."

He felt the blood mount to his throat and cheeks. She sensed his restraint, and was looking at him questioningly.

He strove to find words. talked of the game he had seen that winter, the furs he had caught. After a bit he became calmer, his happiness at being in the presence of Anne outweighing even crushing disappointment.

They had talked together for an hour when John Severance tapped Anne on the shoulder.

"Time to go if we're goin' to get home by mornin'."

Grant walked with them to where Severance's team and wagon waited. He helped Severance stow the various bundles he had bought about the wagon, and stood beside it for a few more words with Anne.

"Why don't you come up and stay with us tonight?" she invited.

Grant wanted to accept, wanted to go anywhere Anne went; but he shook his head. "Thanks. I've got to get home."

"Come on," John Severance added his invitation to Anne's.

"Not tonight. I'll be seeing you though."

He turned swiftly and strode off through the darkness. Anne sat looking after him, the question still in her eyes. She would have called out or followed, but her father's gentle, heavy hand was on her arm. There was approval in his voice.

"He'll do, so far. He's got a job. Now we'll see if he does it or not."

GRANT made camp five miles out of Kinsley. He built a small fire, opened a can of asparagus with his knife, and slowly chewed each stalk. They were a luxury, but luxuries that a man could not afford gave him a new outlook when he thought the bottom had dropped out of the world.

He ate some of the venison. When he was finished he was surprised to find how much better and simpler everything seemed. He would track the bull, all summer if necessary, catch the cows then go back and tell Anne all he had wanted to tell her this time.

He reached his house in the gray hours of dawn. Instinctively he went to the barn to feed his cattle, but he checked himself as he remembered. He fried and ate the last of his venison.

Breakfast over, he shouldered his rifle and went to the break in his fence where the cattle had escaped. He took their track and trailed them as far as the Big Jolly. The spotted cows would not have gone that far, but this was no sluggish farm animal that led them now.

At the Big Jolly he lost the trail. The ground was all moss covered, a whole herd of cattle might have gone through without leaving any trace. Grant squatted on his heels and carefully search the other side of the valley. Nothing showed.

Grant recalled the endless acres that stretched about him. It was half a year's work to search them all, and to conduct his search without alarming the quarry. Still, it must be done.

He crossed the creek, and went up a long valley that led between two mountains on the other side. There were no tracks. When he came to the head of the valley he swung to the right, and crossed the next range of hills.

It was going too far, he reasoned. Surely the cattle, no lovers of distance, would not come so far; yet he couldn't afford to overlook any possibilities.

Nightfall found him to the north of the Big Jolly. He had made a great circle and was reasonably sure that the missing cattle must be somewhere within it.

He shot a partridge that drummed before him on a log, and in the gathering darkness struck out for home.

With dawn the next day he resumed the trail. He had a definite plan to divide the country into sections, and little by little to search all of it. This day, with great care and method, he searched the country inside of the circle he had made the day before but found nothing.

It was as if the fickle god that ruled the hills had tantalized him by allowing him to track his cattle as far as the Big Jolly, and there had taken them to some hideout known only to itself.

Every morning as soon as it was light enough to see, Grant left his house. By lantern light he had spaded up a bit of his meadow, and had planted seeds there, but since then he had scarcely looked at the place.

On three separate nights, as soon as he got home, he had walked the nine miles to John Severance's ranch to see Anne. But being close to the girl who meant so much only aggravated his torment. It was not in Grant to plan with her on trifles.

He could not approach her seriously until he had something definite to back up his talk. A man—if he was a man—must give a girl like Anne Severance more than promises.

Days lengthened into weeks. With a start Grant realized that it was summer, and he had done absolutely nothing to further his cherished ambition of making a home for Anne. He looked at the hay waving in his meadow; if it wasn't cut soon it would spoil. Well, hay wouldn't do him much good if he had no stock.

The cattle must have gone beyond the Big Jolly after all. There were a lot of lost valleys beyond it before the farming country began again. Any one of these would furnish the bull and the spotted cows rich summer sustenance.

Heat was already in the air when he started out, though the sun had not touched even the tallest of the mountain peaks as yet. In an hour Grant was halfway up his home valley, and had struck across the ridge.

It was a wide ridge, he knew, miles across it, but he had walked another hour before he realized that he was off his course.

A tall beech reared itself from an avenue of small hemlocks. Grant swerved to it, and throwing his arms about the knotty trunk, he climbed to its upper branches. From there he would be able to get his bearings.

A vast area of forest land lay revealed. For a moment Grant gave way to fancy. A man could do a lot there for a girl like Anne.

He dreamed of acres of trees cut, and the land where they had grown fenced in to make pasture for cattle, good roads leading to every part of his farm, prosperity for the men he would hire to help him, and himself and Anne master and mistress of it all. Grant shook himself back to reality.

A few hundred yards to his right the ridge sloped into Cat Creek. Grant prepared to descend the tree. His eyes strayed to the ground, and his body clung to the trunk.

Below him, placidly marching through the hemlocks, were the two cows and the red bull.

TAKING care to make no sound that would reach the ear of the bull, Grant unslung the rifle from his shoulders and cocked it. Slowly he trained the sights on the bull's shoulder.

He couldn't miss, and with the bull gone the cows would be easy to catch.

Grant swore silently, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead when the bull went out of sight in the hemlocks. It would be ten years before he could own a bull like that. He cursed himself for a fool, but was glad that he had not shot.

Fifteen minutes after the cattle had gone by, Grant dropped from the branches of the tree. Eagerly he sought the place where the cattle had passed. Ten feet from the base of the beech he found their path.

Grant backtrailed it. It went all the way down the ridge through the hemlocks, but near the creek in the head of his home valley the main trail branched into a dozen small ones all of which led to and across the creek.

A great happiness seized Grant. The secret was out at last. The cattle stayed on the ridge between his home and Cat Creek by day, and came down to drink and eat the rich bottom grass by night.

Half fearful that his eyes had played him tricks, Grant climbed to the top of the ridge again. A mile beyond the beech he found the cattle. The red

bull, with lazy tail that switched the flies away, chewed his cud on the slope of Cat Creek. The cows sprawled indolently close to him.

Cautiously Grant backed into the hemlocks. The bull had the senses of a cat. A rabbit fled across Grant's path, and disappeared in the hemlocks.

The hemlocks! They were the answer. If he could build a hidden fence in them, and arrange a trap at each end, he could catch the cows and the bull too.

He ran back to the house. Snatching an ax from the corner, and an auger and bit from a chest of tools, he left the door swinging as he started back to the ridge.

But he calmed himself. Doing things too hurriedly would frighten the bull to some other hideout.

A mile from the cattle's daytime abode he cut the first rail of his fence, a limber ironwood that would bend almost in a complete circle before it broke.

Carefully he approached the tall beech. It was as he had left it, there was no sign that the cattle had moved. He could not resist stealing down the slope for another look at them.

The bull had lain down, and one of the cows had risen to her feet where she stood with her head hanging in the shade of a small maple.

Grant returned to the hemlocks. leaving no trail, brushing aside no leaf that he did not replace, he shouldered the ironwood rail and pushed his way to a place about five yards from the cattle path.

Choosing two hemlocks about ten feet apart, he lashed the rail to the trunk of each with ropes. Then he bored a hole through each end into the trunk of each tree with the auger. He fastened the rail with wooden pegs driven into the holes, and wasted no backward glance on it when it was in place.

All day he worked, but he was not conscious of the passage of time. Slowly, but steadily, the rails went up.

Three rails high he made the fence, with about two feet between rails. Necessarily irregular, to conform to the broken line of trees that served as posts, the fence was strong enough successfully to withstand the charge of an elephant.

The cattle on their way to the water roused Grant to the fact that day was ending. He crouched in the hemlocks, breathing a thanks to the kindly fate that blew the wind to him.

After the cattle had passed he fastened two more rails. Total darkness made him quit.

WITH the first sign of dawn he was up again, crouching among the craggy branches of the beech tree. He glanced at the climbing sun, an icy hand clutched at his heart. In spite of precautions, had the bull taken warning and fled?

A little sigh escaped him. He relaxed. There they came. The cows, as before, were in the lead. The red bull brought up the rear.

Grant dropped from the beech when they had passed, and followed in the direction they had gone. Two hundred yards from the beech he pressed himself silently into the shelter of the hemlocks. Just ahead the cattle were moving lazily along the path they had beaten, and snatching at the little bunches of wild grass that grew along the way.

After an interminable time, nearly three hours, they moved again to the sunny slope of Cat Creek. Thankfully Grant returned to his fence building.

For eleven days Grant bent himself to the herculean labor. Every day at

dawn he was in the beech tree until the cattle returned to the ridge. Fifteen hours a day he drove himself on his self-appointed task of building the fence.

It never occurred to him that he was wearing himself out, that the muscles in his arms and body stretched taut as drawn strings, and every one of his ribs showed gauntly.

He worked relentlessly, himself taking the place of the team of horses that he should have had.

At last all was ready. For the last time Grant inspected the hidden fence in the hemlocks with the cowpath between the rails. Thirty feet wide in back, the fence narrowed down until the front rails were scarcely eight feet apart.

That was where he would drop his gate when the cattle had gone through. They would go through, he knew. More than once they had already passed between the narrow opening.

Grant was in the beech tree that night, when shortly before dusk the cattle left the ridge. Behind him now were the days of ox-like labor.

Silently he dropped from the tree to trail the cattle to the valley. He watched them cross the stream, and went back to the hemlocks.

Everything was ready. The rails to build up the back end were cut and hidden in the hemlocks. The gate for the front end was made and similarly hidden.

The fence had purposely been built where the cowpath curved. From the gate end the curve concealed the rear end.

Grant worked like a madman. Before midnight the rear of his fence was closed by an unbreakable barrier of sturdy young saplings. With a crude winch he swung the ponderous gate, fashioned from four-inch trees and held together with the last of his precious spikes, from an overhanging limb where he had brought the ends of his fence together.

The ropes that held the gate passed over the limb, and fastened to the trunk of a small tree beside the path. A single blow of the ax would cut them both and allow the gate to fall.

After the gate was in place Grant went into the hemlocks and lopped off great quantities of twigs. He camouflaged the gate with these. The gate was the single disturbing factor. In spite of all he could do to hide it, it was out of harmony with its surroundings and it worried Grant. Having not been there before, it might easily alarm the red bull.

Soon after midnight everything was finished, but Grant did not return to the house. Ax in hand, he waited behind the tree that the gate ropes were bound to. He dozed in fitful snatches. Then, he did not know how long afterward, he fell into a dream-troubled sleep.

He awoke in a panic. The sun was a half-hour high over Cat Mountain. Grant shook the sleep from his eyes, and rustled slightly the branches of the tree under which he slept.

Almost instantly he froze into startled immobility. Not three yards in front of him a great, red shape blotted out the hemlocks on the other side of the path.

Streams of perspiration broke over Grant's forehead. The bull saw the gate and would not enter the fence!

GRANT moved his head silently. Tossing their horns, brushing the ground with their moist muzzles, the cows partook of the bull's suspicion and remained outside the fence.

Grant's gaze returned to the bull. The animal faced him now, and raked

the ground with a front hoof while he tossed his head theateningly.

The red bull bellowed deep in his throat. Sick at heart, Grant watched. A sense of abysmal hopelessness gripped him.

He could not catch the cows, and thought dully of all the time he had worked before he had been able to buy them.

Anne—a man must have something to offer a girl, and he had nothing whatever.

He could go back to work for John Severance; but it would take almost two years until he could buy more cows.

Two years to get back to the place where he had been before the bull had taken his cows—two years after that. It was unthinkable to ask Anne to wait so long.

His hopelessness became a great and consuming rage. Slowly he worked his fingers about the helve of the ax.

With a rush, Grant sprang from his hiding place. In startled terror the spotted cows fled along the path. Grant could hear the drumming of their hooves as they ran to the far end of the fence.

But he had no thought for them now. The bull, the animal that had ruined the life and hopes of a man, must be destroyed.

In a single lunge the bull was upon him. As if he had no weight Grant was picked up on the monster's head, and flung into the brush at the side of the path.

He raised the ax defiantly. The bull would follow up now, and trample him. But the two cows had found the path closed to them, and were lowing nervously.

Another bellow burst from the bull's throat. For a space he hesitated as he lowered his head and looked at Grant. Majestically he stalked through the gate to the aid of his imprisoned harem.

With a single swing of the ax Grant cut the ropes that held the gate. Then he passed into insensibility.

HE WAS, he thought, in the center of an open meadow ringed around by a circle of massive red bulls. With one accord they lowered their heads and charged. His groping hand closed about the stock of a gun that had no cartridges in it, he grasped an ax that was too heavy for him to lift. The angered bellowing of the bulls shut out all other sound as they made ready to set upon him with horns and hooves.

Grant threw himself over in an effort to escape. His eyes opened. The mists in his brain began to dissolve.

Stabbing pain shocked him into complete wakefulness as he rolled over. In a soothing, caressing tone, the branches of the beech tree sang a gentle little melody. It was broken by the mad roaring of the bull.

Perspiration bathed Grant's forehead, but when he looked toward the fence his lips parted in a tired smile.

He put his hand to his chest where the bull had struck him. His lower ribs on both sides sagged under the pressure, and he cried out at the sharp pain; but there seemed to be no other injuries.

On hands and knees Grant crept to the fence. With an effort that tore the breath from him he grasped the lower rail, then the middle one, and pulled himself erect.

Once he was on his feet his head cleared; and as long as he breathed slowly and put no strain on his chest, the pain there could be borne.

The red bull, bellowing furiously, was still crashing his head futilely against the fence. The two cows skittered in terror about the enclosure, then fell

to cropping foolishly at the short grass.

Suddenly the bull ceased his wild plunging, and with head to the ground, walked close to the two cows. They shied warily away. Grant's heart leaped.

They were both in calf by the red bull! Such calves as he had not even hoped to be able to buy for several years —they would be his!

He could not take them home himself; even if he had no injuries he would not dare try to take the bull out unaided. But if he took it easy, and rested as often as he needed to, he could get to John Severance's ranch.

A breathlessness that did not spring from his broken ribs gripped him, a great flood of happiness crept over him. He would stay at Severance's until his ribs had healed.

Anne would be there. He would have such a long time to tell her, not about what he hoped to get, but about what he had and could show. There need be no vague promises that he could not back up.

Everything he said to her would be as definite and solid as this ground he walked on; and even the small things would be important to her. He knew that.

And this time, he knew surely, he could ask her to marry him within two years.

Severance would be glad to send herders to get the bull and take Grant's cows home. Severance would also lend him a man to do his haying, feed his cows, and keep his farm in order until such time as Grant was able to get back to it himself.

And he need not feel that he was asking for help for which he had nothing to offer in return. He had captured the red bull. What little help he needed would not come to more than a tenth of what the bull had cost Severance.

However, Grant resolved that what he needed from Severance he would pay for in time.

That was the way he wanted it to be; he wanted the special feeling of freedom that he could only find on land entirely his own.

Finally, still with downcast head as if he were ashamed of being caught, the red bull walked to the gate where he stood staring out at Grant. The two cows moved nervously over behind the bull. Behind them Grant seemed to see a vast herd of red cattle moving up to his barns.

The picture in his mind was as clear as reality.

Grant almost fainted from the pain of bringing up one arm and shaking his fist at the bull. "You beautiful, dirty devil!" he swore ecstatically.

Old Dr. Kildare slumped to the floor, exhausted, while Jimmy and Dr. Gillespie worked feverishly over their patient

By MAX BRAND

Dr. Kildare Goes Home

Join them now: the countless ones who admire and love the young interne they know as Doc. For he's taken the world on his shoulders, and with one hand would push back a tide of death and disbelief

HAVE YOU MET THEM?

YOUNG DR. JIMMY KILDARE: an interne known and loved by scores of humble people simply as the Doc. STEPHEN KILDARE, his father: a modest but greatly respected country practitioner.

DR. LEONARD GILLESPIE, the great diagnostician, who has chosen young Kildare as his assistant. With but little time to live, he is devoting himself fiercely to his work.

NURSE MARY LAMONT, who is despairingly in love with Jimmy Kildare.

DR. WALTER CAREW, the hospital superintendent.

HEAD NURSE MOLLY CAVENDISH, Dr. Gillespie's eagle eye: tart of tongue but genuinely fond of Mary Lamont and young Kildare.

JOE WEYMAN, an ambulance driver with fierce loyalties—the fiercest for Jimmy Kildare.

CONOVER, Dr. Gillespie's personal bodyguard; and NURSE PARKER, who manages the diagnostician's office.

BEATRICE RAYMOND, the girl back home, still in love with Jimmy.

DR. JACK DAVISON, technician in the hospital's laboratory, comes to the attention of Dr. Gillespie, and, at about the same time, becomes a special problem to young Kildare.

Davison, though competent, is having to support his wife, JOAN, on a pittance—and Joan is soon to become a mother.

Their situation is becoming desperate when—just before Christmas—Jimmy Kildare and Mary Lamont step in with help.

But in the meantime young Kildare has taken on an even more desperate problem. WILLIAM CAREW, son of the hospital super-

This story began in last week's Argosy

intendent, and MARGUERITE PASTON, his sweetheart, have decided to commit suicide because Dr. Carew will not consent to their marriage while the boy is in college.

Kildare has succeeded in stopping them temporarily, but is afraid of what they may do; he sends Mary Lamont to watch the girl.

As she leaves, he kisses her; but his mind is on other things. . . .

CHAPTER VI

HAIL—AND FAREWELL!

MORE than a week later—snatching an interruption in the steady stream through his office—the great Gillespie was saying: "What do you think of his chances?"

"About six weeks," said Kildare.

"Who was I talking about?"

"The fourth man before the last one. The coronary case."

"Six weeks? Six months, rather, if he watches himself."

"He won't watch himself, sir."

"No," said Gillespie, sadly, "he won't watch himself. Next patient! . . . No, hold it a minute! How's that Scotch baby doing?"

"Pete Douglas? Not so well, sir."

"I'm sorry. We ought to know more about that formula and its variations, Jimmy. Why don't we hear from your father?"

"Perhaps he's having a Christmas rush; people getting ready for the holidays, you know."

"Do they do that out in Dartford?"

"Yes, they're afraid of the cider but they know that they won't keep away from it. Still, it's pretty queer that he hasn't mailed us the notes."

"What's happening tomorrow?"

"The Norwegian gets the operation."

"What else?"

"There's the hyperthyroid, also."

"What else?"

"You've promised me a bit of a talk on endocarditis."

"What else?"

"I don't recall anything particularly."

"What about Christmas itself?"

"There's that, of course."

"Isn't that an event in your life?"

"Naturally, sir."

"Are you going home?"

"I think I should watch that hyperthyroid, sir."

"Forget the hyperthyroid. Ring your house this moment and find out why your father hasn't sent in that material about the feeding formula."

"Yes, sir, as soon as this next case of thrombosis—"

"Never mind the next case. The first case is always the home case. Never forget that. Take the phone in the other room. . . . Next patient!"

KILDARE went into the second office where his own desk stood and where Mary Lamont was making rapid notations on cards three by five, for a file. As he settled himself to telephone, she came over and put her head down beside his.

"Yes?" asked Kildare, looking up.

"Nothing," she said, and turned away.

"Come back, Mary," he called.

"Yes, doctor?" she answered, showing him a cold face.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"It's quite all right," she said.

He sighed and shrugged his shoulders. After a moment he rang the Dartford number. His mother answered.

"It's almost merry Christmas," said Kildare.

"Are you coming, Jimmy? Are you going to be able to make it?" she asked eagerly.

"There's a hyperthyroid that I've got to watch," he said. "I'm terribly sorry."

"Oh, I know, I know. I've spent most

of my life learning that a doctor has to be a doctor, but somehow I keep forgetting."

"Is father there?"

"Your father? No, Jimmy—no, he's not here."

"You say that in a queer way."

"I've just a touch of a cold, dear. That's all."

"No, there's something wrong, isn't there?"

"No, Jimmy. No, no, there's nothing wrong at all."

He reflected for an instant on the slight tremor that had come into her voice and left it again, a faint resonance like the music of grief.

He remembered, sadly, that she was growing old and what he had heard might be merely the weakness of increasing age; or perhaps she was unhappy because he was not coming home for Christmas; or it might be any of those thousand shadows which drift across the minds of women, imperceptible to the grosser eyes of men.

He began to probe a bit, carefully.

"Has father told you about an experiment we're doing for him?" he asked.

"No, dear."

"What? Not a word?"

"I'm afraid not, Jimmy."

"About the baby formula we're trying out here?"

"Oh, yes. About that, yes—I think so."

Kildare frowned as he listened.

"He was going to send us in the rest of his notes. Will you ask him about them?"

"Goodbye — and merry Christmas . . ."

HE WAS still frowning when he went back into the other office and Gillespie said instantly: "What's wrong now? Aren't those notes in the mail?"

"No," said Kildare. "My father was a bit excited—just quietly a bit excited—over the idea that we might be able to publish his work. Wouldn't you have said so?"

"Of course. He was as happy as a boy."

"Then he couldn't help talking about it to Mother. He couldn't help making a rather big thing out of it, could he?"

"Why, he couldn't be sure that things are happening unless they're in her mind as well as his own," declared Gillespie. "He doesn't know the day has started until she says the sun is up. He can't taste the news, even, unless he reads her the headlines."

Kildare did not smile.

"Well," he said, "she seems hardly to know whether or not she's heard about the experiment."

"Next patient, sir?" Conover was saying at the door.

"Hold up the line!" commanded Gillespie. "Jimmy, what the devil is wrong out there in Dartford?"

"She's unhappy but she won't tell me what's going on. I don't suppose it can be important."

"Why couldn't it be important? If she were two steps away from dying, she wouldn't tell you. She'd be afraid of stealing some of your time. Those two old fools are so bound on carrying their own burdens that they'd drown in a quicksand rather than ask you to stretch out your hand to them."

"I think they would," agreed Kildare, slowly.

"Anything in her way of speaking?"

"There was one tremor, I thought—but only one."

"How could there be more than one?" demanded Gillespie. "She'll never show weakness. She's all bulldog. She reminds me of a young interne I know:

an idiot who's always searching out lost causes and locking his jaws on them, do or die. . . .

"What are you going to do about this?"

"If it weren't for the hyperthyroid," said Kildare, "I'd go home, with your permission, sir."

"Permission? Permission?" exclaimed the fierce old man. "I'll go out to Dartford *with* you. I haven't looked a real Christmas turkey in the face for thirty years.

"And if those people are in trouble, there's no hyperthyroid, there's no hospital, there's nothing else in the world that's worth a thought—for twenty-four hours!"

IT WAS at about this time that Marguerite Paston and young Carew went into the office of his father confidently, their heads high; and a half hour later they came out again with pale, set faces.

They walked slowly, with searching, wide eyes, as if they were moving through the dark. When they came out into the long hall, young William Carew said: "Well, we had the extra days and the hope; but even Kildare would agree with us now."

"I think he would," said the girl.

"There's only one thing left. You still feel that?"

"What else is there?" she asked.

They looked not at one another but straight down the length of the hall, as white, as immaculate as eternity.

"We ought to see Doctor Kildare and say goodbye," said Carew.

"No," the girl answered. "It wouldn't be right."

"He'd never try to stop us. He understands. It's queer, isn't it? Two or three billion people in the world, and only one of them understands."

"But it would be terrible pain to him. He wouldn't try to stop us, but I know how his face would look."

"It couldn't mean so much; we're hardly more than strangers to him."

"We're more than that. He understands trouble the moment he sees it and it hurts him."

"Maybe you're right, but I think that I've got to say goodbye to him, face to face; otherwise, somehow, it would be like sneaking out."

"I think you're right," she agreed.

That was why they went down to the office of Gillespie. People still were trailing disconsolately out of the big waiting room and Conover gave young Carew the bad news that Kildare and Gillespie both had left the hospital.

"We'll leave a note for him," said William Carew. "You write it, Marguerite. You know how to make words say something."

And she wrote:

Dear Doctor Kildare:

Everything you said to us was kind and wise, but when we went to him it was like talking to a face of stone. Perhaps he's right in calling us fools, because there may be no place for people like us. We feel a sort of strength but not for the kind of life we would have to follow; so we're taking the other way. We wanted to see you, first, because in the whole world you're the only one who will understand.

Marguerite Paston
William Carew.

When they both had signed it, Carew gave the envelope to Conover. He took it back to Kildare's office and gave it to Mary Lamont.

"It ain't from patients. It's personal," said Conover.

"Oh, personal?" murmured the nurse, and tossed the letter carelessly aside.

By that time Marguerite Paston and young Carew were once more out in the street. A wind was sliding down off the northern shoulders of the world,

bringing with it a level-driven spray of snow that cut off the breath sharply.

They turned from the weight of the storm and looked back down the street of ten thousand windows, like a double row of tall desks in which so many lives had been pigeon-holed forever.

CHAPTER VII

SO THIS IS CHRISTMAS!

THE storm which sang so high over Manhattan was bringing down on Dartford such a fall of snow that the cottages were blinded and isolated, each in its own horizon like a ship on a lonely sea.

When the door opened on the kitchen of Mrs. Stephen Kildare the noise of the wind entered with a hollow roar and was shut out suddenly again like the roar of a fast train which comes and passes in an instant.

Kildare, his coat spotted with snow, kissed his mother and took a breath of the Christmas fragrance of evergreen decorations together with the steaming spicery of plum puddings and mince pies and pungent stuffings and the rich odor of roasting meat.

Steam rose from the old-fashioned range to frost on the windows and fog the air so that he saw only one person in the room.

"You're not home for Christmas, Jimmy," she was crying to him. "You're *not* home for Christmas, after all."

"I'm nothing," said Kildare. "I'm only an interne. Wait till you see the surprise I've brought for you. You and Father get ready at the front door. I'm bringing my present in that way!"

"But, Jimmy—" she began; and found herself speaking to emptiness as he disappeared into the white uproar of the storm again.

She turned to Beatrice Raymond, who was in a corner peeling thin-skinned Florida oranges; she was half invisible in the dim blue of an old apron.

"Think of him not seeing *you*," said Mrs. Kildare. "Take off that apron, my dear, and we'll go to the front door."

"No, I'll stay here," said Beatrice

"Are you hurt, child?"

"No, not very much."

"Darling, you know how Jimmy is—just half blind—"

"I know he is," said Beatrice, managing to smile a little. "Half blind until he wants to see something."

"Don't say that, Beatrice. Don't, please, take it this way."

"It's all right; that other business is over and done with."

"It isn't, though. Beatrice, take off that wretched apron. I want him to see you in that sweet dress."

"No, he doesn't look at dresses. I'll stay right here, please."

Mrs. Kildare could not stay to argue. A noise at the front door sent her flying and she arrived in time to see the door thrust open in front of the wheel-chair of the great Gillespie with Big Joe Weyman pushing him forward.

The doctor tossed his hat ahead of him and as the wind knocked his hair into a white confusion he called: "There's my hat in the ring, woman. I'll out-eat, out-drink, and out-talk the best man in your house.

"Where's that husband of yours? I've been waiting thirty years for a Christmas like this and now I'm going to show him what a real man can do to it."

"Stephen will be here in just a moment," she said as Kildare came in last and shut the door. "He'll surely be back soon."

"Well, if we can't have him, we'll have the kitchen," declared Gillespie. "Let me come back there into your operating room, will you?"

"Mother, you know my friend Weyman?" asked Kildare. "We stole him from the hospital to drive us out here."

"Joe and I know all about each other," she answered, "because we know about *you*, Jimmy."

"Where's Father?" asked Kildare.

"He'll be here any time," she said, trying to escape.

He touched her arm and kept her, in the meantime waving Weyman and the wheelchair forward.

"Where's Father?" he repeated.

"He's out and busy. But he'll be back . . ."

SHE kept smiling up at him while Kildare studied her solemnly. From the kitchen they heard Gillespie roaring:

"Come out from the corner there, you. You're what's going to make this Christmas merry for me. Tell me your name—and isn't there any mistletoe in this house?"

"There's trouble about father," Kildare was insisting. "It was in your voice in the telephone. Tell me what's wrong."

"There's nothing wrong. . . . We can't leave Doctor Gillespie alone in there. Good heavens, Jimmy, think of such a man in our little house!"

"It's no good dodging," declared Kildare. "What's happening?"

She closed her eyes and put a hand on the arm of Kildare to steady herself. She said: "Medwick. The last doctor's gone from that town and your father's trying to take care of all the sick."

"That would kill any one man," said Kildare.

She was silent as she nodded.

"When was he last home?" asked Kildare.

"Yesterday morning. I've begged and I've prayed to him, Jimmy. But he says that doctors take an oath . . . And now I've told you and he'll never forgive me for putting the worry on you!"

"Hush, hush!" commanded Kildare. "Since yesterday morning he hasn't been here. That means he hasn't slept. I'm going to Medwick now."

"And leave Doctor Gillespie? Your father would never forgive—"

"Would we ever forgive ourselves?" asked Kildare. "That's what's important. I'm starting for Medwick now. . . . Don't let Weyman sit too near the whisky bottle. . . ."

"Why argue with him?" asked Gillespie, when Mrs. Kildare still protested against the departure of her son for the town of Medwick. "We don't argue with him in the hospital. If you try to hold him, he breaks down the wall and knocks a hole in the roof."

So Kildare departed in the Raymond automobile and Gillespie set himself to bringing a little more cheer into the household, until the last gleam of daylight was gone from behind the storm; and then the winter night came in, suddenly still and clear, and yet neither Jimmy nor his father appeared.

Even in spite of Gillespie's determined cheerfulness, a silence kept invading the Kildare house, spreading coldly, while they looked wide-eyed at one another. In weather such as that day, any sort of accident could have happened along the road; and there was not even a telephone call.

"It's my turn to go," said Gillespie. "This is a sort of fairy story. The oldest son goes out to the enchanted castle and doesn't come back. The second son goes and never returns. At last the youngest son sharpens his sword,

tightens his belt, and takes the road toward the giant. That's the cue for young Gillespie.

"Weyman, get me out into that car. We're going to Medwick!"

Mrs. Kildare and Beatrice Raymond went out beside the wheelchair to the automobile. It was so cold that even the wind was frozen. There was not a breath of it.

Gillespie was bundled into the car, his wheelchair collapsed and put in the luggage compartment, and Weyman took his place behind the wheel.

"Men have the easy jobs," said Gillespie. "They go out and discover the news, but woman have to stay home and wait for it.

"I know what's going on in your head, madame. But what about the 'gone' look of Beatrice? You're not worrying so much about two old men. It's Jimmy who's making you hold your breath, isn't it?"

"We grew up together, you know," she said. She managed to laugh. "But then Dartford turned out to be too small, you know."

"Maybe it'll seem big again to him, some day," said Gillespie. "I'll be back in an hour or two with a whole collection of Kildares."

WEYMAN, as he sent the car out of the small town, was saying: "This Doc Kildare. Quiet and all—but they know when he's around, don't they?"

"You mean, the women know?" asked Gillespie.

"That's right, sir."

"I can't tell what they know or when they know it," said Gillespie. "When I'm with women, Joe, I talk louder but I know less.

"Drive like hell. I want to get to Medwick. I've got an idea that we've bad news for Christmas ahead of us."

So Weyman drove. Where the wind had scoured the road, it was as slippery as greased marble and the rest of the way they sent out a fanning cloud of snow-dust behind them until they crossed the state line into Medwick.

It was not very much larger than Dartford, though the factories gave it an air of greater and more gloomy significance. The moon which shone now out of the clear sky showed Gillespie the long, low buildings of glass and brick and steel, with a thousand panes knocked in and one broken-backed roof.

The town itself was demure rows of cottages set back behind lawns and overstretched by huge elm trees which lined the streets.

Gillespie had Weyman stop at a filling station. They took ten gallons of gasoline and had a chance to talk with the attendant as he scraped the frost from the windshield.

"It's got a good hillside position, this town," said Gillespie. "Ought to be healthy."

"Why, Medwick is one of the healthiest towns in the world," said the native. "When we get the marshes drained, down there, we'll be clean rid of the fever. We're so healthy around here that I'll tell you something: We been getting along without a doctor, even!"

He beamed widely.

"That's good for the town but bad for me," said Gillespie. "I've got a sore throat that I hoped I could get painted up right here."

"Come to think of it," said the attendant, "there might be a doctor down in the Lancey house just now. I've heard there's somebody sick down there. Turn left three blocks down and it's the second house on the right-hand side."

THE Lancey house was like the rest of the cottages. Weyman rang at the front door and it was opened at once by a woman who carried a baby wrapped in a shawl.

"Doctor Kildare here?" asked Weyman.

"I don't know the name, but there's two doctors here. One of 'em is too young to amount to much. Come on in and wait for your turn. They're working out in the kitchen."

Weyman took the news back to Gillespie.

"We'll take 'em in the flank and rear," said Gillespie. "Wheel me around to the kitchen door, Joe."

Weyman pulled out the chair, set it up, and pushed the doctor into the back yard. Through a window from which the frost was half thawed, they looked in on a woman stretched out on two deal tables, put end to end.

The elder Kildare handled the anesthetic; his son worked at an abdominal operation on the white-wrapped figure.

"Look at those hands, Weyman!" said Gillespie. "Look at the way he's tying off, faster than a woman could crochet. Only one half-power electric light to see by, but hands like those can find their way in the dark.

"Get me in there! That old Kildare is blue in the face. He's as like as not to drop dead any minute!"

The door was unlocked. Weyman wheeled in the chair but two doctors were too intent on their work to look up until Gillespie said:

"Trying to keep your Christmas all to yourselves? Go lie down on the floor before you *fall* down, Steve. . . . Go on and do what I tell you; you're dropping now.

"I'll take charge of that anesthetic; push me around to the head of the table."

"Can you manage all right?" asked old Kildare. "It's a brittle pulse. I don't like her heart at all. . . . And I'll just take your advice for a moment."

He slumped down on the floor in a corner, so spent that his head knocked heavily on the boards. He threw out his arms wide and lay like a cross, his eyes shut, his breathing slow and audible.

Gillespie and young Kildare had not spoken. Now their eyes crossed with glances of intent understanding.

"He's had a week of it, day and night," murmured Kildare.

"Get my medical kit out of the car, Joe," directed Gillespie; the stethoscope he had taken from old Kildare now pressed over the heart of the patient.

"How is she holding?" asked Kildare, still rapidly at work inside the yawning incision.

Gillespie was silent. Kildare looked up with a single incisive glance, set his jaw hard, and continued his work.

"She'll just last it out," announced Gillespie, finally.

"Thank God for that!" breathed Kildare.

Gillespie reached out with a handkerchief and swabbed the dripping forehead of Kildare. In both hands Kildare lifted out a red mass and dropped it into a garbage can. His swift fingers began to close the wound.

"She's too young to have a heart like this," said Gillespie. "What's wrong with her?"

"Malnutrition, sir."

"Are they going hungry in this town?"

"No, sir. Plenty to eat, but sometimes the wrong things."

A faint sound of complaint came from the corner of the room. Far lost in the sleep of exhaustion, old Kildare was groaning with every breath.

The automatic hands of the son went swiftly on; his mind was left free for the explanation.

"A year ago the factories closed. They moved South. The doctors scattered. There wasn't any money left to pay them. Only old Doctor Brewster remained. He couldn't stand twenty hours a day. Whisky didn't help him—much. He died a week ago. And father took over."

"This town and Dartford too?"

"Yes, sir."

"*All* the Kildares are fools," said Gillespie. "If they have to play Santa Claus, why don't they wear masks and beards and fat bellies so the rest of us can tell what they are? . . . What's that door doing, leaning against the wall?"

"That's our stretcher, sir. . . . This one is ready for it now. Weyman, give me a hand?"

"All right, Doc. Where to?"

"There's a couch in the hall upstairs. All the other beds are filled."

"What are you doing for nurses?" asked Gillespie.

"Women of the town," said Kildare. "Will you look into the living room, sir? It's full of people who need help. For a year they've been too poor to pay for a doctor and too proud to take charity."

"What have they been paying your father, then?"

"Why, he's different," explained Kildare. "People don't mind taking what he's able to give."

"Yeah, because he's like you, Doc," broke in Weyman. "And you always seem like one of the family."

"Bah!" said Gillespie. "It's all maudlin rot. What people get for nothing is poison to their souls. . . . Let me have a look at your waiting room!"

He found there twenty of the villagers, from an old man huddled on the floor with both arms wrapped around a tortured body, to a white-faced, staring girl of fifteen; and not fewer than five mothers with infants in their arms.

Only the Medwick people who were desperate, it seemed, would take charity to relieve their pain.

Old Gillespie, instantly, had one of the children stretched in his lap, commencing an examination.

CHAPTER VIII

THREE AGAINST DEATH

RAIN came during the night, thawing and sliding the snow from the roofs of Medwick, running from a thousand faucets, as it were, off every corner.

The frost dissolved on the windows to oily smears and the compacted snow on the streets rotted to a yellow mush.

Late the next morning, still in the Lancey house, still in the kitchen, the two Kildares sat around the stove drinking black coffee. Doctor Stephen steadied his cup with both of his shaking hands.

Gillespie said: "Diagnosing a case off-hand, Stephen, what would you say if you saw a man with blue pouches under his eyes, his face a bluish-white, trembling voice, uncertain gestures, an expression of frowning concentration, no appetite, nervous tension around his mouth, blue veins apparent in the forehead?"

"It suggests a kidney condition, perhaps," said old Kildare, "or perhaps—"

He jerked up his head and listened. The sick wail of a baby had been coming constantly from an upper room in the Lancey house. It seemed to have broken in on the old man's attention with a fresh force.

"That may be simply stomach ache, after all," he suggested.

"Never mind the baby. Go back to the description I've just given you. Kidney condition, you say?"

"Well, not necessarily," answered Stephen Kildare. "Simple exhaustion after a prolonged strain, perhaps."

"Dangerous, would you say?" asked Gillespie.

"Wouldn't that depend upon the age and the physical resistance of the patient, Leonard?"

"Suppose a patient advanced in years?" said Gillespie. "A patient habitually overworked and still driven by his conscience. What would you prescribe?"

"Bed rest," said old Kildare. "Rather indefinite bed rest, I think, together with sedatives and . . ."

"Exactly!" agreed Gillespie. "And by the way, what do you think of the fools who imperil themselves and their families and the affections of their friends because of a crackpot, silly devotion to what they think is their duty?"

"Ah, there's a point I've often tried to make," said old Kildare. "There are too many nerves in the American machine. It worries itself to death. It refuses to wait till tomorrow. It tries to do everything today. Nerve strain is rotting away the strength of the American man, Leonard!"

"Then why don't you go home and get to bed—for an indefinite period, or until a competent physician tells you that you safely may get up?"

THE old doctor, who saw that he was fairly trapped, smiled and tried to shrug the suggestion away; but the other two were not amused. They stared at him with grimly accusing eyes.

"It's exactly what I shall do," said Stephen Kildare, at last, "as soon as the Medwick condition is a little improved."

"The confoundest nonsense I ever heard of!" answered Gillespie. "You're trying to carry the entire burden on your shoulders whereas there's enough work here in Medwick, continually, not for one old practitioner but for five or six young ones."

Old Kildare, with a covert wink, made to Gillespie a gesture which implored secrecy, and at the same time indicated his son.

"Why should I shut up because Jimmy is listening to me?" demanded Gillespie. "You're afraid that before long he'll make Medwick one of his lost causes and stick to it like a bulldog and let his hospital work and future go hang?"

"Why, Stephen, he's decided to do that already, because he's his father's son and believes that the life and future happiness of one doctor are nothing compared to the health and happiness of a whole community.

"Now, Stephen, will you listen to reason?"

Old Kildare groaned: "I'll do whatever you say, Leonard. I'll withdraw—as soon as the condition here is a little better."

"Suppose we get half a dozen young doctors out here with plenty of brains and no practices?" demanded Gillespie.

"Very good—in almost any other part of the country," said Stephen Kildare. "But this is New England, Leonard. This is a highly respectable and intensely conservative community. The men of Medwick are the same blood that has led the whole nation in the great emergencies. I can't tell how they would welcome a group of young, of very young and inexperienced—"

"Wouldn't they be accepted with your recommendation behind them?" asked Gillespie.

"Nothing like that would be accepted

without the backing of Winslow. He's the chief citizen and the leader of the community."

"Get him here, then!" commanded Gillespie.

"I could take you to his office in his bank," said Kildare.

"Ah, the rich man, is he?"

"No, not rich. He has a small fortune that he made out of the town, and he's putting his money back into Medwick trying to stave off depression until the place gets on its feet again.

"The people follow him because Medwick is his religion and he's the chief priest of the cult. He's a father to every poor man in the district—a rather irascible father, recently, a sort of benevolent tyrant as he sees his town go downhill."

"Let him be whatever he is," said Gillespie, "but get him in here to listen to that baby's crying."

EXPERTS in torment tell us that there is in nature nothing more heartrending than the shriek of the rabbit when the teeth of the grayhound close on it or, at the other end of the scale, the scream of a tortured horse, when a voice comes to the mute beast as it dies.

But to rouse up even the most callous of men and put him into violent action, there is nothing to compare with the brainless, whining, insistent cry of an infant.

Geoffrey Winslow, when he came into the Lancey house with old Stephen Kildare, could not keep from turning his head toward the sound of the baby's wailing.

He was sixty and very gray; but from a distance he was so straight-standing and carried his head with such an air of command that he seemed still in the full of his vigor.

Only when he came nearer could it be seen how time had worn him, just as a green hill may turn out to have a face covered with the fine lines and gullies of erosion. Around his mouth there were signs of the same nervous tension which Gillespie had pointed out in Stephen Kildare.

They passed through the living room, where a dozen people still were gathered in spite of the long work which the three doctors had been carrying on. Everyone stood up and smiled at the great man of the town. There was just a touch of fear in their eyes, however.

But he spoke to them one by one, quickly, shaking hands and wishing them a merry Christmas, before he accompanied Stephen Kildare back into the kitchen, which still served as a consulting room.

Gillespie was there, saying to an unhappy woman: "Even a very young doctor may be right, Mrs. Jasper. Young Dr. Kildare noticed among other things a slight malformation of the legs of your son, and a peculiar squareness in the head.

"Those are signs of rickets, Mrs. Jasper, and the thing for you to do is to feed your boy exactly the diet which Dr. Kildare suggests to you."

"He only gave my Tommy one look!" complained Mrs. Jasper. "It doesn't seem right that a youngster like that doctor could know so much in just one look."

Gillespie explained with unusual calm: "There are a great many older doctors who cannot see as much in a year as young Dr. Kildare can see in a glance. Musicians and poets are born, not made, Mrs. Jasper, and so are diagnosticians. They look deeper than the skin; they have X-ray eyes. So you just run along and do what he told you."

"I'll do it," said Mrs. Jasper, shaking her head, "but just the same it don't seem hardly right."

AS SHE went out, Kildare was saying: "This is Doctor Gillespie, of whom I've told you; Doctor Gillespie, this is our leading citizen of Medwick, Mr. Winslow. . . . My son doesn't seem to be here."

"He's up working on that crying baby," said Gillespie.

"I should think that the child's mother might quiet it," suggested Geoffrey Winslow.

"She's tried," said Gillespie. "Now, Mr. Winslow, has my friend, Doctor Kildare, told you what we want to speak about?"

"I don't want to talk out of turn," answered the banker. "I'm not a medical man and therefore my medical opinions aren't worth much; but I've seen a bit of life and people and I can't say that I'd put much trust in a crew of youngsters who haven't had the school of real experience. I don't think the town would, either."

"No experience?" echoed Gillespie. "The men we have in mind are fellows who have done distinguished work for four years in their medical schools; then they've had, each of them, two years of hard work in hospitals; and after that some of them have assisted specialists for a still longer time.

"But when they came to hang out their shingles they found that there were a good many people in the world who felt like you, Mr. Winslow—that only age could be trusted.

"But haven't you noticed that age sometimes forgets what young men still remember? Recently, have you ever happened to glance into the school algebra that you once knew by heart? Dead stuff to you now, isn't it?"

"That's true," admitted Winslow, grudgingly. "But medicine handles matters of life and death."

"So do generals in a time of war," answered Gillespie. "In time of peace, gray-heads lead our armies. In time of war they go into the junk heap. Right through history, the greatest battles are won by young, new leaders."

There was a point to this remark that Winslow did not care to answer at once. He said: "A house full of sick people—a baby crying—it's almost as if the stage had been set to persuade me."

"But notice that the baby isn't crying any longer," said Gillespie. "That very young doctor, Kildare, has found some way to ease it, probably to cure it of pain and sickness at the same time."

"True," said Winslow, discovering with surprise that the painful cry no longer was stabbing into his brain. "After all, this lad is *your* son, Doctor Kildare."

"He's no better than the other men we'd bring out to Medwick," said Stephen Kildare.

"Not a whit better; younger, less experienced, in fact," insisted Gillespie.

Winslow gave him a sour look. He half turned and faced old Kildare.

"Perhaps, perhaps," he said, "but people around here put their trust in old friends, true friends—like you! Now, if you give your blessing to the proposition, Doctor Kildare, I might be able, in all conscience, to recommend these young men to Medwick. Do you put yourself behind them?"

"With my whole heart!"

CHAPTER IX

SIX LONG SHOTS

YOUNG Dr. Kildare, back at the hospital with a mission before him, nevertheless paused to tear off his

clothes and take a two-minute shower.

Then hurrying to his office he threw himself face down upon the couch and said across his shoulder to the nurse: "Wake me up in half an hour, Mary."

"What is it, Jimmy?" she asked.

"Hell's popping," he answered, closed his eyes, and was instantly asleep. His loosened muscles let his arm slide over the edge of the couch. His hand fell with a rap against the floor but he was not roused.

Mary Lamont replaced the arm. She sat down beside him and began to massage the corrugated, congested muscles at the base of the skull and down the neck.

Kildare gave a great, sighing exhalation of perfect relief and fell into a sounder sleep.

Her hands still were at work when the half hour ended. She studied her wrist watch for a moment, then shook his arm and spoke to him. No stir of answer came from Kildare. She leaned and kissed him.

"All right," said Kildare, and sat up. He spilled back against a cushion and the wall.

"Wake me up," he said.

She took a wet towel and wiped his face, his throat.

"That'll do," said Kildare.

He stood up, stretched, yawned on tiptoe, and settled back on his heels.

"Anything happening?" he asked.

"Christmas, Jimmy," she said. "And here's something I thought might be useful to you when you're . . ."

"Nice of you, Mary," he said, and took the white parcel in his hands. He started to untie the red ribbon. The knot pulled hard.

"I'll undo it, darling," she said.

He kept his hands on the parcel, not hearing her. His blind fingers went on fumbling.

"Anything I need to know?" he asked.

"Nothing. Except a personal message for you."

She picked up the letter of Marguerite Paston and young Carew.

"I'll look at it later," said Kildare. "Personal? I'm not a person. I'm just a doctor."

"Doctors aren't people?" she asked, trying to smile.

"Of course not," said Kildare, without smiling.

"Of course not," she agreed.

"Where does Midge Whalen live?"

"Seventy-two, Morris Place."

"Ben Connor?"

"One forty-three B West Seventieth."

"Sammy Darnell?"

"Eleven eighty-three Linden Avenue, Flatbush."

"Sid Garfield?"

"That must be the wrong name," said Mary Lamont.

"Wrong?"

"He's not one of your addresses. I don't think he is."

"Sid Garfield? The dentist?"

"You don't know dentists also, do you, dear?"

"Of course I know them."

HERE the instinctive wits in his surgeon's fingers untied the knot and stripped the red ribbon from the package. He went on:

"That's where half the trouble gets into the body: the mouth, you know. And that's where the dentist comes in. You think of some of the old-time boys who were chiefly mechanics. Finer mechanics than watchmakers, but not much more important.

"The new crowd are different. They have to be mechanics, internists, surgeons, doctors, all in one. They are working all the time at the sources."

"Yes, dear."

"You're not interested?"

"Oh yes, Jimmy! But don't you want to see . . ."

She pointed at the unopened parcel.

"Write down those addresses while I get my coat on."

She picked up a pad and pencil and began to write as he hurried into his coat.

"What is it, Jimmy? What's the lost cause this time?"

"A whole town full of the best people you ever saw. All made of oak and iron like old ships. Finest people in the world—and the most pig-headed.

"No doctor there for a year. A big backlog of cases crying out for treatment; and a lot of New England pride to keep them away from a charity clinic; maybe a hundred lives to save; maybe a thousand that need straightening . . ."

"Beautiful, Jimmy, isn't it?" she asked.

Kildare, his eyes on the ceiling, hardly heard her.

"If I had five pairs of hands and five brains behind them—and I'm going to get the hands and the brains right now. Goodbye!"

She picked up the white parcel.

"Goodbye, Jimmy," she said; and as he hurried through the door she began to smooth out the tissue paper. Her eyes were so blinded that her hands had to find their way by their own instinct.

In the outer office Gillespie pulled from his ears the stethoscope with which he was listening to the heart of a man who stood before him, naked to the waist.

"You'll get them out there and be back tomorrow, Jimmy," he directed.

"I'll be back as soon as possible," said Kildare.

"As soon as possible?" roared Gillespie. "I'm giving you a schedule. See that you run on time. Back here tomorrow, without fail, Medwick or no Medwick!"

He could not tell whether or no Kildare had heard him, for the interne was already passing through the door.

"No fool like a young fool," said the patient, sympathetically.

THE office of young Doctor Martin Whalen was up on the third floor; you walked to get to it. Kildare found not Whalen but a lad of fourteen who said: "Doctor Whalen in out on a call. Just nearby. I'll tell him you're here. If you'll just sit down for a minute, sir. Here's some magazines. Be back in two minutes."

Kildare sat down. He got up as the lad disappeared through the doorway and followed the clatter of feet down the stairs, down the freezing sidewalk outside, down a narrow alley, and to the back of a grocery store where a chunk of a young man was unloading boxes from a truck.

To him the boy was talking in great excitement and the other was stripping off an apron and nodding as he rolled down his sleeves, for the work had been hot even in this weather.

"Hello, Midge," said Kildare.

"Ah—you?" said Whalen. "I thought it was somebody worth while."

"A rich guy with stomach trouble?" asked Kildare.

"Yes. And with three children, all married; and three families of kids all with rickets; lots of dough and no brains."

"You're going where there's two thousand kids that need you."

"Siam or China, eh?"

"Do you care?"

"Not if it's medicine, and kids, and enough for bread and water and one

beer on Saturday evening." He grinned.

"Come on with me and pack your grip. We're going some place."

"If I walk out on this job, I'm fired. And this is better than nothing. What are you offering?"

"A long shot."

"All right, Jimmy. I was always a gambler."

*

Dentist Sidney Garfield had the cat swathed in a bath towel to nullify those sharp claws, and her jaws propped open with a cork from a bottle.

"But you're not going to *cut* her!" screamed the little girl, who watched with her sweating hands clasped together.

"Take him away! Don't let him touch poor Mike!" cried her brother.

"I've got to—"

"Don't!" screamed the children in chorus.

"There—you see all that stuff coming out? That ulcerated tooth was poisoning Mike. Now he'll get well and fat. We swab on this stuff to make it heal quickly. Now we let poor Mike go, and you'll see how much happier he is already because . . ."

"Down to cat?" asked Kildare, as he leaned in the open doorway.

"Yeah. I'm Santa Claus," said the dentist.

"How about setting up shop in the sticks?" asked Kildare.

"Sure," said Garfield. "All I want to see are teeth. I don't care who wears them."

"Not much dough in it, Sid."

"Anything is plus to my minus. You can't disappoint me, Jimmy."

*

"If you come in," roared the great voice in the sub-basement, "bring enough cops with you to save your hide."

Kildare pushed the door open and blinked at the dim light inside. The narrow cellar room probably was served by a ventilator; but the air in it was like the air in a deep cave.

There was an iron cot with a single blanket dropped in a heap on it.

Along two walls there were improvised shelves covered with test tubes and bottles that gave out foul aromas.

In the center of the room stood huge Ben Connor, his face smudged with a seven days' beard as with soot. His hair fell forward in a great jag across his forehead so that he seemed all beast and no man at all.

"What is it, Ben; moonshine?" asked Kildare.

The big fellow took a lumbering step nearer to Kildare before recognition came to him.

"Hi, Jimmy," he said. "I thought you were that landlord again."

"You've fixed up a regular garden for yourself," said Kildare, sniffing.

"The bug I'm culturing is happy in a lot worse places than this," said Ben Connor.

"Are you getting anywhere with it?"

"Sure. A couple more years, maybe, and I'll arrive with something."

"Look, Ben, there's a little hick town that doesn't want young doctors, but the young doctors want it. Are you one of them?"

"You mean we have to break in?"

"Just about."

Ben Connor lifted and spread his huge hands.

"I've been waiting a long time for a chance to use these," he said.

*

"How do things go?" asked Kildare.

"Why, I'm keeping pretty busy. Too

busy to move out of this dump, you see. An appendectomy and a fractured skull and a broken arm and a skin cancer, all yesterday.

"Things are waking up and I'm going to let my light shine; can't keep it under a bushel, Jimmy," said Darnell. "Have a drink? No, you don't drink this time of day."

"Yes, I'll have a drink," said Kildare. "It's Christmas, and all that."

"Wait a minute," said Darnell, rummaging through his kitchenette. "Shucks—nothing but dead men. I forgot there were some of the boys in here last night."

"Maybe I can find something," said Kildare, and pulled open the second door of the pantry.

A chunk of old yellow cheese and the heel of a stale loaf were the only things in it.

"Haven't been eating in for a long time," said Darnell.

"How long is it since you ate anywhere?" asked Kildare.

"Are you trying to kid yourself, or me?" asked Darnell, coldly.

"It's cold in here," said Kildare, and turned on the gas switch at the grate. There was no answering hiss. He turned the switch back again.

"That thing's been out of order since yesterday," said Darnell. "But it doesn't bother me. Gas heat rots the oxygen in the air of a room, you know. There's altogether too much heat used, anyway."

"That's a twenty-five cent meter," said Kildare, "isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," agreed Darnell, carelessly. He shifted away from the eye of Kildare. A silence followed.

"I've got to run along, Jimmy," said Darnell. "Terribly sorry about the drink . . . boys cleaned me out last night, as I was saying . . . I have to get down to Maynard's hospital to look at a couple of patients and then . . ."

He stood at the door, waiting for Kildare to go past him, but Kildare remained fixed in the center of the room. They stared at one another for a moment. After a moment Darnell closed the door, slowly.

"All right," he said. "You win."

"Listen to me, Sammy," said Kildare. "There's a little town out there on the edge of Connecticut called Medwick . . ."

THERE was a Christmas wreath on the door of Jack Davison's room. It was a single spray of fir, the kind you can buy for a quarter. Kildare looked at it for a moment, gloomily, before he knocked.

The door was opened by Davison himself. He paused an instant, startled, then stepped out into the hall.

"Sorry I can't ask you in, Jimmy," he said. "But Joan's asleep."

"We'd better wake her up," said Kildare.

"I don't think so, old fellow," answered Davison. "I really don't. She's tired and all that. You know how she is, just now."

"I know," said Kildare, "but don't act this way. I want to see Joan."

"All right," said Davison, making a slow surrender. "But the fact is—"

"I understand," said Kildare. "Quit making excuses."

When he went into the room, he saw Joan sitting up in the "living-room" corner knitting. The only sign of Christmas hung outside on the door. There was not a token of it within the room.

Joan Davison started to get up, hastily, but Kildare prevented her.

"So nice of you to remember us, Jimmy," she cried, "but I'm afraid that it's going to be a gloomy spot in your

day. You see, Jack and I both feel that all the Christmas to-do is rather silly and we made up our minds just to let the whole thing slide, and—"

"Why do you apologize to me, Joan?" he asked.

"It's no good," explained Davison. "He has the X-ray eye that Gillespie talks about. If we lie to him, he'll simply read our minds.

"Well, you know what the truth is, Jimmy. This is the only kind of a Christmas that I could afford to give her."

After he had said that they were both easier; they were able now to be glad of Kildare's presence there. Joan smiled at him.

"I've come with a beggarly sort of a present for you both," said Kildare. "There's a town without doctors called Medwick not so far away. The idea is for us to get together a group of doctors and try to take care of the whole place.

"The town's nearly broke so I can't try to bring in established practitioners. They have to be on the make, like you.

"There's a chance that the whole thing will crash through, too. We may not get the confidence of the Yankees in the village and then everything would be cooked. But I've got Midge Whalen signed up as pediatrist; Ben Connor as gynecologist—"

"That big black devil is tops," said Davison.

Kildare nodded and went on a little hurriedly.

"Sid Garfield will be the dentist, and Sammy Darnell will be general surgeon—"

"He has the greatest pair of hands I ever saw work," said Davison. "They can't beat down a crew like that. You mean that there'd be a place for me, Jimmy?"

"They have to have a laboratory man and an internist; you'd fill those two bills at a stroke," declared Kildare.

"Do you hear, Joan?" cried Davison. "It's our ship coming in! It's our chance!"

She was smiling, but there was doubt in her eyes above the smile.

"What would happen to Jack's job in the hospital?" she asked. "That would have to go?"

"I'm afraid so," said Kildare.

Her eyes were steadily on her husband; she did not look at Kildare as she went on questioning him.

"And nothing in Medwick is really sure?"

"Nothing is really sure."

"Jack, can you afford to take the chance?"

"There's never a sure thing, when a doctor makes his start," said Davison. "Look at Jimmy, here. He thinks it's the right thing."

"I think there could be a bare living and something more, perhaps—if it works out," said Kildare.

"*If* it works out—you see?" said the girl.

"But it's got to work out. Jimmy's in it himself," said Davison.

"Oh, that's different," she agreed, turning back to Kildare. "Are you really in it, Jimmy? You can't leave the hospital, can you?"

He looked into his thoughts for a moment. There was an abyss of doubt opening coldly before him as he thought of the last words of Gillespie and of all that might be entailed in a promise.

Then with a great lifting of the heart he overstepped the question and said calmly: "I'm in the thing to stick; I'm in it until it begins to work, Joan."

The change in her face then made him forget entirely the sudden, terrible doubt of a moment before.

"Are you, Jimmy? Are you, dear?"

she insisted, brightening every instant. "Then of course it's all right for Jack. Of course—it's glorious—it makes this a *real* Christmas. . . . I'm going to dance or something!"

WHEN Kildare was down in the street again, he headed back toward the hospital rapidly; and as he leaned into the wind it seemed to him that he was pulling, on an invisible tow-line, six adult lives.

They were a present which Medwick might thank God for, or else they were a nuisance which Medwick would throw into the fire.

Five of them could endure the shock, no doubt; but for Joan Davison, he knew, failure might be a tragedy.

He went on down the street with his head lowered, and his uncertainty and his new fear were like a huge burden on him.

A great blasting of horns and ringing of bells turned a corner toward him. Half a dozen Christmas floats were rolling slowly through the streets. Windows were flying open and crowds gathering and shouting along the pavements.

On every float there was some sort of a stunt performing with plenty of girls bare enough for the Christmas beaches of Florida or California.

On the central float an enormous Santa Claus poured blessings upon the world with a megaphone.

Kildare was aware, suddenly, that there still was sunlight in the day, there still were unconcernedly happy people in the world—and it was Christmas!

He laughed a little. Hope unexpectedly had returned to him.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Squaw Lady

By ARTHUR LAWSON
Author of "Epitaph in Red," "Brother Cowpoke," etc.

Look out, Independence—there's a big-time medicine wagon headed your way with a cargo of calamity. Item: fifty cases, Triple X Tonic, guaranteed riot-inducer; item: the Doc himself, quick on the trigger, but faster with a straight flush; item: one blue-eyed Indian with a cowboy's drawl and a price on his head; item: two cayuses given to heading for Kentucky at the slightest opportunity. And don't forget Elizabeth who knows her man when she sees him, and gets him even if she has to paint him red to do it

NOVELET

I

THE girl's cussing woke Doc Lane who had been sleeping in the jolting wagon. He listened for a while, disapprovingly, and when he could stand it no longer he sat up to speak to her.

"Hi there!" she was shouting. "Hike into those collars, you spavined, sway-backed sons of a cross-eyed Tennessee mule . . ."

The girl slapped down half-heartedly with the reins to emphasize her remarks. Horace, the off-horse, paid no attention to her. Greeley, the near-horse, waggled one brown ear.

Doc Lane cleared his throat. "*Them* collars, Elizabeth." His voice was deep, resounding, though dulled at the moment with sleepiness. "Despite the august names with which we inflicted those poor brutes, they were educated by my dear brother, your own father, who, as we well know, is ignorant. So always say 'them' to those horses, my dear."

Elizabeth sighed. "Maybe my father didn't go to Harvard College," she countered helplessly, "and maybe he does talk so a body can understand him. But that doesn't give you any right to call him ignorant."

"In this great and glorious country, in this land of the free," Doc Lane began, "a man has a constitutional right to—" Then he thought better of it, for there was no point in antagonizing this lively niece of his who was by far the best trick he had in his whole bag. Elizabeth gave class to his medicine show. Dressed in a white uniform she looked something like an angel and was much more convincing to skeptical customers than any Injun Chief he had ever had.

"A man has a right to what, Unk?" she asked.

Doc Lane's voice boomed through the covered wagon. "Don't call me Unk! How many times do I have to explain that Unk is hardly a cognomen fitting the dignity which I must maintain?"

"Okay then—what, Doctor?"

"I was going to say, that in this great and glorious land the roads are long and I must have my sleep against my turn at the reins."

"It's your turn already," Elizabeth

said, but her uncle was careful to snore, indicating that he had fallen asleep and must not be disturbed.

Elizabeth snapped her whip.

"Come on you bangtailed, hock-sprung old sinners," she cussed. "Tighten *them* traces."

IT HAD no more effect on the horses than had her previous remarks. They just plodded on while Doc Lane snored and Elizabeth hunched deeper into her sheepskin coat and watched the frozen plains creep by and the hungry bunches of cattle with their tails to the bitter norther that swept down from the Indian Territory.

Then Horace snorted, shied out of the roadway dragging Greeley with him. The wagon jolted, Doc Lane was tossed out of bed. And Elizabeth clutched the whipstock to keep from being thrown from the high seat.

"I—I think there's a dead man out there, Unk." Her voice was strained. "No! He moved."

Doc Lane sat up. "Then sell him a bottle of our special Tonic for Chills

and Fevers." He was fully dressed except for his black Prince Albert and Stetson. The tall, lean man with a flourishing gray mustache had been obliged to run for his life so often he usually slept with his boots on. "Or are we out of labels for that?" he added.

But Elizabeth had climbed from the wagon. By the time Doc Lane got out into the icy wind, the girl was kneeling over a cowboy who was sprawled with his face to the prairie. Lying on the road near him was a dead horse. Above them buzzards were wheeling.

"He must be dreadful hurt," Elizabeth said without looking up. "He's still unconscious. But he doesn't seem to be wounded and I can't find a bump on his head—or anything."

"Drunk," Doc Lane commented.

The cowboy's eyes flickered, opened. He managed a faint smile, and with Elizabeth's aid, sat up.

"Ah—Ah—thanks," he gasped.

Doc Lane straightened. "Don't try to speak, young man, don't make the slightest effort. As field-surgeon and private physician to the great J.E.B. Stuart, himself, I saw many cases such as yours. I have with me just the thing to make you feel right as a trivet. One good snort of . . ."

Elizabeth's bright curls jerked, sending her uncle off to the rear of the wagon to return a moment later carrying a bottle.

"One bottle of this Triple X Elixir will make you livelier than a colt, fresher than a girl in her teens, and stronger than an ox. And only one dollar."

"Now, Unk!"

The dying cowboy stiffened, relaxed. The muscles on his face twitched. Elizabeth knew that this was not the time to be making speeches. She took the bottle, pulled the cork with strong white teeth, and held the liquid to the cowboy's lips. The odor of it made his nostrils twitch; his eyes opened wide.

"Take a good deep drink," Elizabeth ordered. "It's only diluted rum with a little chili pepper in it, and . . ."

"Several ounces of Doctor Edward J. Lane's private formula," her uncle cut in with dignity.

"Anyway, it'll be good for you," the girl insisted. "Please."

She turned up the bottle, letting a bit of the fluid dribble onto his tongue. Then he took a good swallow and found that it did for him just what the doc had promised. At least, he felt like jumping up to howl.

"Better?" the girl asked.

"I—I think so," he said uncertainly. He coughed, and gasped for air to cool the column of blistering fire that seemed to be stuck in his throat.

"Then I'll help you into the wagon." Elizabeth tugged at his shoulder. "Your horse is dead. Somebody shot him. We'll take you to town."

Between the two of them they carried the cowboy to the wagon. There they covered him with a blanket. Then, while Elizabeth yanked the saddle and bridle off the dead horse, Doc Lane and the cowboy finished the bottle of Triple X.

"The chili," Doc Lane explained, "has certain medicinal properties of its own. Learned that from the Azetecs. But I take the stuff for the value of my own secret formula, which of course I cannot divulge." He cleared his throat resoundingly. "Is there anything else either I or my assistant can do for you, my man?"

The cowboy shook his head. His eyes closed again. And when he rolled over in the blanket he drew his six-

shooter from its holster and lay with it close to his stomach. . . .

IT HAD been dark for over an hour when the wagon skidded and slithered down the red, muddy bank of the Brazos with Doc Lane snapping his whip like a pistol and cussing in a language that Elizabeth envied and the horses feared. It frightened Horace and Greeley right into the swirling waters of the shallow river, to plunge, sloshing through the dark and treacherous flood, now hock-high, now belly-deep; then snorting as loud as the Doc's cussing as they dragged up the far side toward lights of a tiny crossroads settlement.

Elizabeth, bracing herself in the wagon bed, sighed with relief.

"How you feeling, mister?" she asked softly.

"Better!" The cowboy shrugged out of the blanket, the dim bulk of him hardly more than a shadow beside her. "Fine! Say, your uncle's snake oil sure hit the spot. That secret formula . . ."

"Oh, yes," Elizabeth said cheerily, remembering the lessons her uncle had so carefully taught her. "Doctor Lane worked for years on that. It's a combination of secret herbs from all over the world."

"Humph," the cowboy grunted. Suddenly he became agitated. "Say—is this Independence, already?"

"Sure!" Elizabeth was feeling better now. "Just get a good meal in you, cowboy, and you're going to feel like a new man. I couldn't find where you were hurt. Just jarred in the fall, I reckon. But you'll have to take it pretty easy."

"Yeah," he answered absent-mindedly. "Say, kid, I must of dozed off. I wasn't figuring on . . ." Then, much to her amazement, he stood up in the wagon bed. "Pardon me, lady," he said, "but I'd be obliged if you didn't let out a holler. If you do, I'll have to plug you and the doc, too."

The cowboy's gun was in his hand. It was an old hawg-leg Colt's. He worked his way forward through the wagon to the seat and poked the muzzle into the doctor's back, cutting off Doc's cussing as if he had slapped on a gag.

"Just keep on talking to the hosses, Doc." The cowboy's voice was colder than the wind. "And if anybody stops you to look over this wagon for nits, just tell them I'm your woman's husband. Savvy?"

"And if I don't?" Doc Lane asked evenly.

"I'm just going to be back there with the girl, and we'll have a blanket around us, and I'll have this gun in her ribs."

"Thanks," Doc Lane said, "for telling me your plans. I believe horsemen are approaching."

There was a pound of hoofs on the hard ground as the cowboy came back to the darkest part of the wagon.

"Come on, sister," he said. "You and me are going to be husband and wife for a couple of minutes."

She was too terrified to move, too frightened to make any protestations as he threw a blanket over her and climbed underneath.

The hoofs clattered closer, stopped as Doc Lane swore the team into a halt. A man yelled from outside:

"Hey, Gramp'a, you find a cowboy out there along the road a piece?"

II

ELIZABETH felt the gun jab deeper into her ribs as if the cowboy was trying, by doing so, to make Doc Lane

answer the question properly. Doc Lane cleared his throat with a sound like distant thunder.

"Young man," he boomed, "this country seems to be full of cowboys. Maybe you could describe your particular cowboy to me and let me think whether I have seen him or not. In the meantime, try to speak more quietly, as my assistant is sleeping within."

"Your assistant?" one of the riders said suspiciously. "Maybe that's him, King."

"My assistant," Doc Lane said with dignity, "is a young lady. A very capable one, if I may say so. A veritable Florence Nightingale. Should your wives, daughters, mothers, sweethearts, or lady friends be suffering from any complaint, my assistant can . . ."

From their positions beside the wagon the men could read the faded sign which Doc Lane had painted three years ago in brilliant colors over the canvas cover and the sideboards.

Dr. Edward J. Lane, M.D., F.R.G.S.
SPECIALIST
Woman's and Children's Diseases
Inventor and Sole Manufacturer of The
WORLD FAMOUS
Dr. Edward J. Lane's Twin
Palliatives
TRIPLE XXX TONIC
& SEVEN SEAS TONIC
(For Men) (For Ladies)
Free Demonstrations Nightly!
(These Goods are the McCoy)
No Snake Oil!

"Okay, Doc," one of the men broke in. "Trot out this young lady. We want to see her."

"That's right," another man chimed in.

"Elizabeth!" Doc Lane called. "Visitors."

The girl moved gingerly from under the blanket, felt the pressure of the gun relax and took it as permission to get up. She stumbled forward over the cased bottles and kegs, and emerged on the seat beside her uncle. For a moment none of the men said a word, only stared at this vision. Then a heavy-set gent with a sheriff's star on his chest spoke up.

"Okay, Doc, yuh can ride on. But keep yore nose clean in this town. If yuh can find suckers for your snake oil it's okay with us. But no funny business."

"I thank you, gentlemen," Doc Lane orated, "from the bottommost recesses of my heart."

He lifted the whip. But a second man, tall and thin and pale, dressed only in black, stopped him with a wave of the arm.

"Maybe you saw our friend, Doc," he suggested. "A cowboy out there on the prairie. Probably without a horse. About six feet two. No chaps. Red shirt and sheepskin coat and gray wool pants. Carries one six-shooter in a carved holster. A pale feller."

"That sounds just like . . ."

"Like the dead man we saw there with the buzzards wheeling over him," Elizabeth cut in quickly.

The three riders looked at one another with some satisfaction.

"Just as good," the third man, short and squat, spoke up. "Saves us the trouble of running him in. Doc—that cowboy is a jailbird. That's howcome he's so pale. Should of been hung years ago. The meanest gent to ever ride these parts. They's an award on his hide, whole or perforated, of ten thousand bucks."

Doc Lane's eyes gleamed. "Thank you, gentlemen, but not being a professional manhunter, I feel that I can not claim the reward for myself. However, if it should fall to me, my only

wish would be to turn it over to some worthy cause—an orphanage, let us say."

"Doc," the sheriff said gravely, "we can see your heart's in the right place. We got plenty of orphans in this town, and more every day. You'll never be forgotten by our citizens, Doc."

Elizabeth was sure of that, but not the way the sheriff meant it. Doc Lane bowed from the waist, swung his black hat in salute.

"I am only a humble man," he said, "dedicated to the welfare of humanity."

The men reared their horses toward the Brazos. Doc Lane called after them: "By the way, you haven't seen an odd Indian wandering around, have you?"

"No, we ain't!"

Doc Lane snapped his whip, cussed Horace and Greeley, then leaned over to whisper into Elizabeth's ear as the horses snugged into their collars.

"Ten thousand iron men. Now get back there and don't let that cowboy get away."

Elizabeth had no idea how she could hold him if he wanted to go. But she climbed back over the bottles and kegs, stumbling in the darkness.

ELIZABETH sat down beside the cowboy, and he whispered in her ear: "Why'd you say I was out there—dead?"

"How do I know?" she asked. "Oh—because I knew you were so tough you'd shoot me in the back and so mean you'd plug Unk—I mean the doctor—if I let him tell those gents you were in the wagon."

"I sure would of done both," the cowboy said. "You heard what they said about me?"

"Of course I heard. And I don't believe a word of it. You're really as gentle as a lamb. I can tell."

"Not me," he insisted.

"Then"—she laughed—"you'll get a good chance to prove it. Unk and I are going to cash in on your hide. That's why we didn't tell those gents you were here. Those three are just as big crooks as you—and we'll be damned if we'll split with them."

Doc Lane turned the horses off the road into a wagon-yard behind a livery stable. As he did so, the cowboy suddenly leaped for the tailboard and freedom. But Elizabeth went right after him. She was not one to let her man get away that easily. As he put both hands down to vault into the yard, she grabbed for his left leg and clung onto it. The force of his jump yanked her halfway out before his foot slipped from the boot. There was a dull thud. And the cowboy was not fooling this time as he lay face down on the frozen earth.

THERE was a bump on his head the size of a dream nugget and his arms and legs were limper than last Monday's wash. It took both the doctor and Elizabeth to get him back into the wagon where they securely bound him. Then Doc Lane put up the horses and he and his niece went down the street in search of food.

Elizabeth could not keep down her curiosity.

"What are you going to do with—uh—" she asked as they walked toward the Lone Star Café.

"You mean Injun Joe?" Doc Lane said with never a change of expression.

"Sure," she said.

"Where there's fire there's smoke," he told her. "If that cowboy's worth ten thousand dollars to somebody, he may be worth more to us. That's what I aim to find out. Tonight I will make the rounds of the various dens of pleasure, with which I observe this town-

ship abounds, and by morning I expect we will have not only panned a pay-streak but discovered the mother lode as well. By the day after tomorrow, Horace and Greeley will have solid gold bits."

They stepped into the restaurant, sat down where Doc could look over the guests and were served with great heaps of potato and slices of beef. Elizabeth still did not know what the doctor was up to. She tried to find out but he insisted on talking on the wrong subjects.

"My dear—" he announced as the food warmed him, "didn't I promise you we'd make our fortune in this land of gold and whisky. As the great New York editor said 'Go West—young man!' We came, we saw, we will conquer. And remind me, Elizabeth, to write my dear friend Horace Greeley to tell him of our success."

It would only take a postal card, she thought, to tell of that. "Just add for me," she said, "that I'm going home to Kentucky, first chance I get."

Doc Lane looked hurt. But the waitress, cook and owner of the café waddled by and he beamingly signaled her to stop. "We have an Indian," he explained, "who is very hungry. All he eats is meat. Warm him the biggest steak in the house, madame."

"An Indian?" she gasped.

"Yes, madame, an Indian." He turned back to Elizabeth. "It's really a shame that Indians are forbidden to enter such places as this— Especially chiefs of such an ancient lineage as Chief Chemquassibampticook."

The woman went on with her work. Elizabeth said: "Yes, Doctor."

It was half an hour later when they were walking down the middle of the street that Doc Lane explained himself to her. They were in the center of the street for two good purposes—so that everybody would see them and nobody would hear them.

"A fool and his money are soon parted. So while I while away the evening waiting for the angry return of the sheriff and his two friends, you are to paint up the chief. Give him that outfit we had down in Arizona Territory. Tomorrow we will exhibit him. And, rest assured, my dear, no man in the world ever looked in plain sight for anything he had lost. They won't find him."

Elizabeth had her doubts. She walked hurriedly on, clutching the half-cooked steak, leaving Doc Lane to weave the last strands of a web that she was sure would sooner or later trap them all.

III

THE cowboy gulped the huge piece of meat and Elizabeth broke the good news. "From now on you are going to be Chief Chemquassibampticook. We had a chief once before, over in Arizona Territory. But he drank too much of the Triple X and a lawman shot him. He was very handsome and his name was Pat Garrett, but I thought it was very mean of him to shoot our chief."

"I've heard tell of Pat," the cowboy admitted, "but what's that got to do with me being this chief?"

"Oh, nothing, I suppose. It's an easy job, though. Chemquassibampticook is the name of a lake somewhere. So whenever we have a chief that's what Unk calls him. Unk says it means 'Healing Waters'. But Unk made that up the way he does everything else. Come to think of it, all our chiefs have been shot—or something."

The cowboy shuddered. To keep his mind off the fate of Injun Chiefs, he asked:

"Ain't Doc a genuine sawbones, even?"

"I don't know. Maybe he is. Anyway, he says he went to Harvard. But he never showed me his diploma. So I've got to paint you up, see. It's a lucky thing you've got black hair. I don't know what Unk will do about the blue eyes. But he always gets an answer from someplace."

She fussed around finding the Indian Chief costume and some brown paint. Then she decided:

"Maybe you better shave first."

"Okay," he agreed readily. "But I can't shave sitting down and tied up."

"Then you better learn," she said. "If you think I'm going to set you free and give you a razor into the bargain you must have a pretty poor opinion of me."

"I did at first," he said, "but I've changed my mind."

"Thanks, cowboy."

"Jack Austin," he corrected grimly. "Jailbird."

"Jack Austin sounds good to me," Elizabeth smiled. "And you can call me Betty, though nobody does. Lane is the last name. But if anyone is around you are 'Chief' and I am just 'Ugh,' or something like that. Ready, Chief?"

"Ugh!" He nodded sourly.

While he scraped off the stubble, using the single hand she had set free, she warmed up the paint over a tiny charcoal stove that they carried in the wagon. His face rinsed, she said:

"Now, toss the razor over here and stop thinking of cutting those ropes."

"Honest, lady . . ."

"Honest yourself, Chief— Toss!"

He tossed the razor over to her, took the brown, greasy paint that she handed to him and gingerly smeared it on his face.

"You better take off your shirt," she suggested, "and put it on your chest. And on your arms and hands, too."

He shrugged out of his jacket and shirt. When he was through, Elizabeth gave him an Indian blanket and beaded jacket, then fixed his hair and stuck a bright red feather into it. Up until now they had both been deadly serious; but his woe-begone expression was too much for her. She laughed.

"Even your own mother wouldn't recognize you, Chief, and if she did she wouldn't admit it."

"I guess not," he agreed. "But General Custer would sure as Hell start chasing me. And what would he say when he found out I had on Levis?"

"He's not going to find that out because you're not going to have them on. Here—" She handed him a pair of beaded trousers with moccasins to match, and Indian leggings. "Climb into these. And if I untie you and don't look, will you promise to behave?"

"I'd promise damn near anything and mean it." He smiled sorrowfully through the paint. Then he added with a more cheerful note: "Once you let me loose this rig is going to come in handy. I can just see the look on King Hansen's face when I tell him who I am."

"King Hansen? Who's he?"

"He's the lanky gent you were talking to back there by the ford. I'm going to plug him, pretty soon. Now, untie my legs and I won't do nothing but put on them Injun pants. This is startin' to look like fun."

THE inside of that wagon was not the only place where things were beginning to look like fun. At the Brazos Keg, affairs were also looking up. Doc Lane had settled down to a poker table after announcing to one and all that he was the world renowned Doctor

Edward J. Lane, that he had no tricks up his sleeve other than the trick of mixing Triple X, compounded of herbs from all quarters of our fair earth, and that he wanted to get into a game, preferably penny ante, as he was an honest man and therefore poor.

He had, before entering the place, canvassed every other bar in town, taken a drink, and picked up whatever information was on hand. The sum total of it all sent him back to the Brazos Keg just in time to look as if he had been there all evening when three men clattered in, two of them scowling and the third smiling in a thinly masked expression that never changed. Doc Lane saw them first and waved to them.

"Ah—my friends of the ford. Maybe the gentlemen will join me in a game of penny ante. It seems that the other gentlemen here are more interested in viewing the bottom of the bottle than in matching wits at cards."

The three men moved up with the precision of a wave. It was the short, stocky man who spoke first.

"Doc," he said bluntly, "we found that horse."

"Fine!" Doc Lane beamed on the three of them. "Fine! I'm more than glad that my simple directions proved to be sufficient. The other matter, gentlemen, can be arranged in the morning. Shall we play?"

"The other matter," the sheriff said, "ain't going to be arranged in the morning—or at any other time. As Tilden, here, said, we found the *hoss*."

Doc Lane seemed to ponder that one. "The horse! Oh, yes—" The smile was broad again. "Of course. I forgot to mention it. Fearing thieves, I brought the saddle along with me, intending to turn it over to the proper authorities. Too beautiful a saddle to leave out there where any chance wayfarer might covet it. Incidentally, I found my Indian."

"Doc," the third man, the lean gent in gambler's clothing, said in a cold, clear voice, "I don't know if you're crazy, or if the whole bunch of us are loco." He pulled a chair from the table, leaned on it with one hand. "But what Indian did you find and where's the body?"

"My Indian," Doc Lane explained carefully, "often gets into my supply of Triple X Tonic. I'm afraid he had too much of it yesterday, and full of the spirit, he returned to his pagan ways. To put it more briefly, he vanished. You remember my asking you this evening if you had seen him?"

"Yeah," the squat gunman said, "and we didn't see him."

"Well, I found him," Doc Lane said proudly, "right here in town, waiting for us. And never was there a more contrite Indian." The sheriff moved as if to speak and Doc Lane cut in before he could get out a word. "And as to the body to which you refer—I'm sure I don't follow you at all."

"The cowboy's body," the gambler said coldly.

"Oh, of course!" Doc Lane looked mighty embarrassed. "I took his gun, of course, and holster and outer clothing, thinking of possible thieves along the road, and expecting to turn them over to the widow or proper authorities, with the other equipment."

He smiled blandly.

"Doc," the gambler said, "you're crazier than hell."

"I think we better get them things," the sheriff said.

"You didn't take the body, too?" the gunman asked.

Doc Lane drew himself up to his most impressive show of dignity. "Gentlemen—I am not a ghoul!"

IV

IT WAS just at that moment that Jack Austin finished lacing up his new pair of buckskin breeches and fitted his feet into the soft, beaded moccasins. He was thinking rapidly, probably as fast as he ever had in his life, and he was not progressing.

This afternoon he had been bushwhacked by three men and his horse had been killed. Though the men had run after the first volley, he knew who they were, and he had no doubt at all but that they would wait down the road and try another shot at him if he came to town afoot. That was why he had played dead when the wagon hove over the horizon, and had let the girl and satanic oldster save his life.

He had intended skipping out when darkness came but the Triple X Tonic had put him to sleep and now he was in a worse fix than his wildest imagination could have conjured up. It was like dying a cowboy—and being resurrected a full-fledged Indian Chief.

It made him smile a bit more than grimly. "Okay, Betty," he said, "I've got these pants on. Now you can turn around. How do I look?"

"You look wonderful!" Her big blue eyes went dreamy. "If only you didn't have an award on your head."

"Why?" He was puzzled. "What's that got to do with me looking like an Injun?"

"Nothing," she said, "only I'm afraid my uncle's more interested in the award than he is in you."

"And you?" He hid the smile.

She stamped her foot. "You ask too danged many questions. I told you you're only supposed to say 'Ugh'."

They fell into a brief silence, sitting in the flickering candlelight, their eyes inevitably drawn together.

"You know, kid," he said, "if I'd met you three years ago I wouldn't be in this tight. That's life!"

"It sure is," she blushed. "If I hadn't met Uncle Ed three years ago I wouldn't be in it either. He told me all the young men in the East were going west and that I could pick up a hombre with a gold mine, with a solid silver bed and swan's down mattress. So I left Kentucky with him; and now look at me. Consortin' with jailbirds and—and all sorts of low characters."

"Yeah," he said, "it's too late now."

"Too late?"

"Well—in those three years Hell has boiled over, kid," he explained. "I got mixed up with those three gents who want to kill me. They got me run into jail for a job I pulled with them. They shot my best friend, too. Killed him. And they'll get me, I suppose, sooner or later. I'm not griping about what they done to me—I had it coming. But when I was up in that jail at Kansas City, I had plenty of time to think. And most of what I thought about was the different ways I was going to make those varmints pay for what they done to Mary and little Jack whilst they had me all nicely tucked away."

"Mary and little Jack?"

"Listen!"

The crack of footsteps over the icy ground was coming closer, and with them voices became audible.

"You say, Doc"—it was the cold voice of King Hansen—"that this Injun of yours is a medicine man and knows how to cure damn near any disease with only one pill?"

"That's right," Doc Lane was saying. "Damedest Indian I ever met. But even he prefers our secret formula, Triple X." He raised his voice. "Elizabeth, we have visitors. Has Chief Chemquassibamticook sobered up yet?"

"Beat it!" Elizabeth whispered frantically. "You can still get away. Out front, Jack. Your wife and baby. I'll keep them off!"

"Ugh!" Jack said, his shoulders very square.

ELIZABETH lived over her whole life in those few seconds while the footsteps crunched closer and Jack Austin sat on a box of Triple X Tonic bottles with his arms folded over his chest, his eyes looking straight ahead. Then the rear flap opened and Doc Lane poked in his smiling face. He winked quickly at the girl.

"So the Chief ate all that raw meat and sobered up some!"

He pushed the flap back, revealing the faces of the sheriff, the gambler and their gunman. "We have visitors. The sheriff has come to claim the effects of the deceased, to hold them for the heirs."

As usual, Elizabeth did not understand half of what her uncle said, but her training through the last three years of wandering all over the West told her what to do.

"Of course!" She smiled her best on the three. "I was just figuring on getting the Chief to help me tote them over to the jail."

Jack Austin sat there looking glumly ahead, moving only his eyes, while Doc Lane climbed over the tailboard and rummaged through the piles of cases, kegs and blankets for the saddle, the six-shooter and the cowboy's clothing. It was significant that, as Doc Lane passed each item out the back, the gambler looked them over carefully, then the sheriff, then the gunman. But at no time were less than two of them ready for gunplay.

"I guess that's all," Elizabeth said finally.

"This stuff is his, all right," the gunman announced. "It's the same rig he had on when he went to the jug. I guess I'd reck'nize it any place."

The sheriff was going through the pockets of the jacket. He had already investigated the pants and the saddle bags. Now he fished out a crumpled letter, opened it, and began to read aloud. Elizabeth, from the corner of her eye, could see Jack Austin's shoulders growing tense. She felt herself readying for action.

Dearest Jack—

Your coming home is the best news I've had in years. Sheriff Swift has been . . .

The sheriff broke off there, added: "The light's bad. Can't read this good."

The gambler took the letter from him, turned it so that the light from the flickering lantern fell upon the page, and began where the sheriff left off:

Sheriff Swift has been very good to me while you were away. He and Mr. Hansen are looking forward to your return. They have helped me look after our properties here in Independence. I must say, Jack, I never have known two more unselfish men in my life.

Having you back will be a real homecoming. Little Jack, though he knows you only by what I have told him, is dancing with joy at the news, and sends his love.

Affectionately,

Mary

The gambler's expression had not changed a whit through this reading, while the sheriff looked half puzzled, half modest over the praise. He said:

"Hell, King, I didn't think we done so much."

"As our world-renowned friend, Doc Lane, would say," the gambler put in, "We are most pleased that in our own feeble way we have brought happiness and aid to a poor little orphan and a brave little widow. Sheriff, I think we had better take these things of Jack Austin's over to Mary's house. I hate

to bear sad news, but I suppose she and little Jack will have to know sooner or later."

"Yeah," the gunman added as he lifted the saddle to his shoulder, "and maybe she knows what happened to the body. I seen her scouting around—"

"Doc," the sheriff broke in hastily, "you done us a real service bringing in this stuff. It's too bad, though, that we can't settle the award until we find the body and have it positively identified."

"Of course, gentlemen." Doc Lane was fully agreeable. "It has just occurred to me, however, that finding the body by daylight might not be much of a task. We passed many coyotes on the prairie. They may have dragged the corpse a few yards from the road."

"That's something," the gunman agreed.

"And now—the game, gentlemen? After you have interviewed the widow, of course."

"The game," the gambling man nodded. "In half an hour, Doc, at the Brazos Keg."

"It will be a real pleasure." Doc Lane bowed from his slim waist.

The sheriff picked up the cowboy's clothing and the three men turned to walk off into the night. Before going, however, the gambling man looked Jack Austin straight in the eye and said:

"Good night, Chief—and pleasant dreams, Missus Lane."

Elizabeth said not a word—and Jack continued to stare straight ahead as if he had not understood a thing the men had discussed.

DOC LANE cleared his throat when the three had left the wagon yard and the rear curtain had been drawn again. "So you're Jack Austin, eh, and these three hombres have been robbing you and your wife while they had you locked in jail. That gambling man, you have to hand it to him—he made up a very fine letter, didn't he, Chief?"

Jack Austin growled deep in his throat. "Doc," he said quietly but tensely, "I read that letter so often I could recite it in my sleep. King Hansen did a mighty fine reading on it."

"So I thought. And would you mind—"

"Like this, Doc—"

You coming home is the best news I've had in years. Sheriff Swift has been vile while you were away. He and Mr. Hansen are laying for you, and will shoot you in the back if they get the chance. They have robbed me of everything I own in Independence. Jack, I have never known two more cowardly thieves in all my life. Having you back gives me the courage to go on. Little Jack, though he is only a baby, has suffered, too, at the hands of these beasts.

Fearfully,

Mary

In the silence that followed only the wind could be heard in the canvas top, and the wing-like flutter of the lantern's flame; and the two men and the girl, sitting on kegs and boxes could not raise their eyes from the wagon bed.

It seemed like hours before Jack Austin unfroze and stood hunched over slightly because he was too tall to stand upright without striking the wagon bows.

"Doc—I want a gun. I'm going to shoot those skunks right now!"

Doc Lane stood up, too, as tall as Jack Austin, gaunt and grizzled, all sign of the charlatan, of the quack doctor and tinhorn gambler wiped from his eagle-like features.

"Jack," he said, "the only reason I didn't cash in on your hide an hour ago for ten thousand dollars was that I believed I could make more by playing poker with these three men—using you

as my ace in the hole, so to speak. Not poker with cards—but poker, nevertheless. Shooting them would just turn the game into solitaire—with a rope around your neck as the stake. The cards are dealt for poker, the chips are on the table. If you'll come with me to our rendezvous at the Brazos Keg while I call these three gentlemen, I believe we'll win the pot."

"Okay, Doc," Jack Austin said. "What you're sayin' don't make much sense to me—but I'll go."

Doc Lane smiled enigmatically. He checked the six-shooter he kept under his coat and the derringer up his sleeve. From a box by the wagon-seat he took another Colt and handed it to Jack Austin.

"Maybe," he explained, "we won't need these. But maybe we will."

He opened the rear flap, clambered down with Jack following, an odd-looking couple, these two, the lean, black-dressed quack and his Injun Chief. And Elizabeth watched them go as if they were joining the procession to their own funerals.

Before closing the flap her uncle ordered: "Elizabeth, you stay here! Understand?"

She nodded dumbly.

They went across the dark wagon-yard, side by side, out the gate to the main street. Jack Austin asked:

"Doc, how about lettin' me in on this scheme of yours? I never played Cowboy-and-Injun before and don't know if I savvy the rules."

"Just follow me in," Doc Lane said, "and pick a corner and go to sleep. If I must say so, Elizabeth made a masterly job of turning you into an Indian. But those blue eyes—I believe our gambling friend spotted them."

"Me too. He looked at me kinda funny. I figger Hansen knows me."

Doc Lane shrugged his shoulders. "Most likely," he said. "And better if he does."

"My God, Doc," the cowboy said, "what's this rig for, then? Give me a horse and a gun and I'll show those boys some fun. But what's the point of dressing up like an Injun if they know who I am?"

"Very simple, my boy, very simple." Doc Lane walked on. "The Chief's regalia will make them curious. They'll hold their fire until they find out the reason for the masquerade. They've robbed the honest people of this town for years, I gathered tonight whilst prowling around. They robbed your sister—and you—and shot your brother-in-law. But they haven't taken their loot out of town yet. We'll leave the town to its citizens, chief—but we can use the folding money."

"Doc, I think you been drinkin' too much Triple X." The cowboy had become very gloomy.

"There is no need to worry, my friend," Doc said. "I'm a shy man and modest, but I might say that in my years of being buffeted about I have learned to handle cards with a certain deftness and precision. I have learned the finer nuances of poker. The shooting never starts until the hand is shown. So rest easy."

"Until they try to plug me, huh?" the cowboy asked moodily.

"Right!" Doc Lane snapped. "Here we are."

V

THEY stepped into the Brazos Keg and found their three men waiting for them at a round poker table. There were two extra chairs set out, one between the gambler and the sheriff, the other between the sheriff and the gun-

man. When King Hansen stood up, Doc Lane said:

"Evening, gentlemen. Hope you don't mind if Chief Chemquassibampticook just looks on. I never could break him of cheating. He always reaches for the pot. Most embarrassing at times." He turned to Jack Austin and said: "*Bellis perennis*," which means daisy.

But Jack did not know that. He blinked, lowered his head and walked over to one corner of the room. From there he could cover Doc Lane's back. He sat down on the floor, pretending to sleep.

King Hansen smiled thinly. "That's too bad, Doc. I was kinda looking forward to playing with the Chief."

"I'm afraid he'll never learn white man's rules," Doc Lane said, pulling out a chair, sitting down between the sheriff and gunman. "Well, gentlemen, what'll it be? Small stakes, I hope, as I am a poor man and not an expert player of poker."

"Just penny ante," King Hansen agreed.

The other two nodded. Hansen won the cut, dealt swiftly, his eyes moving from the sheriff to Doc Lane to the gunman, eyes that were opaque, holding their secrets. But Doc Lane had already verified one suspicion: They knew the identity of his Indian Chief.

He had learned other things that evening: That the ten thousand dollars award on Jack Austin's head was fictitious. Jack had served out his time at the Rusk pen and was no longer wanted by any responsible law-enforcing agency. The fake award had been only bait thrown out to lead Doc into telling all he knew about the cowboy.

So Doc Lane was not worried. These three were set on killing Jack Austin; there was no doubt about that. But they were smart enough not to try shooting him down in the Brazos Keg before a dozen and more witnesses. They would wait until he or Doc started the fight—or until they could bushwhack him or rig things so that the murder looked like self-defense on their part.

Which was just what Doc Lane wanted.

The sheriff passed on the first hand. Doc said casually: "Hm. Not so good. But openers, gentlemen. Shall I say ten dollars?"

The gunman's eyes went to King Hansen. The sheriff said shortly:

"I thought you said small stakes?"

"Of course, gentlemen," Doc Lane smiled blandly. "That's why I bid only ten dollars. Do you call that high?"

"Ten dollars is only peanuts to us," Hansen said.

The gunman threw in his hand. King tossed ten silver dollars into the pot; the sheriff stayed; and eventually Doc Lane won with sixty-four dollars in the pot.

"Gentlemen," he beamed, "this is the kind of poker I like. Nothing extravagant. Just playing for the fun of the game, so to speak."

The three were feeling him out and Doc fed it to them. Insisting on small bets he consistently wagered anything from ten dollars to a hundred at a time and they let him win the hands. Hansen, deciding that the Doc had a lot of money, built him up, working on the ancient sucker trick of boosting the victim until the last couple of hands when the time came to shove him into the buzzsaw.

As the stack grew in front of him, Doc Lane's smile became wider. Chief Chemquassibampticook snored in his corner. King Hansen broke out a bottle of Old Buckaroo and passed it around. The barflies, holding their

drinks moved over to the table to watch the big money game. And finally Hansen stood up and bowed to Doc Lane.

"Doc," he said, "you're the luckiest old goat I ever played against. But I still figure I can show you a couple of poker tricks. I'll be back."

He went out the rear door of the Brazos Keg, returned too soon to have gone far, and brought with him a bag full of gold eagles. These he planked down on the table.

"Doc," he said, "I'm going to double that."

"The pleasure," Doc said, "will be all mine."

It was Hansen's deal.

THE sheriff opened with a hundred dollars. Doc Lane let his hand lie on the table. As they had come to him he had checked off three aces and two minor cards, going by Hansen's not too adept markings, and he saw, too, that Hansen had dealt himself four kings. In an honest game, the chances of drawing a fourth ace to Beat Hansen were about twenty-three to one against him. But in this particular hand there was no chance at all.

In the first place, Hansen had stacked the deck. He had prepared for that by fetching the spare cash to have plenty of money on hand for a thorough clean-up. And he had riffled the cards so expertly that Doc Lane, pretending not to look, had almost missed the fact.

But Doc Lane smiled benignly.

"Gentlemen," he announced, "I seem to be winning tonight, and I'd like to give you all a chance to get back your money. This must be the last hand as I'm afraid I'll have to be leaving immediately after it. So, I'll raise this opening five hundred dollars without evening looking at the cards."

Neither the sheriff nor the gunman got it. But King Hansen's dark eyes narrowed slightly, as he suspected that Doc Lane had an even better trick up his sleeve.

The gunman dropped out. King Hansen stayed in and the sheriff threw down his cards. Then Doc Lane picked up his hand. He blinked rapidly, swallowed an imaginary lump in his throat, and poured himself a good stiff drink from Hansen's bottle. He threw away the two small cards.

"I'll have two, Mister Hansen," he said.

King dealt them, giving Doc a full house. A silence dropped over the hangers on who could look into Doc's hand. The bidding went up and up. And, over in his corner, Chief Chemquassibamptikook opened his very unindian-like blue eyes.

Hansen said, "Call you, Doc."

He shoved in the rest of his gold. Doc Lane mopped his brow, reached for another drink. To grasp the bottle he had to come half out of the chair, leaning over the table.

"Oh—" he said, clutching the neck of the bottle—"so that's where the other ace was, huh?"

Eyes moved quick to follow the direction of his glance. Doc Lane seemed to fall forward, bumping against the table, sliding it across the floor against King Hansen's belly.

King Hansen slammed his hand down on the baize.

"What's this shennanigan?" he snapped.

Everyone was looking toward his lap. But the table-edge had covered it. He jumped up. Doc stepped back quickly, leaned over and picked the fourth ace off the floor not far from Hansen's feet.

He smiled blandly and said to the crowd: "See what I found?"

ELIZABETH could remember many a town they had passed through in their years of wandering, but at the moment none came to mind that they had left in a leisurely fashion. Usually they had gone out before dawn, sneaking away like thieves in the darkness, or roaring out of town with the whip snapping and Horace and Greeley putting every ounce of speed into their gait while Doc Lane took quick pot shots at pursuing citizens or lawmen, or at the whole town at once.

This was mostly because Doc Lane had an incurable habit of playing an unorthodox brand of poker, or doping his Triple X Tonic to gain some special end of his own—or getting into some other sort of trouble like that into which he had stepped tonight.

So Elizabeth dragged Horace and Greeley from their cozy stalls and hitched them to the wagon. Then she shifted all the cases around to the sides and rear making a sort of rampart with an open space in the center. This done, she loaded all the guns kept in the box behind the seat, tied the horses, bundled up in her heavy coat, and headed downtown.

This evening's exit, she was sure, was going to be like all the others. However,there would be one major difference. Usually there were only the two of them, herself and her uncle, to run away, and occasionally their current Injun. But tonight there would also be Mary Austin and little Jack. For Elizabeth was convinced that Jack Austin would have to run too—and she was determined he would take his wife with him this time.

Elizabeth headed for the Lone Star Café. Turning over in her mind the ways of fate, how destiny had dropped a man in her lap, only to produce a wife for him and snatch him away. It was just her luck, too, to be appointed by Fate to bring them together. But that was life, as Jack had said not so long ago.

"Say," the fat little proprietress of the Lone Star greeted her, "did that Injun of yours really eat the whole steak?"

"Sure," Elizabeth said. "Eats nothing but meat and drinks nothing but Dr. Edward J. Lane's Triple X Tonic. It makes him kinda dopey sometimes—but stronger than an ox. There's no holding him when he has a good load of Triple X."

"Maybe," the woman said, "I oughta get a bottle of that tonic and feed it to my husband. He's about as lazy as a shorthorn steer with the ticks."

"I'll tell you what," Elizabeth suggested. "You bring the coot to our show tomorrow morning. Doctor Lane will show him how good Triple X is, and you won't ever have to worry about him again. By the way, have you ever heard of anybody named Jack Austin?"

"Jack Austin?" The woman screamed the name. "A sinner, if there ever was one. And poor Mary waiting all these years . . ."

"Well," Elizabeth put it bluntly, "we found this Jack Austin on the prairie today, dead, and I just thought I ought to tell his kinfolk." The woman kept on screaming, but Elizabeth continued. "Maybe you know where this wife of his lives."

"His wife?" The woman screamed louder. "Never heard of her." She wrung her hands. "That's terrible. Maybe his sister would know. She lives down the street toward the river, six, seven houses. A little house, all kinda fallin' in, with bullet holes in the windows, patched with old drawers and shirts."

"His sister?" Elizabeth gasped as

if she had been hit on the back of her head. "Oh, uh, thanks."

She ran out of there. Jack's sister. Mary. And for the last two hours she had been eating out her heart, . . .

SHE found the house easily enough, knocked on the door, and stepped inside when a woman's voice answered. In the light of a flickering candle a pale, thin girl no older than herself, sat on a rickety chair, crying as she clutched a two-year old boy to her bosom. Before her on the floor were Jack's saddle and bridle, his clothing tossed across the cantle.

"What do you want?" she asked suspiciously.

"I guess you're Jack Austin's sister?"

"What if I am?"

"Only"—Elizabeth went right to the point—she felt wonderful now, like Horace and Greeley did sometimes, like digging in her toes and neighing—"well, Jack wants to see you. I suppose you heard he's dead. Well, he isn't. He's a little diff'rent than he was this morning. But he's alive, all right."

"Where is he?" The girl jumped up. "In jail again?"

"No. But, well, he can't come here. He's got to leave town pretty soon. Have you got anything you want to bring along?"

Mary looked around the bare room, half dazed. "Aren't we coming back?"

"No. So if you've got anything you want, bring it. And hurry. I'll take Jack's saddle and stuff."

Mary became suspicious again. "If that's another stunt of those skunks . . ."

Elizabeth couldn't wait any longer to argue the point. She had picked up the saddle and its load and was at the door.

"Okay," she said, "don't come . . ."

She ran off into the night, down the back alleys, followed a moment later by Jack's sister who caught up with her at the wagon-yard.

Just then the shooting started down at the Brazos Keg and a wild Indian war-whoop wailed through the night.

"*That's* him," Elizabeth said. "The Injun. My uncle's with him. We've had a couple of Injuns killed in our day—but never my uncle. And it was always when the Injuns got drunk. But Jack's sober as a hound dawg. Can you drive a team?"

"Yes!" Mary nodded dismally.

"Then—" Elizabeth handed out the orders from a long experience of similar escapades. The shooting had stopped momentarily after one furious burst and the whole town seemed to be holding its breath in the expectation of a more violent volley. "Drive the team up to the door of the Brazos Keg, and don't sit on the seat. You can't see if you sit on the floor, but Horace and Greeley can, and they'll go where they want to anyway, probably back to Kentucky. So all you have to do is hold the reins so they don't tangle their feet. And if you know any good cuss words tell them all to the hosses. That makes them run faster."

Mary nodded, clutched the baby tighter.

"Now," Elizabeth asked, "will Little Jack lie on the floor like a good boy?"

"I want my Unk," Little Jack said.

"You'll get your Unk, all right," Elizabeth promised gloomily. "I dunno just in what condition—but chances are, you'll get him."

Mary set the boy down and Elizabeth folded a blanket over him. He was well protected from stray shots, with canned goods surrounding him and the heavy wagon sides at head and foot.

The firing started again, single, carefully placed shots, that sounded as if they came from a rain barrel. At each one of them both girls shivered. Elizabeth blew out the lantern, waited until Mary had the reins, then untied the horses. Standing by the big front wheel, she said:

"Okay, Mary. Drive down to the Keg. Take it easy. Stop just beyond the front door so you won't be in the line of fire. I'm going to walk along behind."

Mary snapped the whip. Horace and Greeley, from long habit, turned resignedly in the direction of the gunfire. Elizabeth clutched a big six-shooter in her small hand and followed the lumbering wagon, trying to remember some of her uncle's best cuss-words and all of her mother's prayers at the same time. . . .

VI

THE darkness in the Brazos Keg was lighted only by fitful pencils of flame as the men inside shot blindly at the slightest noise they happened to hear. Events had moved rapidly in the last few moments since Doc Lane picked that ace off the floor.

The Indian Chief came to life first. Seeing Doc Lane standing alone at the table he snap-shot at the two lamps, extinguishing them and sending the nearer crashing in a shower of glass to the floor. Then the darkness went in a lurid flare as the three men behind the table fired where Doc Lane should be.

Doc had vanished!

For a moment there was silence. The sheriff, trying to ease into a better position for battle, knocked over a chair. Jack Austin fired for the sound,

splintered the chair in the sheriff's red face and rolled over to get out of the way of the two shots that smacked into the wall where he had been sitting.

And now, so intent on destruction were the men inside the Brazos Keg, the two girls managed to stop undetected beside the saloon. There, Elizabeth cocked her gun, repeated one brief prayer, then stepped up to the door and kicked it in. Yelling like a Comanche, she punctuated every phrase with a shot into the ceiling.

"Triple X and Seven Seas!" *Bang!* "At 'em Unk!" *Bang!* "I brought the Army!" *Bang!*

A bullet whistled by her head, convincing her of the wisdom of seeking the comparative safety of the wall, which she succeeded in doing just as a storm of lead sleeted through the doorway. Down the front of the building a few steps she smashed in a window, took two quick shots toward the back mirror. Glass tinkled. Someone swore. Jack Austin howled a war-cry and someone yelled:

"It's Jack Austin!"

The wild tattoo of gunfire that followed set little Jack to hollering with innocent joy and started Horace and Greeley to prancing.

Then, all at once, everyone came tumbling out in a wild flood, preceeded by the panicked cry of:

"Fire!"

Elizabeth turned from the window. Standing by the doorway, her vision blurred by the stream of humanity, she could see the flames streaking through the saloon as if following trails of gunpowder, flames with a bluish tint to them as the high-powered whisky caught fire.

When the sheriff plunged by, she took a quick shot at his rear, missed as he ducked around the wagon and ran for shelter on the other side of the street. Just behind him was his stocky henchman, and Elizabeth took a shot at him, too, but the firing pin clicked down on an empty shell.

Still there was no sign of Jack Austin or Uncle Ed Lane. And as the last citizen ran past her, running in blind fear for cover, not knowing what had struck the place, Elizabeth felt something squeeze a tight knot in her stomach.

Suddenly the black-garbed gambler pitched out, bent like a bow when a slug took him in the small of the back, and fell at Elizabeth's feet, never to move again. She grabbed for the gun in his splayed fingers, praying there would still be live bullets in the cylinder, then plunged through the smoke into the saloon which had already become an inferno. Groping through the heat, she finally found Jack Austin crawling blindly toward the bar. And, like a ghost in the smoke, her uncle, bent almost double, was carrying a black box toward the door.

Doc Lane could take care of himself —his life was charmed, Elizabeth had come to believe. But Jack? She thought of all their other "Injuns" and what had come of them!

SCREAMING at him, she pushed through the blinding smoke and tugged at his shoulder. He seemed to understand, turned around to the right direction, and let her drag him outside.

Her uncle, now without the black box, holding a gun but not shooting it, was standing in the shelter of the wagon. From the other side of the street came spasmodic firing. Then the flames broke through the flimsy roof of the saloon, lighting the town as if by a noontime sun, and limning Jack Austin against the blue-red glow.

"Git that Injun!" someone howled.

The cry was a bucket of water on the half conscious minds of Elizabeth and Doc Lane. Between them they pushed Jack into the wagon, then clambered after him. A bullet cut through the canvas top, another *thwacked* into the wagon side and Elizabeth, with the last bit of her ebbing strength managed to cry out:

"Vamonos!"

Mary snapped down with the whip. Like the cap on a cartridge it shot the two horses, Horace and Greeley, into action. This was old stuff to them. It was fun.

They slammed into their collars, dragging the heavy wagon after them down the rutted street like a brown leaf in a November gale. They slithered down the greasy red bank of the Brazos, hit the water without a pause, sending the spray high into the heavens to glisten like a shower of rubies against the crimson glow of the blazing saloon.

And after that, they just kept on running in a beeline across the prairie, while Elizabeth lay on her stomach looking back toward Independence, another town they had left with hell on their heels.

BY THE time the wagon's load had become unscrambled, Horace and Greeley had eased their pace. But, caring nothing for the advice of the gentleman whose name had been divided between them, they were still headed for home and the Kentucky blue grass. So Mary tied the reins to the dash rail and clambered back over the high seat to the wagon bed. Elizabeth had lighted the lantern again, and it swung from the bow to shed its uncertain light on the confusion below.

Elizabeth was crying because Jack Austin was hurt so terribly. But Doc Lane was laughing, and Jack was brave, just sitting there smiling, rubbing his blind eyes.

"That damn Injun paint," he groused. "When it got hot in there, it melted and run down into my eyes. Doc, you old son, you'll do this to me again only over my dead body."

"There's money in that, too," Doc Lane said soberly, "exhibiting stuffed Indian Chiefs, I mean."

"Jack!" Mary screamed. "Is it you?"

"Sure 'nough." He opened his eyes and grinned at her. "Aren't you going to kiss me, Mary? How've you been?"

Elizabeth gasped. For the shortest moment she wished she was Jack's sister—then was very glad she wasn't—and then Doc said sharply:

"Elizabeth—you're supposed to be keeping a watch to the rear!"

Elizabeth looked out back. Doc tinkered with the black box. "Jack," he said, "when we crack this open I'll wager we'll find fifty thousand dollars inside. Including, no doubt, the proceeds of the swindles and robberies he perpetrated on your very lovely sister. As I've always said: An ace in the sleeve is worth two in the hole."

"If you don't fumble it," Jack said scornfully.

Doc Lane gathered up his dignity. "It's the nuances of the game, my friend, and the psychology that count, rather than the cards dealt—or the cards sequestered up the sleeve. If that ace had fallen into Hansen's lap, someone might have seen it drop. As it was, you, from your position on the floor, were the only one who knew I deposited it under the table."

"Yeah," Jack said, still scornful.

"And it follows," Doc Lane continued, "that if Mister Hansen had not resented the appearance of that ace, which he knew he had not dropped, he

would not have chosen that moment to shoot me down."

"There's no doubt about that," Jack said.

"None at all. And if Mister Hansen had not tried to kill me we would not have had the delightful opportunity to trade shots with him, nor would I have found such an excellent time to burn down the saloon by setting fire to kerosene spilled by the broken lamp, nor would Mister Hansen, fearing his treasure would be consumed by fire, have led me straight to its hiding place."

Jack said: "By damn, Doc . . ." and the scorn was gone from him.

Doc Lane silenced him with a wave of his hand.

"I observed," he said, "that the honest folk of Independence, with our example of intrepid bravery, courage and recklessness, turned on the men they feared. In other words, believing that ace had been dropped by Hansen, they set out to wreak justice. So, you see, my friend, that ace in the sleeve was worth more than two hundred in the hole. In fact, two hundred would have been rather obvious."

Jack nodded. There was a rustling up front and a childish voice piped up.

"Ma—have I layed here long enough? I want to see my Unk."

The boy poked his head over a case of Triple X. He blinked, and then his eyes filled with disgust.

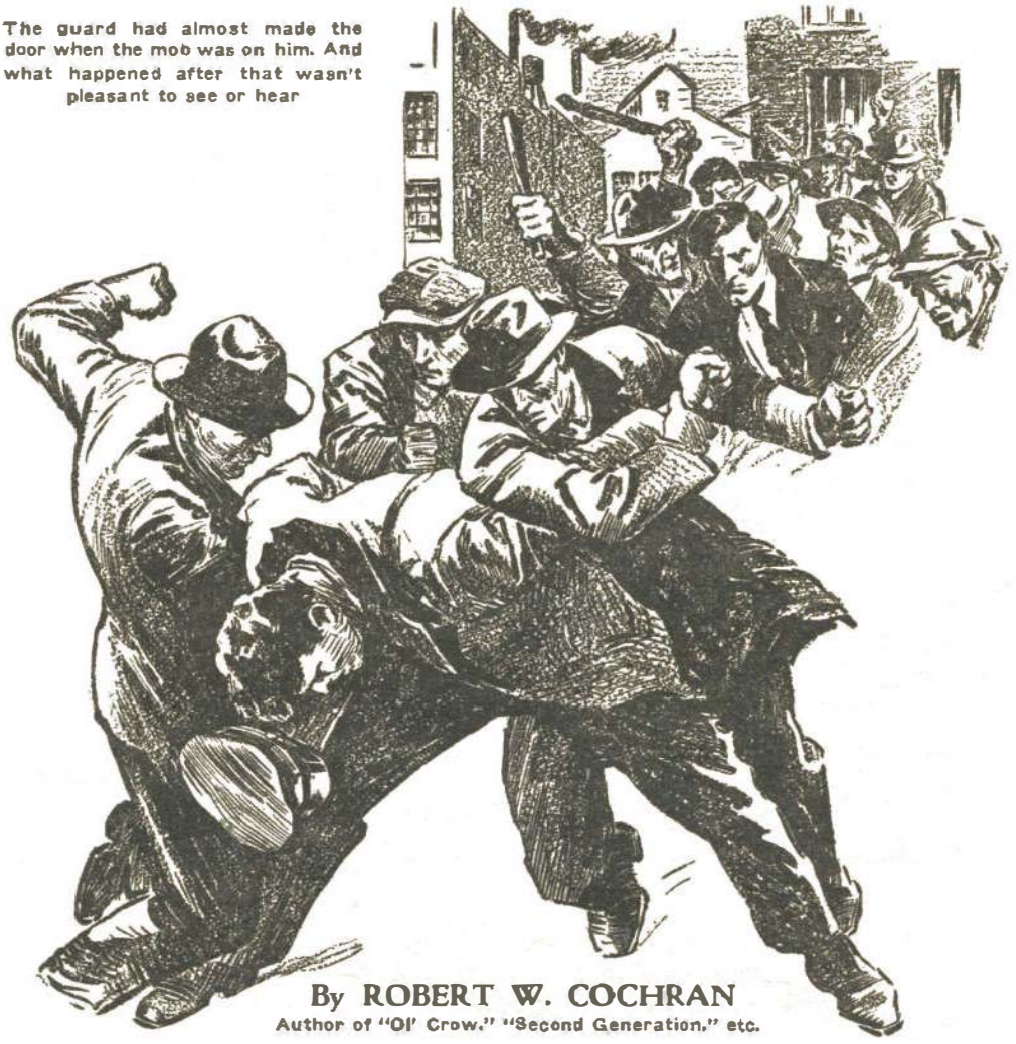
"That Injun?" the child scowled.

"Ugh!" Jack said.

"Hey—is that his squaw?" the youngster asked.

And Elizabeth became red enough to be a Piute. She just couldn't help looking at Jack that way.

"Ugh!" she said defiantly. . . .



The guard had almost made the door when the mob was on him. And what happened after that wasn't pleasant to see or hear

By ROBERT W. COCHRAN

Author of "Ol' Crow," "Second Generation," etc.

One Less to Feed

Did you ever get up at three o'clock on a cold morning, walk miles looking for a job—and then not get it? Then maybe you know that men make automobiles, but it takes a lot of things to make a man

WE HAD a room on East Jefferson—Whitey, Smitty, and me. Smitty's name was really Schmidt, but no one ever called him that and only a few people knew it anyway.

Whitey's wife was working out at Ann Arbor as a maid. She earned seven dollars a week and her board; five of that went to pay our room rent.

We got only occasional jobs since the lay-off in October, and it was the end of January. It used to be like that in Detroit before this plan was developed to have new models come out in the fall.

We must have spent fifty dollars, all

told, on carfare those four months, and now we didn't have it to spend any more. You've got to be rich to look for work in Detroit, where the factories are all scattered to hellangone. You hardly ever found two plants within walking distance of each other; and riding took time and money. Particularly money.

We'd often walk miles, thinking of lots of things we wanted to say but not saying them, because it's painful to talk when your face is all but frozen.

Whitey did more talking than any of us, but it was usually the same thing.

"Fellows," he'd say, "I'm glad Sis is out of the cold, anyway."

Or perhaps back at the room we would be eating a loaf of bread cut three ways, and Whitey would say, holding a hunk of bread up and staring at it, "I'm glad Sis can put better than that in her stomach."

I guess we felt almost as strongly as he did about it.

When Smitty and I first knew Whitey, he and Sis were living in a little apartment on Gratiot Avenue. They had an extra bedroom and advertised it for rent. Smitty and I had been sharing a room that we didn't like, and when we saw Whitey's place and met the two of them we made the change. Inside of a week we were calling Whitey's wife Sis, and pretty soon he got to calling her that too.

We kept the apartment for two months after the October lay-off. Then Sis got hold of the job in Ann Arbor and started paying the rent for the three of us in the dump on East Jefferson.

Sis would come into the city maybe once a month. She was in at Christmas. That was a bad Christmas. She gave us all socks and gloves and a carton each of tailor-mades. We hadn't seen her since, but Whitey said she'd be in again before very long.

THERE was a small parts factory not more than a mile from where we roomed. Whitey had been strawboss there once and he thought if he could get to see the superintendent he might get a job for one of us, anyway.

It wasn't much of a place; in good times they didn't work more than a thousand men. Most of their work was on contract from one or another of the independent companies.

We had been going there regularly every morning for more than a week. The employment office didn't open till eight, but if you weren't there by four you never reached the employment office. They were adding one or two men a day, and usually by four in the morning there were a hundred applicants lined up for each job.

That's what you call looking for work; standing out there with the mercury around zero, dirty gray snow packed hard under foot and a cold wind whipping in off the river.

Daylight would come so slowly we'd never be sure just when it arrived. By seven o'clock you could take a step out of line and see how many men were strung out around the corner of the building. Very often you would see someone you knew or someone would ask if you hadn't been at some other factory a day or two before, and usually you had. There seemed to be some satisfaction in knowing that other men had seen you and remembered the places you had been.

February was always the worst, because your money, if you'd had any, was probably gone, and your clothes were worn out and what surplus vitality you had had in the early winter was used up.

When it wasn't too cold to talk, there used to be a lot said about Russia and Communism and giving the working

man an equal chance. Smitty was really educated, and he had fought as an officer in the first World War on the side of Germany; but he had been over here a long time and was a naturalized citizen. He never said anything in public; but to Whitey and me he was outspoken in his criticism of anything that would do away with our own democratic form of government. He thought everyone was entitled to a chance to live a decent life.

People who have never been out of work think it odd that men don't find jobs, don't look for jobs in lots of cases. Sometimes there's a reason. It may be different now, but back in those days, if you weren't hired by ten o'clock you might as well go home.

You stay at a place from four until eight, when the employment office opens, and by nine the one or two who will get jobs have been picked out, so there's not much left to do but loaf until four the next morning. Even if we got to another plant by ten, the line ahead, if it hadn't already been turned away, would keep us from reaching the employment office by noon.

We knew all this, and so we decided to keep hammering away at the little parts plant where Whitey had worked as strawboss. Whitey would swear sometimes, and you would think to look at him that he was about to cry: "If I could only see the super!"

Each day in February seemed to get a little colder. Raw, damp, foggy cold, that makes tears come into your eyes when you face it hour after hour. We got in the habit of bringing old newspapers and pieces of packing cases to make fires with.

Whitey had a bad foot. It wasn't very bad—an eighty-five-pound crankshaft had dropped on it—but though he could walk all right, whenever he was out in the cold for a long time he said it ached something terrible until it grew finally numb and he no longer felt it. Then he would go through the same misery when he was thawing it out back at the room.

IT WAS maybe the third morning that we made a fire that the watchman came from the office and ordered us to put it out. Most of the men—and there were at least a hundred—took turns stepping out of line and warming their feet.

We couldn't hold our feet too close to the flame, for even those who had soles to their shoes knew how thin they were.

"Put it out, I say." The watchman came up close to those standing around the blaze. Whitey was there trying to keep his bad foot from going numb.

"We'll watch it," Whitey said.

The watchman wasn't wearing a uniform the way they do in the big plants, but he had a badge on his cap. "Put it out, I said," he repeated, looking at Whitey.

"Nothing doing," Whitey said, and came back to his place in the line, limping a little the way he always did when he forgot to favor his bad foot.

The watchman didn't say anything else; he just started stamping out the blaze with his thick-soled shoes. Nobody said anything. We stood there watching, moving a little the way a body of men will. When the blaze had died completely, the watchman went on back into the warm office, locking the door behind him.

There was a lot of talk then—low, rumbling talk as some man murmured to his neighbor in line.

"If I could just see that super," Whitey said. "If I only knew his name! If I told him I'd been a strawboss here I believe he'd give me a job. I can do

anything. There's not an operation in this joint I can't handle."

There wasn't anything we could say; Whitey was a good mechanic, a lot better than either of us; but there were fifty thousand good mechanics walking the streets.

After a while, when it was still dark, some of the men back of us got another fire started around the corner of the building. They tried to crowd about it to keep the watchman from seeing the glare.

Perhaps he didn't see it; I don't know. But anyway he came out after a while, and this time I saw when he passed close beside me that he had strapped on a holster and there was a gun in it.

He didn't say anything now, just crowded his way up to the fire and started stamping it out. He must have heard some threat in the murmur of the men's voices nearest him, for he stood stock still, his hand coming up to rest on his gun butt. There was just a faint gray dawn in the east when he passed us again and went into the warm, lighted office.

"Sis is just about getting up now," Whitey said. "She's warm, anyway."

That always seemed the coldest time, just at dawn. Stamp our feet and thrash our arms as we would, we couldn't keep warm, not when we had had nothing to eat except stale bread for the past three days.

There were only five men ahead of us in line that morning. Whitey was the first of the three of us to go in. It was drowsily warm in the waiting room of the employment office, but the time we were allowed to wait there was too short to get all the chill from our bodies.

Whitey came back from the inside office with a look in his eyes that I had never seen before. The watchman had already gone off duty for the day. Another man had taken his place, herding us ten at a time into the waiting room, like cattle in a loading chute.

The employment manager came to the door of his office and beckoned to Smitty.

Whitey said to me from the corner of his mouth as he went past, "If you've got ten dollars you get a job." There was nothing new or particularly surprising about that. I had got a job myself more than once by kicking in five or ten dollars to the employment manager. It was all right if you had ten dollars. We didn't have more than a dollar between the three of us.

When Whitey had gone, I heard Smitty talking in the private office. He didn't talk loud, but every word was plain. "You'll get it," he said, "out of my first envelope."

The man's answer must have been no, for Smitty's voice raised a little as he went on. "Is there no way that I can make you understand how bad things are with us?"

In another minute Smitty came out, and the man followed at his heels and beckoned to me. I didn't have ten dollars either, so I went on out with Smitty.

IT WAS nine o'clock when we got back to the rooming house on East Jefferson. The morning mail had been delivered and there was a letter for Whitey from Sis. It was, we knew, the regular weekly letter with the five-dollar bill for the rent.

Whitey left the five dollars there on the table where we could see it while he read the letter.

"She's coming in this afternoon," he said when he finished.

"Here?" Smitty asked.

"She says here," Whitey said.

"We'll blow," I said. "You can still get in the public library."

We finished the bread we had there so that Sis wouldn't see what we were living on, though I expect she had a good idea. Then we left Whitey and headed down town. There was an East Jefferson branch of the library, but we felt more at home in the old brick building where all the bums went to read the advertisements in the newspapers.

It was five o'clock when we got back. We saw there was no light in the room as we came up the street. Sis might still be there, we decided, but they had had four hours alone together; they wouldn't mind us barging in.

Sis was sitting by the window looking out across the tops of the houses. Ours was an attic room. Whitey was lying on the bed, his face cradled in his crooked arm.

Something was wrong; it hung in the air thick as smoke. We had never seen Sis and Whitey quarreling; little spats sometimes, but nothing serious. This was serious.

Smitty looked at me, raising his eyebrows, when Sis and Whitey both greeted us without much warmth. We had been talking about something like this all the way back from the library. We couldn't expect Sis and Whitey to go on looking out for us forever. Perhaps they were fed up with it. No one could blame them.

Sis said, "I want to get some things from the store. Whitey's just told me what you boys have been eating."

"We don't need anything," Smitty said. "We're not working. It doesn't take much food when you're not doing anything. Besides, we have money." He jingled some coins in his pocket.

Sis went over to get her coat; it was on a chair at the foot of the bed. Smitty stopped jingling the coins in his pocket all at once. We hadn't seen Sis since Christmas.

Whitey turned over on his back, his eyes going from Sis to Smitty and then to me. Sis sat down on the chair with her coat on it and began to cry very softly. Whitey said, "Don't do that, honey. Boys, Sis is going to have a baby."

HE DIDN'T have to tell us. Smitty was the first to snap out of it. "Congratulations." He went over and kissed Sis and then sat down on the bed beside Whitey and slapped his leg with loud, friendly smacks.

I said, "That sure is swell," and went over and sat down on the other side of Whitey. I would have liked to kiss Sis too, but it didn't seem the right thing. I was a lot younger than Smitty. He could get away with things that I couldn't.

Quite suddenly Sis stopped crying and began to laugh. She threw back her head and laughed again and again. "That's fine," she said, " 'congratulations.' Why don't you say what you're thinking: What in Heaven's name will you do with a baby?"

"I mean it," Smitty said, "I think it's wonderful. Chick and I will be godfathers—or do you have godfathers in this country?"

Sis just sat there looking at us, with a funny, almost pleased expression on her face. When I remembered it afterward, it came to me that she looked at us as if we were something she was proud of.

The shoe was on the other foot, really. I guess any one of the three of us would have gone down into Hell if Sis had snapped her fingers.

Sis stood up and put her coat on. "Come on," she said, her voice for the first time getting back the familiar easy

tone, "you lilies of the field, let's go get some grub."

I looked at Smitty and followed his eyes to where the five-dollar bill that had come in the morning mail still lay on the table. He stood up very slowly and crossing over picked it up. "I'll pay the—" He made a downward motion of his thumb.

We trooped out, the four of us, to the red-front store in the middle of the block. Whitey was the only one who had not regained his spirits. I suppose the responsibility was more of a burden to him than anyone.

Smitty walked in front with Sis, Whitey and I brought up the rear. I heard Smitty say, "We mustn't forget your train. What time do you have to be back?"

"She's not going back," Whitey said.

My eyes were on Smitty's worn, unpolished shoes, and it wasn't until I saw his step falter that I got the full significance of that remark.

I heard him say as if trying to make a joke of it all, "When you say that, smile."

"Laugh," Whitey said, his voice tight as if something inside of him was burning up.

Smitty nodded his head for me to go in the store with Sis. His hand on Whitey's arm, the two of them went on up the street. Through the glass front of the store when we were inside, I could see Smitty talking slowly, deliberately, as if impressing something on a child. There was something about Smitty's voice; I always thought it was because he had been an officer and used to giving orders.

Sis spent three dollars, taking time between purchases to tell me that they had given her two weeks' pay in place of notice.

Whitey was more cheerful when we joined them on the sidewalk. He even peered hungrily into the bag I carried and smacked his lips. "Nothing like having a good provider in the family." He almost put it over, but his voice cracked at the end.

We slept four in that single room that night; Whitey and Sis in the bed, Smitty and I on the floor. We wanted to take the hall, but Sis wouldn't hear of it. There was no heat in the hall.

Sis insisted that Whitey take ten of her dollars and buy himself into a job. He turned the proposition down flat. "I'll get a job," he said, "and I'll not grease any double-crossing polecat to get it."

I've slept in warmer places than that attic floor, but I did go to sleep finally, probably because my stomach was full of something besides stale bread for the first time in days.

SMITTY, as usual, was our alarm clock; and it was just striking three by a church clock somewhere nearby when we reached the street and started walking.

"No use going back there," Whitey said. "I'll see him fry before I'll pay that guy ten dollars or even five."

"Now look here, Whitey," Smitty said. "Let me handle this. I'll get one of us a job and then later perhaps the others can get on."

I thought about this, as well as I was able to think in the bitter, biting cold; and then I remembered the five dollars Smitty had taken for the rent, and I couldn't think of any time he had gone to give it to our landlady.

We certainly couldn't be any worse off than we were; I was sure of that. Then, too, Smitty was older and had the air of authority about him, like one who knows what to do in emergencies.

We could see the watchman staring

at us from the heated office, his breath as he stood close to the window making a little plume of steam on the glass. Smitty counted the men ahead of us; there were nine. Whitey was ten, Smitty eleven, and I was twelve. By five o'clock there was a line that stretched out of sight around the corner of the building.

We hadn't brought papers that morning for a fire. Whitey lit a cigarette, took a few puffs, and handed it back to Smitty. After a minute he gave it to me and I smoked it till the fire burned my fingers when I held it.

"If I could see that super," Whitey said. "A man should have some consideration when he's worked at a place before."

The word came down the line that there was a fire out of sight around the corner of the building. We didn't go, but the others dropped out one or two at a time. I think the food we had eaten the previous night and the new responsibility of Sis helped to keep us from feeling the cold.

The watchman must have seen the glare of the flames or suspected something when the men kept coming and going in the line. He came out, clicking the door behind him and trying it to make sure it was locked. As he passed our place in the line I could see that one hand rested on the gun butt.

Someone farther back along the line must have stuck out a foot, for the man went sprawling into the soft snow beside the walk. He got up almost before he touched the ground, as if he was afraid someone would be on top of him. He slapped the snow from his hands and clothes, looking not only at those in front of him but at the rest of us, up and down the line.

His face was gray, with black holes for eyes, in the dim light that reached him from the office. He said thickly, "I'll be eternally damned if any of you get a job here."

No one answered him, and after a moment he went on around the corner of the building. We could hear his feet stamping out the fire and smell the smoldering, half-burnt paper that refused to go out.

I think that it was his intention to stay out there and watch us, for he had locked the door securely. Perhaps it was colder than he had realized, for after about fifteen minutes, or twenty, he unlocked the door with a key that he brought from his pocket on a chain and went into the warm office.

I don't know what he told the employment manager; maybe they just didn't need anyone. But the office opened at eight and no one was taken inside. We waited until after nine, all but a few who got discouraged and left. The watchman, of course, had gone long before.

There wasn't any sun; it was one of those gray, cold days that make you think of Winnipeg more than Detroit.

Whitey was arguing with Smitty about leaving when the employment manager came to the door and waved his hand. "Hit the trail, boys," he said, and you could tell from the look on his face that he enjoyed saying it.

One or two of the fellows close to the door, men who bad been standing there for three hours before that guy was even out of bed, tried to talk to him. "Get going," he said, "get going," and went back inside so that he could watch us through the glass door.

"Come on," Smitty said, "we'll try it again tomorrow."

"Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow," Whitey said. I saw that he was limping a little and guessed that his foot was too numb to have any feeling in it. "I don't care about myself; I don't even

worry about Sis. We'll make out. But the kid's got to have a chance."

"The kid'll have a chance," Smitty said, putting his hand for a moment on Whitey's shoulder.

"If I could only see the super," Whitey said. "Fellows placed in charge of other men like that are usually on the level. If I could put it up to him straight, I could get a job."

SIS had some kind of stew steaming on the single gas plate that was in the room. We had three forks but only two plates. I offered to wait; Smitty insisted on waiting till the rest of us had eaten.

Sis fixed it up. She put a big helping on each plate and then she and Whitey ate from the stewpan, taking turns using their fork. It struck us all so funny we couldn't eat for laughing at first.

"Times are sure bad," Whitey said, "when three people have to eat from one fork."

"Three?" I said. "Where's the third?" Then it came to me what he meant. We couldn't laugh after that; it showed how hard Whitey was taking the thing.

When we had finished, Smitty said, "Come on, Chick, we'll scout around and see can we maybe pick up some loose change."

"Stay in where it's warm, for a while," Sis said. "You've been out since three o'clock."

"After a dinner like that," Smitty said, "cold doesn't mean anything to us. Say, how about adopting Chick and me? If you adopted us legally you could deduct us from your income tax."

We kidded a little like that, then Smitty and I went down to the street. The landlady was in the hallway on the first floor. She didn't mention the rent, she just looked at us.

Smitty spoke first. "I've got to get a check cashed. We'll see you after a while."

"I don't have women in my rooms," she said. "You all ought to know that."

Smitty straightened a little, his shoulders coming back so that he looked as if he was standing at attention. "That girl," he said, speaking very slowly, "is Mr. White's wife. I wouldn't say anything like that to her if I were you. You understand me; they are my friends."

When she didn't answer, he went out to the street and I followed him.

"You still have the money for the rent," I said.

"We owe them something, those two. I'm going to try and land one of us a job with that five. If we're thrown out then, it won't matter; we can stall for another day or two. We'll have to find a way out before long."

WE DID get a job that afternoon. Smitty got it, and I helped him just to have something to do and keep warm. He got twenty-five cents an hour for unloading a car of beans over in the freight yard.

It was almost seven o'clock when we got home. Sis and Whitey were both scared when we came in. "We thought you'd run out on us," Whitey said.

"You're joking," Smitty said. "You think we're that kind of scum?"

"He doesn't mean it the way it sounds." Sis put in. "We thought that you two might decide it was to our advantage to be rid of you."

"That will come later," Smitty said, "unless . . ."

"Stop being noble," Sis said. "We've got beans for supper."

"You don't want to go back there in the morning?" I said to Whitey when we were getting ready to turn in.

"Of course we're going back,"

Smitty said. "How about it, Whitey? That bird can't carry a chip on his shoulder forever."

"Well," Whitey said, "if I got half a chance I think I'd get something out there. It's the nearest place, too."

We went at three, as usual. Sis told us goodbye, promising a hot supper when we came in from work that night. "Some day we'll fool you," Smitty said. "Maybe they'll have a new watchman and he'll say, 'Come on in here, fellows, where it's warm.' "

We went out after that and tiptoed down the stairs to the street.

There was nobody ahead of us in the line. It was the first time we had ever been right up next the door.

"Something wrong here," Smitty said. We hadn't been there more than a couple of minutes when men began to pile in behind us. We could see the watchman standing with his back to a radiator staring at us.

He came over after a while, and opening the door, stood on the step looking down at us.

"Any of you fellows here yesterday?" I felt Smitty's fingers clamp onto my arm. There wasn't a sound in the whole length of the line.

"Come on, speak up." The man's words were all right, but his tone was nasty. I thought that he just couldn't be nice even when he wanted to.

"Well, some of you must have been here. You're losing a good chance to get a job." I saw Whitey move forward and heard him grunt when Smitty's elbow struck him.

The watchman had seen Whitey, too. He was staring at him. "What about you?" he said finally, pointing to Whitey. "You were here, weren't you?"

The man right back of me said, "I was here, Cap." Then others farther down the line, afraid that they were missing a chance for a job, began to answer.

"All you fellows," the watchman said, "step out of line." I looked over my shoulder; half the line seemed to be moving. Only Smitty's fingers on my arm kept me from joining the others.

The watchman said, "All right." He hesitated a second as if he particularly enjoyed what he had to say. "Get going," he said. "Hit the dust."

No one spoke. No one moved. He came down off the step where he had been standing almost directly beside Whitey and shoved the man who had been behind me in line. "Snap it up," he said. "Scram."

Of course he couldn't put it over. He probably knew he couldn't, too, but he could make a bluff at it.

His eyes caught mine, and because I didn't want him to think I was scared I didn't look away. "What are you staring at?" he asked.

"Nothing," I said, and I didn't mean it as it sounded.

"Let the kid alone," Smitty said. The watchman hesitated. He looked from Smitty to me and then at Whitey at the head of the line. After about thirty seconds he unlocked the office door and went inside.

"Rat!" Smitty said; and my arm, when he dropped his fingers, felt a little numb, he had been squeezing it so hard.

There was a lot of talk and movement behind us. We were pretty sure what had happened. The men he had tricked out of line had gone around the corner of the building and fallen in again. He didn't know their names; he couldn't remember more than one or two of them.

PERHAPS they built the fire just to bait him; I don't know. Anyway, after a time we could see a flicker of flames every once in a while.

The watchman saw it too. I think maybe he had been waiting for just that, because in no time at all he was out again, trying the door at his back to make sure that it was fastened.

He disappeared around the corner of the building, and almost immediately the fire blazed up as if the men who had been surrounding it had moved aside. Only one man made a gigantic shadow on the snow.

We weren't around there, of course, to see what happened. We heard voices, though not the words. We didn't have to hear the words to know that there was going to be trouble.

The sound of a pistol shot came clear and ominous. That one shot changed everything for me. I wanted to get out of there, but I didn't go. Smitty was talking, his hand again on my arm; and I knew without actually seeing it that the other hand held Whitey.

There was a great deal of satisfaction in knowing that Smitty was there. He was that kind of man. Nothing seemed to worry or excite him. His voice was sharp, impressive. "Remember why we're here," he said. "Fighting won't get us anywhere."

I seemed to hear his words coming from a long way off, for I was trying to find out what was taking place out of sight around the building. There was the harsh, labored breathing of struggling men.

Then from around the corner came a huge wave of them, fighting, squirming. There were twenty, maybe thirty of them. The air was full of their curses, yells, threats, cries of encouragement to each other. I couldn't even see the watchman.

"Come on," Whitey said. "They'll kill him."

"Shut up," Smitty said. "Stay where you are." It was a command, and there was more to it than just the words; there was something in the way he said it.

One man broke from the mob and ran, crouching, toward the door of the office building. He didn't even see us, I'm sure. His eyes were big with the knowledge of what that mob meant to do. It was like a fox breaking from a pack of dogs and trying to reach its hole.

He would have made it, too, if he hadn't locked the door when he came out. Perhaps he forgot, perhaps he was already past knowing what he had done. His hands fumbled at the door latch, and then they were on him again.

We could hear, even though we couldn't see. It wasn't nice hearing what was taking place. Three times he called, each time his voice a little weaker, a little more muffled. The last time it was only a whisper, "Help"—just one word.

Whitey lashed out at Smitty with his fist, but it was no use. Smitty said simply, "No," and took the blow on his mouth without letting go his grip on Whitey's arm.

Then the wave of men rolled back, silent now, perhaps realizing individually for the first time what had happened. The man was dead, his head twisted to one side, his eyes open.

"Let's get out of here," I heard myself say.

"Wait," Smitty said. A police car siren sounded near at hand. But when the officers came in their thick, long coats and heavy shoes, there were not more than forty men in line.

They took the names of everyone as witnesses; and Whitey, because he had worked there before, was first to tell his story to the company officials and the superintendent. They must have believed him, because he went to work that same day.

SMITTY and I had been down to the freight yards looking for a job that wasn't there. I was still seeing that watchman's face, hearing his weakening cries for help. I had to find out something. "You could have saved him, Smitty," I said, "couldn't you?"

He walked for half a block without answering, and I was beginning to wonder whether or not he had heard me. "Yes," he said finally, "I could have saved him, but I couldn't save all three."

Just for a minute I believed he meant save himself and Whitey and me from getting hurt, but the more I thought about it the more I saw that that couldn't have been what he meant. He wasn't thinking of himself or of me; it was a question of Whitey and Sis or the watchman.

"You think I'm a murderer, don't you, Chick?" he said, coming to a halt.

"Well," I said, "if you could have saved him. Maybe Whitey would have got the job anyway."

"Maybe," he said. "I didn't have time to figure out all the fine points. For all I knew, maybe that watchman would have run us all off like he tried to do those who were there yesterday. Maybe Whitey would have got hurt. There were too many maybes that way. Do you think you'll ever run across another couple like Sis and Whitey?"

"No," I said, "I don't."

"There's your answer," he said. "It was Whitey and Sis and their baby I was thinking of. Kid, when you're paying a debt to a friend, never count the cost."

I had the feeling then that my heart was swelling up inside of me. It was as if the fog and cold and hunger of those last few months didn't matter when I compared it to knowing a man like Smitty.

We were more than a mile from home, and I walked along with my head in a cloud. It seemed that without realizing it we had come to a turning in the road. I remembered the picnics the four of us had had the past summer on Belle Isle. It was suddenly worth while living again.

I was walking in a dream and never saw the car until I heard the shout and felt Smitty's body drive suddenly against mine.

It was over in a single instant of time. I was getting up from the center of the side street where Smitty's lunge had thrown me. A sound that was like a small Niagara pounded in my ears.

"Smitty," I remember calling, "Smitty!"

Men were running toward me. The driver got out of the car. He was sick, leaning against the mud guard to steady himself.

A man's foot beneath the car jerked once convulsively and became very still. I recognized Smitty's scuffed, unpolished shoe, but I couldn't believe it was Smitty. I couldn't even believe it when they had him out and I was trying to make him talk to me.

Someone took off the thin gray overcoat that Smitty wore and spread it over his lower body.

The driver was talking to an officer. "This man," he said, pointing to me, "stepped off the curb right in front of my car. The other fellow must have seen me, but he jumped in front of the wheels and knocked this young fellow clear."

Two officers took me down to the rooming house later. I felt, climbing the stairs, as if only half of me was there. I sat down on the top step of the attic stairs, trying to think how I would tell Whitey and Sis.

Down Went McGinty

By ALLAN R. BOSWORTH

Many's the mermaid he'd met at the bottom of the sea, but only one of them was equipped with dime-store diving gear and a marriage-license blank

THE road was a white-striped ribbon fluttering under Alvin's nose. His Navy jumper's collar stood rigid in a Force Twelve wind, and the motorcycle's speedometer registered 60. Alvin translated this into an approximate fifty-four knots, and was pleased, because any craft logging fifty-four knots is fairly well under way.

His five days' leave had scarcely started, but San Diego and the U.S.S. *Ouzel* and the blond waitress at the Harbor Light Café were far astern. Everything was clicking. On the sixth day, the *Ouzel* would sail with the Fleet, Alvin would sail with the *Ouzel*, and the blonde—her name was Billie—would finally be convinced that Alvin had only had a drink too many when he mentioned marriage.

In Alvin's opinion, any sailor who got married had a bubble between his ears.

The Suicide Lady thundered over a hill, and the highway dropped to skirt a lake. Eucalyptus trees whipped past in blinding patterns of sunlight and shadow, and the speedometer needle went up ten miles. Alvin put his happiness into song:

He reached out and touched her; she was real

Oh, what a time I've had
With many's the mermaid,
Down at the bottom of the sea—

Then he closed his throttle and smeared a good dollar's worth of tire rubber on the pavement. There was a girl running into the road, waving urgently.

"Are you going to Lakewood?" she asked breathlessly as he braked the Suicide Lady to a full stop. She was tall and slender in slacks and a jacket that looked like Navy dungerees, and she had blue eyes.

But what attracted Alvin most was her voice: it had Texas in it, with all the softness of a breeze over sun-warmed prairies, and he hadn't heard a voice like that since he left Texas for the Navy, eight years before. He got off the bike and stood a full head above her.

"Yeah." He grinned. "I go through Lakewood. Hop on, babe!"

It's like that. You put women out of your mind and start on a fishing trip, and the first thing you know, there is a dame on your luggage carrier. On the other hand, sometimes when you drop the hook in a strange port and go out to *look* for a dame, you'd have a lot better luck if you went fishing.

But this one shook her head. "My name's not Babe. It's Judy Bell Sims. I don't want a ride. I want help sent out from town—a tow car and a derrick, or something. That is, if it won't cost more than twenty dollars. If it does, the car will have to stay where it is."

Alvin trundled the Suicide Lady into the shade. "Where's the car?" he asked. "Maybe I can fix it."

Judy Bell pointed down a weed-grown road. "It's on the bottom of the Lake. Gramp ran it off the landing."

"In the lake?" Alvin gasped. "With him in it?"

"No. He cranked it, and it slipped into gear. It ran over Gramp and broke the trailer hitch, and went right off. The water's pretty deep."

A gleam came into Alvin's eyes. "We'll take a look," he said. "My name's McGinty. Alvin McGinty. I'm from Texas, too."

"How'd you know I'm from Texas?"

"I got ways." The sailor grinned. "Lucky I came along, I guess. I'm a diver, babe. Off the U.S.S. *Ouzel*. She's a submarine rescue ship, and if we can raise a sunken sub, I reckon we can hoist your car out of the mud. Let's go."

A HOMEMADE trailer was on the stubby pier, and that would be Gramp sitting forlornly on its steps. He was gaunt and long, with a mustache that drooped around the hand cupping his chin, and a sparse goatee thrusting between his fingers. He looked as if the car had been his last friend.

"Gramp," said Judy Bell, "this is Mr. McGinty. He's from Texas, too, and he's a diver."

"Howdy," Gramp grunted. "Knew a McGinty, once, in Brewster county. He stole a horse."

Alvin ignored the implication. "How deep's the water?"

"Too dagged deep," said Gramp. "Judy dived in and couldn't no-way touch bottom. It must be thirty foot. I used to be a diver, myself.

"When I was a young 'un, we'd put watermelons in the swimmin' hole to cool, and then dive after 'em. But even if you could go down thirty foot, you couldn't stay there long enough to tie a rope on the car."

"I've been down two hundred feet," Alvin said, and Gramp grunted again.

"Don't try to hooraw me, son! We can't raise her without grapplin' hooks and an engine and derrick. If the job

costs more'n twenty dollars, she'll have to stay there. Unless"—and Gramp brightened—"they'll charge it till I get my thirty a week."

Alvin saw Judy Bell color slightly. "Gramp's a Ham and Egger," she explained. "That's why we came to California."

"And a dagged lot of good it's goin' to do us if we have to set here," added the old man. "They ain't got a chapter of the Life Payments Association in Lakewood. I got to get to San Diego."

"You don't really figure to get thirty bucks a week, do you?" Alvin inquired, and changed the subject when he saw Gramp's goatee rise bristling from his hand. "I *have* been down two hundred feet. That was in a deep-sea suit, of course. But I can work up to fifty feet in a shallow-water outfit."

Judy Bell sighed. "Well, we haven't got a—one of those. You'd better just ask for help in Lakewood, if you don't mind."

"I don't mind at all," Alvin said. He looked at Judy Bell and minded even less than that. Her hair was just as pretty as Billie's, and twice as natural. "I got five days' leave and was going fishing. But the fish can wait."

He walked out on the pier, stamping to see if it would support a tractor and a tripod hoist. Gramp's voice followed: "You'd better go on and do your fishin'. I told you I can't afford but twenty dollars. I caught some catfish here last night, but they're mighty puny compared to Texas catfish. It's a Model T, and it ain't worth much."

The world is full of people like Gramp. They don't understand that when a man is on the bottom, away from everything, he can be mighty happy. They don't realize that diving can be as much fun as flying—if you like to dive.

Sure, it's dangerous at times. But you never heard of a man in a diving suit being run over by a taxi, or breaking his neck in a fall downstairs, or stopping a bullet the cops meant for somebody else.

"I'll ride to Lakewood and find a welding shop," Alvin said. "It won't take long to make a shallow-water rig, and we can hire a tractor around here. Want to go with me, ba—Judy Bell?"

Judy Bell looked at Gramp. He had risen from the trailer steps, but now he nodded and then sat down again to wait for his thirty every Thursday.

"Dagged if I think it'll do any good," he said. "But you can try if you want."

A SHALLOW-WATER rig is a comparatively simple thing to construct. It takes a welding outfit, a four-sided five-gallon can, a piece of window pane and a length of rubber hose. After it has been made, you need an auto pump and somebody to man it, and you need a weight that will take you to the bottom.

Alvin borrowed tools at the welding shop, and Judy Bell watched him cut out the bottom of the can and shear curves in opposite sides, riveting inner tubing over the edges so the curves would fit snugly over his shoulders. He cut an eye port in front and secured the glass with soldered strips of tin. He soldered the hose connection on the top, and they were ready to go. There was a pump on his motorcycle.

"I think that's wonderful!" said Judy Bell. It was easy to see she thought Alvin was pretty wonderful, too. She clung to him as they rode back, and he sang:

Oh, what a time I've had
With many's the mermaid,
Down at the bottom of the sea—

They took a highway dip at fifty-four

knots. Judy Bell squealed delightedly.

"Having a good time, babe?"

She sidestepped. "I've heard that song on the radio. It says *Minnie,* the mermaid. Not *many's* the mermaid."

"With me," Alvin teased, "it's many's the mermaid. I've seen a lot of 'em in my time."

They slowed for the weed-grown road. He looked at Judy Bell and saw the pout of her lips. "What do they look like?" she asked.

"Pretty. With a lot of long hair, and gadgets and doodads—you know, seashells and coral necklaces, and seaweed."

"You can't hooraw me," sniffed Judy Bell. "There's no such thing. But if there was, I'll bet sailors would make love to 'em."

Alvin laughed.

"I'll bet that sailors make love to every girl they meet," the girl pursued. "I'll bet you're married."

Alvin stopped the Suicide Lady. He lifted the diving rig and put it down carefully, and then he lifted Judy Bell as if she were much more fragile. She was getting better looking all the time.

"No," he said. "I ain't married. There ain't any bubble between my ears, babe. When a diver gets a bubble between his ears, he's sunk."

Judy Bell glanced over his shoulder, and called sharply: "Gramp! Gramp, where are you?" Gramp was in plain sight, and Alvin was puzzled until she explained in a low voice: "He's found that jug I took away from him. He's spiffed. When he gets like this, the best way to stop him is to pretend you can't see him. Oh, Gramp! Where are you?"

Gramp had drowned his gloom. He lurched happily toward them, carrying the gallon jug and being preceded by a smell of corn liquor. Judy Bell called again, and Gramp set down the jug and snorted that he'd be dagged. Alvin went into the trailer to don swimming trunks, a belt and sneakers. There was time to make an inspection dive before it grew dark.

HE FOUND a rock heavy enough to take him down, and climbed over a rickety ladder nailed to the pier, looking like a robot from the shounders up. When he waved to Judy Bell, she began pumping air into the coil of hose, and the murky water swallowed Alvin.

There was only a chain of bubbles rising like tiny transparent balloons as the surplus air spilled from the bottom of the tin-can helmet; Judy watched them, fascinated, and forgot to breathe.

Gramp pushed her aside and took the pump handle. *I'm* here, Judy!" he said. "You ain't. You're away off somewhere's. I've seen that look before. Your grandma looked just that-a-way the time I dived for a watermelon and come up under the willers, out of sight, to fool her.

"Yes, sir, she looked just like that—and I'm dagged if we wasn't married inside of two weeks!"

Alvin's leave turned into a busman's holiday. He might as well have stayed aboard the *Ouzel,* diving days to clear a fouled anchor, and going ashore nights to get one drink too many and speak of marriage to Billie, the Harbor Light's blonde.

Because it took four days to complete the job of raising the Model T and getting the water out of its inwards, and that evening Gramp produced another jug while Judy was gone to a farmhouse for milk, and urged Alvin to have a little snort.

After the fifth snort, things were a little hazy. There was a moon over the lake and a soft breeze in the eucalyptus trees, and the leaky rowboat some duck

hunter had left. And all at once there was Judy Bell in his arms, and a very large bubble between his ears—and then she upset the trim of the boat and they went over.

The shock of the cold water dispelled the bubble. Alvin swam to shore with her, and waded out, listening with growing alarm to what she was saying:

"—and it isn't as if you had to make more money, because I can get a job, all right. But we'll have to wait three days in California, won't we?"

Alvin put her down with a jar. "Wait for what?" he faltered.

She held his arm tightly.

"For a marriage license, silly! I'll meet you at one o'clock Monday, on the dock. We'll go straight to the bureau. That means we'll get it Thursday, I guess. Oh, dear, it'll seem years!" Alvin gulped. "Yeah. Yeah, it will. Look, Judy Bell—I've got to shove off! I've got to get back to the ship, right away!"

That was the idea. Shove off and never come back. She wasn't like Billie; she was different, and he couldn't tell her that he was only kidding. But the *Ouzel* would sail with the Fleet at dawn on Monday, for a four-months cruise; and by the time he came back, she'd know. . . .

She stood in the moonlight. The Suicide Lady's thunder drowned Gramp's snores in the trailer. Alvin swung out on the highway and stepped up to fifty-four knots, but there was no pleasure in the speed.

THERE is a tide in the love affairs of Navy men, which, if taken at the flood, leads to Panama, and beers in Jimmy Dean's place or Kelley's. Alvin McGinty turned into his bunk Sunday night, confident that the *Ouzel* would sail with the dawn.

He was still counting on this when he awoke to hear the howlers of the destroyer squadrons ripping the foggy air. And then Boats Murphy, redheaded and salty, burst into the crew's quarters rubbing his tattoed hands together in great joy.

"Boy, did we get a break, or did we get a break!" he chortled. "The C. in C. revoked our orders. We ain't going!"

Alvin jerked erect. "Ain't going?" he echoed weakly.

"Nope. Couple of new subs coming down from Mare Island for trial runs, and we stand by. Say, Alvin, there was a dame come on board Saturday looking for you."

Alvin stifled the groan that welled from the depths of his misery. Not going. *Two* dames, now. One o'clock on the dock—Judy Bell—

"She was a blonde," Boats said.

"Go away," Alvin urged. "And if anybody comes looking for me, tell 'em I was shanghaied to the destroyers and went south!"

"If you're sore at her," Boats said, "how's to give me her phone number? She was a doll."

"You don't need her number," Alvin explained eagerly. "Her name's Billie. She usually catches the twelve-to-eight watch in the Harbor Light Café. Just barge in, sailor—but don't mention me!"

Maybe that would take care of Billie, he thought. But Judy Bell was different. One o'clock on the dock.

At twelve, he was overhauling a deep-sea suit on deck, where he could watch the landward end of the pier. At twelve-fifteen he saw Gramp's home-made trailer pull into the parking space there. An idea born of desperation flashed into his mind thirty seconds later, and at twelve-thirty he was nine fathoms down, with permission to dive

every day during the week if necessary, to test the equipment.

Which was why Alvin found all manner of things wrong with the deep-sea rig during the days that followed. Boats Murphy was on deck when Judy Bell came aboard on Monday, and on successive days. He told Alvin that he was plain nuts.

"Anybody," he said, "who'd give himself the deep six to hide out from a dame like that should be locked up permanent!"

"Did you tell her I was transferred to the tin cans?" Alvin asked.

"Well, no. Look, Alvin—there are some babes you can't lie to, see? I told her you had to work. I said you was awful busy, diving. She stayed until four-thirty."

That was when all visitors had to leave the ship. And that was when Alvin came up again.

IT WAS Friday when Alvin hurried through the baked halibut at noon mess, and hurried out on deck. Somebody called: *"Psst!* McGinty!" and there was Gramp, already over the gangway.

Alvin jumped. "How'd you get aboard before visiting hours? You ain't supposed—"

"Supposin'," said Gramp, "is what broke the wagon down. There wasn't nobody watchin' for a minute, and I just walked over that little bridge, yonder. I want to talk to you, McGinty."

It had come. Gramp was going to insist that he marry Judy Bell. Gramp was carrying something under his coat: it might easily be a gun. Alvin began to perspire. He beckoned Gramp to a hatchway forward.

"This is a right nice boat you work for," Gramp said. "But Judy Bell tells me they've been workin' you like a mule. How about a little snort here, son?"

"They don't have liquor on board Navy ships, Gramp," Alvin explained at the bottom of the ladder. But Gramp snickered, and pulled back his faded blue serge coat to show a bottle.

"They have now," he said, and drew the cork. "Here. You look plumb fidgety, McGinty. This'll do you good."

It was court martial if he got caught. But he wouldn't get caught, and he needed a drink. He'd dive before Judy Bell came aboard.

"I'm signed up for thirty every Thursday," Gramp said proudly. "Judy's in town to see about a job. But you look mighty dagged fidgety, son. You need another little swig."

The second drink gave Alvin courage for what he had to say. "Look, Gramp. About Judy Bell. She's all wrong about—"

"Sho!" Gramp interrupted. "You can't tell me nothin' about that girl, McGinty. She's just like her grandma. When she sets her mind to somethin', it might just as well lay down and holler calf rope, because she'll get it!"

"Yeah, but I—"

Gramp wiped his goatee and thrust the bottle into Alvin's hand. "Yes, sir," he went on, "I never seen anybody so dagged stubborn. I told her she don't have to do it.

"Why, I can support Judy Bell. I'll be gettin' that thirty every Thursday most any time, now. But she's after that job, and she'll land it. Here, McGinty, there's just one good snort left, and you look like you need it!"

THE waves lapped over Alvin's rubber-encased legs and spray fogged across his face plates. The light went dim; he could hear the hissing of the exhaust valve change to a gurgling sound, and he swallowed to equalize the

pressure on his ears. For the time being, he was safe again, and the thought made him happy:

Oh, what a time I've had
With many'sh—with many'sh the mer-
maidsh—

"Listen, Alvin," Boats Murphy complained in the telephone set. "I don't mind standing by your air-and-life-lines, on account of how you fixed me up with Billie. But I don't have to listen to you sing!"

"Okay," Alvin said good-humoredly. The stage settled, and sank a foot in the soft harbor ooze. Sea dust rose in an inky cloud around Alvin's helmet. He valved air into the suit, and then valved it out, but the roaring was still in his ears and his throat was uncommonly dry. By and large, he didn't feel so good; it was just as well there was no real work to do on the bottom.

Boats said: "I can see that dame over on the dock. She's a lulu, Alvin, and you're nuts. Look, are you okay? Because I want to leave the phone for a minute."

Alvin said he was okay but he wasn't. It was strange that his tongue should be so thick, that he should feel so much pressure at only fifty feet. The tide was coming in. Pretty strong. Could that be the tide roaring so loudly?

—with many'sh the mermaidsh—the
merdmaimsh—
Down at the bottom of the shea!

What he needed was a little exercise. Work off the accumulation of oxygen in his blood. Keep off the bends.

"Boatsh!" he yelled, and his shout rolled around the helmet and came back at him, sounding oddly flat and distorted. He yanked the life-line twice as a signal for slack, and somebody was still standing by on deck, because the slack came.

Alvin let go the bails of the diving stage, and leaned against the tide, walking with the peculiar, slow-floating gait of the diver—walking like a man in slow motion pictures.

Oh, what a time I've had
With many'sh the mermaidsh—

He stopped singing with his mouth still wide. He lifted a hand and rubbed it across his face plate, and the pressure broke out in little pinpoint prickles along his spine.

It was still there. A real mermaid. Judy Bell was wrong, and he was wrong, and so was everybody else. No fish looked like that. It was a mermaid, and no mermaid had a right to look like that, either, because it had legs.

ALVIN reached out a long arm and touched a leg. It was soft and smooth, not scaled. It and another leg floated down before his face plate, and brought a red bathing suit into view. Suspicion blazed in Alvin's mind; he ducked his head the best he could in the helmet, and looked upward, fearing that at last diving had got him and that he had a bubble between his ears.

But he saw the shallow-water diving rig, and the bubble broke. It was the same rig he had made at Lakewood. He could make out only a white blur behind the rectangle of glass, but he knew how the eyes looked in that face. They were blue.

All at once everything was clear, as if he had taken no drinks at all. There would be Gramp up on the pier, pumping hard on an auto pump and not realizing what danger Judy Bell ran, nine fathoms down and hard by a maze of slimy, spidery piling in a strong incoming tide.

"Judy Bell!" he exclaimed, and of course she couldn't hear him. But she

acted as if she could. She was carrying a canvas sack that held some sort of weight. It had brought her down; she held it in one hand and waved to Alvin with the other.

Bubbles streamed from the tin can helmet that was too large for her shoulders, and he knew that the straps were too large, too. He knew that water would be over the tip of her chin, and only a precious little air pocket above it stood between her and death if the tide swept her under the pier.

And the tide was pulling her away from him.

"Get back, you little fool!" he cried. "Go away—get topside!"

"What's that?" Boats demanded in the telephone. "Who you talking to, Alvin? You gone batty, down there?"

"Yes—no!" Alvin roared. Judy Bell was leaning against the current. It caught at her slenderness as she struggled and tried to walk toward him. She was gesturing with her free hand, trying to tell him something; the weight she carried for ballast was all that held her, and it was pulling her body to one side.

"Do something, Boats!" Alvin yelled. "Jump to the dock! Tell Gramp to hoist her in, the damned fool!"

"Tell who *what?* Who's a damned fool? You're nuts!"

It was apparent that Gramp and his pump were not within sight from the deck. Alvin groaned and made a violent gesture toward the girl. But the water took the violence out of it and turned it into slow motion. He fought forward, reaching with both hands, dragging his weighted shoes like a man struggling against a nightmare.

Judy Bell found the sack a handicap. She stooped, hunching her shoulders to keep the helmet upright and not spill the air bubble inside it. Just as a tired woman might place a shopping bag on the floor, Judy Bell deliberately set the ballast on the bottom, and Alvin saw her turn loose of it.

All in the same breath, he shouted and grabbed for her, and he saw the buoyancy of her body and the air in the helmet jerking her toward the surface. In that shaved second, he thought of the bends she would suffer from so rapid an ascent, and he pictured her plummeting headlong against the bottom of the *Ouzel,* or the barnacled timbers of the pier.

Then his frantic fingers touched her leg, closed on her ankle. The jerk lifted his weighted shoes from the mud, but he jammed his chin against the spit valve in a hurried move to let air out of his suit and cut down his own buoyancy. His feet settled again, and he pulled Judy Bell down to slip his free arm around her waist.

Bubbles from her helmet flurried across his face plate like a mermaid's gleaming necklace. He could see her eyes when the sea dust dissolved; she gave him one frightened glance and then smiled. It was a trusting smile: it told him she wasn't afraid of anything in his arms.

"When you start seeing things on the bottom," Boats was saying, "you been down too long. Better come up, screwball! That dame will be here any minute, but there's no use ducking her any longer."

No, because it was like Gramp said. When Judy Bell wanted anything, she got it. You couldn't fight a girl who would follow her man to the bottom of the sea.

He made the diving stage and prayed that there was enough hose on her rig to allow hoisting from the outboard side of the ship. He hooked one arm around the bail, and said, "Hoist away!"

THE sunlight was blessed, and the air was sweet. He couldn't hear the shout of surprise from the men on deck; somebody took Judy Bell from his arms and was removing her helmet. And when they unbolted Alvin's helmet, she kissed him.

He liked it, too.

Nobody made a crack about this. Except Gramp. Boats was hauling in on the hose and Gramp came with the other end of it, working the pump until he was actually aboard the *Ouzel* and could see Judy Bell.

"Well, I'm dagged," Gramp said. "I told her, McGinty. I told her she'd have to wait to tell you about gettin' that job, because any fool would know she couldn't talk to you down there. But she said she could use deef and dumb language. She's just like her grandma—you can't tell her nothing!"

Judy Bell smiled up at Alvin. "I got the job," she said proudly. "A girl who works in the Harbor Light Café is getting married, and I take her place. That means we can get married just as soon as you finish your diving job."

Alvin shot a look at Boats, and the redheaded sailor blushed. "We—Billie thought—" he began, then stopped. It was plain that Boats had a bubble between his ears, too.

"I guess I'm through with this diving job," Alvin sighed. "But the Harbor Light will have to get another girl. I won't have my wife working."

Gramp snorted. "Dagged if you can stop her!" he exclaimed. "Not if she sets her mind to it."

Death Under Water

By WILLIAM Du BOIS

CHAPTER XXVII

CATCH AT DAWN

CANDLES were burning on the cottage veranda when I hurried back through the pale early light. Dave, propped up in pillows like a sultan on his day off, was waiting for me with the travesty of a grin.

"So you brought him in, Jack."

"With a little help. Lie back, you're supposed to be resting."

"The candles were Gail's idea. Nice symbolism, eh?"

"Where's Mrs. Yates?"

"Back on that couch in the living room. Just between us, I insisted she take another quarter-grain of luminal to ease off her nerves."

"Speaking of nerves, what right have you to be so calm?"

"I hope you don't mind, Jack. Why shouldn't I relax, now you've got your man?"

This time, I took a real look at him. His face was the color of the light outside those veranda screens; but the bump behind his ear had definitely stopped swelling.

"Is your memory still intact, Dave? I've a lot of threads to pick up, before I go back to that Austrian."

"Haven't they told you what happened yet?"

"At the present moment," I said severely, "Dr. von Merz is lying on that pier, permitting Ulrich to extract a .38 caliber bullet from his right triceps. Elsa is being an efficient, if unwilling nurse; and Frank is standing by with a tourniquet, when and if it's needed. Somehow, it didn't seem the best moment to ask

The first installment of this five-part serial, herein concluded, appeared in the Argosy for May 11

how the doc crowned you and broke for cover."

"He managed very easily, Jack. So easily, I'm ashamed to admit it. Everything happened in a rush, shortly after Elsa joined you on the dock.

"I was on the terrace, watching them all through the windows, when I saw von Merz take a swing at Nash. It seems that Alec had been passing remarks about his connections abroad. They were tearing out each other's whiskers when I jumped between them."

"You didn't—"

Dave smiled ruefully. There was even a little color in his cheeks now. "All I got for my trouble was a roundhouse clout, of course. Then von Merz tangled horns with *me*. You know how blind he is without his glasses—"

"Slow down a minute. Where were the others, while this was going on?"

"Ulrich had already been knocked galley-west. Gail slept through it all, thanks to that first pill. Frank and Nash, I'm sorry to report, kept discreetly out of harm's way."

"Check. Back to the center of the ring. Von Merz won the match, extracted your keys while you were taking the count, and—"

"It wasn't quite that easy for him. All he did was hammerlock me, and go through my pockets. Then he jumped for that hall. Of course I was right after him, gun or no gun. He must have waited, quite deliberately, behind the kitchen door. I'm sure it was an ice-tray that hit me."

"Our friends were still letting you fight it out alone?"

"So it seems. I've a dim recollection of Frank creeping down the hall in the dark to carry me out to fresh air. There was a lot of door slamming in the hallway, too. I must have gone under again; but I'm sure that Ulrich was on his feet, helping—"

HE LET the rest ride as the Old Master himself came up the veranda steps, drying his hands briskly on a towel.

"Will your patients recover, Doctor?"

"Both of them, yes. How is the head?"

"Ready to start ticking again at any moment," said Dave. "How's yours?"

Ulrich smiled gravely. "As you have probably gathered, Mr. Jordan, my behavior in this crisis was something less than admirable. You see, when a man of seventy is struck with a flying chair—"

"Just help Dave on two points, will you? Was Mrs. Yates really in a drugged sleep when trouble started?"

"Emphatically. Frank and I lost valuable time arousing her, after Karl broke free. Even though this young man's condition was not serious, we felt that someone should serve as nurse while we joined in the—the manhunt."

I got up abruptly, and put my head through the living room door. Gail Yates, looking ten years younger despite the gray light, was lying on her side, breathing deeply again.

Ulrich glanced over my shoulder as I turned back to the veranda. "Do you blame her too much?"

"Not at all, Doctor. Just checking on possible witnesses. You see, my second point is a trifle harder. In your opinion, was the quarrel between Alec and von Merz a genuine one, or a trick to lure Dave into that living room?"

"So sorry but I cannot answer. As I say, for the past hour I am deep in my books. Why should I listen to their silly—?"

"No reason at all. Will you sit down

beside Dave, please, and help me to think aloud? As I see it, von Merz planned to make a run for that launch, some time ago.

"He must have been watching me like a cat from the moment I tossed those keys to Dave. Obviously, this was the best chance he'd have, with our force divided. He'd mapped every move, when he slapped Nash and slung that chair in your direction. Of course, he wouldn't have had a chance, unless Dave made the mistake of mixing in."

Dave spoke dourly from the pillows. "Don't pretend you wouldn't have done the same."

I ignored the interruption. "From that point on, we've got a jigsaw that dovetails perfectly. Von Merz breaks for freedom via the kitchen door, knowing it'll give him a head-start to that light switch, in case you caught your wind. Or Frank had the courage to cut him off.

"Once he's smashed those fuses, he waits inside the pitch-dark aquarium, hoping that everyone will leave the dock to see what's the trouble—thus giving him a clear runway to the launch.

"As we already know, London was near enough to spot him at his little act of sabotage, and stay grimly on his trail. While you and Frank were shaking yourselves together, London was already halfway across the lagoon, overhauling our Austrian aquadonis with every stroke, on his last desperate sprint to the launch.

"Von Merz still had a good lead when he climbed into that cockpit, and kicked the engines. If it hadn't been for our sharpshooter from Miami, he'd be well out of the lagoon by now, on his way to meet that police boat—"

Ulrich broke in. "There's the part I cannot follow. Why does he break for cover—knowing he cannot clear the Bank until daylight—when he is sure to meet the police coming in?"

"Maybe he thought our story about the police boat was pure bluff," said Dave. "From what Jack had already told him, he knew he was in for a framing. Maybe he figured that he'd get the jump on us—claim diplomatic immunity."

"Is not all this beside the point?" asked Ulrich. "Surely it is clear enough that poor Karl was guilty of these dreadful crimes tonight."

"It's clear enough to me," said Dave. "Why are you shaking your head, Jack?"

I spoke deliberately. "If Dr. von Merz had any part in those two deaths, I'll turn in my police card."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE JAUNTY SCOUNDREL

DAVE had done his best to jump up on that one. It took quite a bit of force to ease him back to the pillows again.

"Let's keep this orderly, as long as we can," I said. "What are chances of bringing von Merz here, just to put my point over for Dave?"

"He is on his way now," said Ulrich. "I saw no reason why he should not be made comfortable." He got to his feet, and patted Dave's shoulder. "Please do not excite yourself without reason again."

Dave subsided helplessly; together we watched the erect little gnome stride across the terrace.

"Do you mind explaining the strategy of *that*, Jack?"

"I'm through with strategy. From now till morning, I'm relying on brains alone."

"Thank God it's morning now." Then we grinned in unison. "Whose

brains, if I may make so bold?" asked Dave.

"Mine," I replied, with dignity. "Strange as it may sound, I feel they'll be more than sufficient."

"Damn it all, Jack, you *said* you were only waiting for an explosion. What more can you want?"

"So that's why you're looking so rested? Just because the Austrian saw fit to bolt—"

"He socked me in the dark, blazed away at you, and swam to that launch, with an outboard motor in each toe. If that isn't a clear proof of guilt—"

I cut in decisively. "Use your head, Dave. The Doc's bolt proves nothing but a burning desire to get off this island. Must I remind you that I threatened to name the murderer an hour ago? That threat still holds—depending on certain reactions."

"Enjoy yourself, Jack. Don't think it rude of me, if I relax and let you carry on alone."

"To be brutally frank, I'd feel much easier in my mind if you were completely unconscious—like your sister-in-law."

IT SEEMED as good a time as any to stamp into that living room. After I had prodded Mrs. Yates' shoulder with no apparent effect, I went on down the hall to Nash's hideaway, and pushed—hard. Yes, the idiot had barricaded his door all over again. I hammered loudly.

"Aren't you coming out to see the sunrise, Alec?"

"Only if you're stronger than I."

I started to demonstrate the point, thought better of it, and brought him up to date instead. Not that words were any help to that state of funk, though he heard me through without interruption.

"Can't you see the war's over, Alec? Don't you want to take a few notes?"

"Go away, please?"

"Or hear what von Merz has to say for himself?"

"You promised me immunity, Jack. I've completely lost faith in you. Drag me out by brute force, or leave me in peace."

"Fair enough, Nash, for the time being. Just answer a question through the keyhole. Who started the fracas?"

"Von Merz, of course. He realized that it was I who uncovered—"

"Skip it, and take a back somersault to three A.M. Where were you standing, when London towed Jim's body up to the pier?"

"What possible connection—"

"Think hard, please."

There was a short pause behind the closed door. "As I remember, I ran down the dock on Frank's heels. When I saw what was up, I jumped into the launch with him, for a better view."

"Did any of the others join you?"

"Certainly not. Why?"

"So your curiosity is coming back, Alec. Any chance of your courage following suit?"

I left the cottage by the kitchen door, mad enough to kick it from its hinges. The rest of our party was just climbing up to the terrace level as I met them, a bizarre procession from any angle. The Old Master led the way, the tails of that white sleeping coat flapping in time with his beard.

London and Frank supported von Merz between them, though the Austrian looked more than capable of bearing his own weight, in spite of the impromptu sling on his right wrist. Elsa walked last, like a girl in a trance. In fact, she could have passed for a somnambulist aware of her suspended state, and afraid to come out of it.

Von Merz waved his good arm gaily. "And how does it feel to have your pistol back, Jack?"

His voice had all its old bounce, too. I looked him over carefully in the vague twilight. From his manner, you'd have sworn we were all one happy family, helping a favorite son home from an accident.

"Just for the record, Doc, would you mind explaining why you left it under the pillow on Nash's bed?"

"I had to put it somewhere, Jack. Sorry I didn't choose yours. How is our white rabbit, by the way? Still cowering in his burrow?"

"Never mind the d'Artagnan pose," I snapped. "Did you ask Alec to hide anything aboard the launch for you, sometime between ten and three?"

WE WERE eye to eye as I said it, so I pointed the question by putting Frank's flashlight full on his face. He was pale enough under his bristles —pale, but unwinking.

I snapped off the light in favor of the slowly burnishing dawn. "Not talking, from now on?"

"On the contrary, Jack. You know there's nothing I enjoy more than a quiet chat with you. Still, you can't expect me to answer such a meaningless—"

"I asked if Alec Nash had hidden anything aboard that launch tonight, at your request. Surely it's simple enough for a categorical—"

"No, Jack."

"Did Frank do a similar favor for you?"

"No."

"Did you yourself go aboard the launch at any time before your jailbreak?"

"Certainly not. Why should I go aboard without the means of escape?"

I marched that thought up to the veranda in silence. I leaned back against the corner post while they made von Merz comfortable in a Morris chair, and tried my best to look like an inquisitor with a hot iron up my sleeve.

"Sorry to begin my inquiry in the middle," I murmured. "From this moment on, we'll be chronological."

Von Merz nestled gratefully among the worn leather cushions. "Why must we be anything, Jack? Can't we take a leaf from Mrs. Yates' book, and rest comfortably together until the police come?"

"So you believed our story about the police, Doc? That's very interesting. . . . Will you bring out a few more chairs, Frank? And London—you might smash down that closed bedroom door, and invite Mr. Nash to join us."

Elsa had already seated herself at the foot of Dave's couch, with his hand in hers. I let that proceed without comment, watching the others take chairs in a cautious half-moon, with von Merz as a focal point. Nash appeared gingerly, with London bulking impassively in the background. Believe it or not, he had picked up his hair en route. Discounting that damaged front plate, he looked almost himself again.

"Someone should waken Gail," said Dave.

I spoke as gently as I could. "This is for your benefit, not ours. Will you start the ball rolling, Austria, or shall I?"

"Do make it a monologue, Jack," said von Merz, just as gently. "I'll only break in when necessary."

"Thanks so much. Perhaps you'll really mean that before I'm done. You see, I'm probably the only person on this cay—with one obvious exception —who doesn't think you guilty of murder at this moment."

ELSA started to speak, but I held up my hand imploringly. "Facts first, Miss Ulrich—exegesis to come. May I tell your story, Doc?"

"Why shouldn't I tell it myself?"

"Considering the lateness of the hour, I'd like to keep the record accurate."

"Very well, Jack. Perhaps I was over anxious, running out on you so rudely. Perhaps it won't hurt me to submit a little longer."

"Haven't you heard a word I've been saying? At the moment, I'm the only friend you've got here. Look at the jury, if you don't believe me.

"I'm going over your past activities from the beginning because I want to convince everyone here—Dave, especially—that you weren't running out on a murder rap just now. Maybe I want to convince myself at the same time. Just so I won't desert you too easily when that police boat arrives. I'd advise you to sit tight, Doc, and listen carefully."

Von Merz spoke precisely. "I knocked Dave out, and ran for that launch for one reason only."

"To get to the police first?"

"If you insist, yes. Most of all, I felt the need to free myself from this kind of seance." He gave me his best wolf-grin. "So sorry, Jack. As you observe, my blood is cooled by now. I submit to the inevitable. So."

I watched him lean over to take a light from one of the candles, exhale smoke in a deep contented puff, and close his eyes.

"One thing more. I should like to apologize for that shot. Not that the police will blame me for answering violence with its own weapon. Or doing my best to break free."

"Do you know who killed Tony Yates, and Jim Flagg?"

Von Merz blew a perfect smoke-ring into the windless morning. "You may infer what you like, Jack."

"So you really wanted to help the police close this case. Is that your reason for stealing the launch?"

"That is my only reason."

"Thanks, Doc." I addressed the others generally. "My diagnosis is now backed by a competent witness. May I proceed?"

No one said anything. Not even Dave, who lay deep in his pillows with an air of utter repose. Something told me I'd have to speed the tempo of my inquiry, if I meant to hold my audience.

"DON'T jump down my throat, Dave—but believe every word. That is, I'm morally certain he was running to the police with an inside story all his own.

"Isn't anyone going to ask me why? Don't sit there like a mummy with a hangover, Alec, letting him steal your thunder without a murmur."

I saw my audience was dying on its feet, and switched my routine. "You all know why he's on this island, and what he was after. You can see how badly Tony's death set him back.

"Never mind that now. Suppose I told you that he slid down a rainpipe from his window in that indoor aquarium, sometime before ten tonight. That he was floating quietly in the lagoon when Tony was pushed into the tank; paddled close enough to see the job done; spotted Jim Flagg in the act of photographing same; swam near enough to alarm the killer; grabbed the camera with seconds to spare; and was safe in his cubby-hole again when the lights went on?"

Silence from the jury, and more smoke-rings from von Merz. But I

stuck to my routine. At least, I had their undivided attention now.

"From that point on, Dr. von Merz had two problems. He must get rid of a fairly bulky camera, and secrete the film in a fool-proof hiding place. We already know that the camera was dropped overboard, from the string-piece of the wharf."

I bowed in von Merz's direction. "Pardon me for underestimating you, Doc. We've wasted some valuable time, working on the theory that you'd hidden the film on the launch, as the first step in your getaway.

"Obviously, that was impossible, with Alec and Frank on board. It was also entirely unnecessary, according to my diagnosis of your motives, which is now virtually complete.

"You see, Doc, up to a few moments ago, I've been one jump behind you. Now I'm happy to announce that I'm a safe jump ahead. I know you've left that film on this island, for a purpose of your own. A purpose that has no direct connection with your attempted escape just now.

"Of course it was to your advantage to beat me to the punch in Nassau; to spread the story of my high-handed brutality all over Government House; to come swooping back with the police, believing that our only bit of evidence was safely hidden. Believing that you could run things as you saw fit."

I got up on that, taking my time about it and making all I could out of the leisurely glance at my wristwatch. "Can I trust the rest of you to guard that Morris chair until I get back?"

Then I went slowly down the steps to the terrace feeling their eyes burn into my back. What's more, I forced myself to count ten, like a good actor, before I turned back to them with my exit-line.

"If any of you are curious, I'm going down to the aquaria to close this case—*my* way."

CHAPTER XXIX

ARREST UNDER WATER

STILL forcing myself to take it slow and easy, I climbed down from the terrace, crossed to the door of the aquarium, and turned in sharply, lingering on the steps to light a cigarette with a gesture that lacked von Merz's aplomb by several beats. Something that looked like a cross between an active volcano and a battleship headlight was burning over the rim of the eastern sea, hitting me full in the eyes as I went indoors. The sunrise had never looked so naked before—or so welcome.

After all, it was pretty essential that I go through this part of my routine in broad daylight.

Once safely inside the doorway, I went straight to Jim Flagg's cubicle, where I sat down for a long time on his army cot, going over my lines one more time just to make sure I hadn't forgotten anything.

Then I climbed to the mezzanine, opened the tiny window, and slid down the drainpipe to the water's edge—also for the record. The sun was up in earnest when I strolled out to the end of the dock, and dangled my legs over the string-piece.

Of course, I could return to my audience now; the temptation to go back on the run was almost irresistible. I forced myself to wait, counting the minutes grimly on my wristwatch, fixing my attention on a cloud fleck on the far horizon.

Fifteen minutes was better than five; with a good book, or even a crossword puzzle, I might have kept up the suspense for as much as a half-hour.

The cloud was moving nearer now, surprisingly low to the sea for that flawless dawn, and emitting a faint thumping sound.

When I saw what it really was, I dashed down that dock with all the steam I had, forcing myself to pull up among the outdoor tanks, and stroll back to that waiting group on the veranda.

Yes, I'd timed it well enough, at that. Six tongues, going full blast as I came into view. Then dead silence—and six pairs of eyes, following my progress to the veranda.

"Would it interest you to know that a police boat is coming up to the reef?"

They were on their feet in a rush now—even Dave, who got up steadily enough, with Elsa's arm around him. I slapped them back with my voice, and whipped out both those automatics with a gesture worthy of Dillinger in his salad days.

"Sorry, we've no time. Anyone who doubts my ability to keep the party intact from now on may step down from the veranda. . . . London, will you go into the living room and waken Mrs. Yates—forcibly, if need be?"

THEN I got a surprise all my own. Gail Yates, pale but contained, stepped disdainfully past London in the cottage doorway, and joined the silent group on the steps.

"I've been wide awake for several minutes, Mr. Jordan. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, I assure you, besides making our little group complete. Just to bring you abreast of the times, Mrs. Yates, everyone is quite intent on a police launch, which is feeling its way through the reef at this moment.

"Dave will tell you that it contains a few picked men from Government House. They've come to take part in a newsreel, for the glory of the British Crown. Too bad our company is too suspicious of one another to finish the performance."

Von Merz threw down his cigar, and came steadily over to the deadline of the steps. I knew he was playing it my way before he spoke. In fact, I could have turned a handspring for pure joy as he faced back to Gail.

"Don't mind him, Mrs. Yates, please. He has shot his bolt, and knows it. In five minutes more—"

I crashed through, with a whoop. "I'm finishing your sentences from now on, Doc. In five minutes more, Mrs. Yates, Dr. Karl von Merz will formally accuse Elsa Ulrich of the murder of your husband. Right, Doc?"

Von Merz turned his back on me with a light shrug, faced the others, and spoke in a tone of studied quiet. "For the first time, Jack has guessed my intentions correctly."

Dave and Ulrich were on their feet instantly. I waved them back. "Let him go on, please. Miss Ulrich doesn't seem unduly alarmed. You see, Dave, she's followed along with me much faster than you.

"For instance, she must know now that Dr. von Merz is a past master at the gentle art of blackmail. Having cleverly hidden the missing film, he would naturally begin his extortion by accusing the wrong person."

I let the Austrian cross the deadline to me in one of those bull-like rushes. I let him come clean out of the group, before I straight-armed him into a deck-chair and jammed a pistol barrel into the roll of fat just below his ears. He was shouting in earnest now, and I let that ride, too. Why shouldn't I, when he was playing into my hands with every word.

"Believe me, Mrs. Yates—everyone—I have no film. With my own eyes I saw her—"

But I could outshout anyone on that island, now that I knew just where I was going. "Can you face these people, and deny you worked out every move in this game? From the moment you snatched that camera, to the moment you hid the film?"

"I deny every word of—"

"What sort of monkey d'you take me for, Doc—promising to close this case without the goods? Don't you realize that I had my eye on your hiding place all along?"

"You're lying, Jack. It did you no good to search the boat—"

"How do you know—if you never saw that camera?"

Not that I needed that slip to make my point. To this day, I can remember the way the spool glittered in the sunshine, as I reached into my belt and tossed it in the air, snatching it back just this side of von Merz's nose.

Then I let him get up, and turned sharply back to the veranda—in time to see Gail Yates break into a run in the direction of the lagoon.

WE ALL stood watching her in a kind of half-trance as she took the plunge—dressing gown and all. It was obvious what she had in mind, from the first break-neck moment. I couldn't say if it was Elsa or I who hit the water first on her trail.

We swam past the dressing gown a hundred feet offshore, ballooning in the gentle morning surge of the returning tide. Gail was a smother of foam beyond, a feather-kick crawl that was a match for Elsa's sturdy eight-beat—almost. I floundered in their wake now, already conscious of the beat of limbs in the sunlit water behind us.

Maybe it was a half-mile to the reef; I'm sure we covered it in record time. I'm also sure that I was only a few strokes behind them when they broke surface in a photo finish, racing across the spongy coral to trip in the surge of an incoming roller. Then they were thrashing in the lagoon again, limbs locked, fingers in each other's hair.

I had just sense enough to climb to the reef before I dived after them—which gave me a real push downward. Elsa said afterward that it was all that saved her life; but I'm sure she still had a fighting chance when I whipped both arms around Gail, planted ten toes in the solid coral of the reef, and ripped the two women out of their mutual strangle hold.

Then I was being pulled down in turn, beyond light- and-shadow, deep into a world of looming brain coral. Elsa sounded again, and we were dragging our would-be suicide back to the air between us.

They said later that London made the final rescue, when Mrs. Yates went down a second time, leaving us both too winded to follow.

I wouldn't argue too much. All I can remember distinctly is the loss of something more than dignity as Ulrich and Frank rolled me across an oil drum.

Then I was lying comfortably on my back—on planks already warm from the sun—and red-striped legs were milling all about. Then a man in a Calcutta helmet and brown gabardine was bending above me, asking questions.

For one awful moment, I felt sure it was Inspector Bishop. Were we back in Bermuda, after all? Then I decided not to protest too much, even if I'd caught up to Zoo-bug when I opened my eyes again.

CHAPTER XXX

CHARMING, COOL, AND DEADLY

OF COURSE, Inspector Tucker didn't actually resemble Bishop, except for the faded gabardine. Inspector Tucker was rotund, ruddy, and tremendously tired. Two hours later, when he sat down beside me on the veranda, he might have passed for a remittance man keeping up appearances, until he opened his mouth. Then you understood why the sun has kept shining so long on most of the British Empire.

"A dreadful business, sir. I suppose you'd like to have Mrs. Yates' confession, from the beginning?"

I leaned back gratefully, and closed my eyes again. It was a pleasant sensation, hearing a story straight for a change. Why should I disillusion him, if he took me for a detective on vacation?

. . . When Dave came up on Ulrich's arm some time later, he looked himself again, despite a new white turban of bandages. He sat down quietly beside me, too, listening to the inspector's concluding remarks. Tucker was a busy man that morning, but he had given me almost an hour of his time, regardless.

I half closed my eyes, lazily watching Ulrich lead the inspector toward the aquaria. Both of them had their notebooks open, too. It was nice, knowing that my own notes were in order.

"Well, Jack, we're alone."

"Haven't you picked up the story yet?"

"Listen, fellow, I've just come from Elsa. She says she'll pitch you in that lagoon again if you don't relay every word that passed in that huddle. Even if you did save her life, twice."

"In that case, I'll talk. Bring her out."

Dave blushed. "She's waiting for me down on the sandspit. If you don't mind, I'll relay the message."

"I don't mind anything, at this moment. Your sister-in-law's story is a simple one, once you understand its emotional basis. Or should I say Gail's own lack of emotion? It explains her relation to Zoo-bug."

"Was she in love with Strong?"

"Vice versa, dim-wit. Gail Yates was never in love with anyone, so far as I can gather. She used Strong for a purpose of her own—just as she used Adam Foster, and Tony himself.

"OF COURSE, there's no doubt that Strong was crazy about her from the moment they met in Nassau. Crazy enough to rent that 12th Street walkup.

"*That* was the sort of intrigue that Gail Yates enjoyed, providing she could keep it within bounds. Don't dismiss her as a lonely wife, looking for consolation. She married your brother, for what he could give her, and considered herself clever enough to hang on indefinitely.

"So long as she could call herself Mrs. Anthony Yates, why should she mind Tony's feelings or the hunting trips he took to forget them. Or even distractions like Pola Kosloff?

"According to the confession she's just signed, Tony approached her with every inducement for divorce. From cash offers to vague threats. Gail had met them with a patient, wifely smile. After all, could she be blamed for clinging to a bargain she had kept perfectly in the eyes of society?"

"Don't tell me she used that phrase?"

"She did indeed. Your sister-in-law knew that Tony was a gentleman, in spite of his habits. She knew he would never try for divorce on his own. Not with the countersuits she could file."

"And Tony never suspected?"

"Would *you* suspect Zoo-bug of being in love with your wife—or anyone's wife? He'd rented that studio from an agent in the Village, stating that he was a landscape artist, who needed a *pied-à-terre* in New York. We already know how he made the premises authentic, with that canvas of Elsa's, and others.

"An extra latchkey permitted Gail to come and go as she pleased—and invite friends, when Strong was on the other side of the world in the interests of ichthyology. Are you with me, so far?"

"Miles ahead."

"Oh no you're not. I want you to picture her, an August evening one week ago. Ultra smart, and still gracefully this side of forty. Walking sedately through the commuters' rush at Grand Central, and stepping into a taxi on Forty-second Street, where she was joined by a young man who had just whisked out of a drugstore phone booth."

"Adam Foster?"

"The down-East lawyer, in person. He'd been fidgeting around that station since three, waiting for Gail to keep their appointment."

"Was he another of her admirers?"

"Adam Foster was the typical small-town boy with a reverence for riches. The hick college alumnus who wished he'd gone to Harvard, and tried to dress the part.

"Apparently, he'd done some legal work for Tony, in connection with their place in Maine, when he met your sister-in-law. Purely for her own amusement, she'd burned him with the idea of playing the market, on tips supplied by her.

"Unfortunately for Adam, he had a little success at the start. When he left Pine Beach, however, he was in debt to the eyes. The five thousand in his pocket was a partner's share in a joint bank account, which he had drawn out in a wild plan to break his bad luck. It had been fifteen thousand when he left Maine; the balance had gone up in margins by the time Gail consented to see him.

"His demands were few, but definite. She must bail him out at home and help him to establish himself as a big-town lawyer—or gambler. It was the sort of ultimatum no one but an unimaginative and half-crazed young man could have made; and Gail had handled it coolly, over a cocktail in an obscure bar on Thirty-eighth Street.

"It doesn't matter, really, how long it took her to make him dissolve in tears, and agree that he must face his partner's ire alone. She had used a tone that was half-ruthless, half-gallant woman of the world who wished that life were different. But she had also made very sure that no one in Pine Beach knew why Adam had left town under a cloud.

"Once that fact was established, she had agreed to take him down to the Village for one last highball, before he boarded the State of Maine express.

"They had gone downtown on a bus, and walked across. No one had seen them climb the walkup stairs that evening; no one was the wiser when Gail pulled the batik drapes over those studio windows, and switched on the lights.

"She remembered that Adam Foster was still whimpering when she went into the kitchenette for seltzer; and she swore it was he who put the cyanide into his glass. She even insists that he lifted it in a grave toast. After all, that was the sort of gesture a name like Adam Foster would make on its way to immortality.

"ONCE she was positive that Foster was dead, Gail had acted with her usual efficiency. Devoting real attention to fingerprints, she had put her own glass back into the pantry.

"Adam's glass, which had dropped to the floor without smashing, remained untouched beside the body. She slipped out, quite unnoticed, around eight, locking the apartment with that extra latchkey. When she stepped on a bus at Fourteenth Street, she felt sure that she was entirely in the clear. Providing, of course, that she could handle Strong.

"Knowing that he would be tied up at Ulrich's farewell dinner, and remembering a promise he had made to telephone her, she had taken a taxi at Forty-second Street and hurried home.

"Her plans for Strong were airtight when she arrived. What did they have to fear, if they both kept their heads? There wasn't a single article in that shabby little studio to identify them. Strong had said he was a roving Bohemian when he signed the lease—a far cry from ichthyology, even if he hadn't been sailing for the Bahamas the next morning.

"With this thought comfortingly in mind, she had come briskly into her own living room—and found herself face to face with Tony. This was shock enough, as he was seldom home at that hour. But she had carried off the meeting perfectly, agreeing readily to fly down to Bermuda the following noon. And then the butler had put Strong's call through to the living room.

"Of course, Gail had no choice but to keep the conversation impersonal. She had tried to call Strong back at his hotel later that evening; she admits to a sleepless night, while she waited for the morning papers.

"Of course, there wasn't a word in any of them. The first afternoon sheet to break the story was the *Record*, when a district man picked up the news from a precinct blotter.

"Gail read it at the airport, and found it reassuring enough. Nothing indicated that the police had the slightest clue to work on. Naturally, it was disconcerting not to know how Strong would take the facts; but there would be time enough to thrash that out in Bermuda.

"This was her attitude when she stepped out of the plane at Darrell's Island. Her poise was unchanged when she came down to meet the *Monarch* two mornings later, the perfect hostess, making amends for a truant husband."

CHAPTER XXXI

THANKS FOR A LOVELY TIME

"NOW, with your permission," I said, "we'll backtrack to Strong. According to your sister-in law—"

"Would you mind not calling her that again?" said Dave.

"According to Gail, Strong had walked out of the Society's dinner an hour early—full of blues and oratory. He had started down to the Village immediately, with the idea of persuading her to meet him at the studio.

"For obvious reasons, they had never kept a phone in the place itself. So Strong had put through his call from a booth in a hotel. The impossibility of seeing Gail had added to his depression. He had decided to stop at the studio for a solitary nightcap before going uptown to bed.

"I won't try to describe his feelings when he opened the door on that brightly lighted room and saw what was lying on the carpet. Or the sudden, sickening awareness of what was behind it all.

"An hour later he found himself standing alone, having a nightcap in an uptown bar. Several of them, in fact, while he tried to pull himself together, to plan out his future.

"He was still planning—after a fashion—when he reeled off the *Monarch of Bermuda* at the pier in Hamilton. Lacking the courage to face you—as he had intended, when he sent you that radiogram at sea—afraid to face Ulrich or Elsa—he had made a date with Gail instead. This was not the first date they had had together on an empty beach. He had made it in the split second it took to stagger against her surrey's wheels on Front Street that morning.

"Gail had seen to her guests' comfort at Felicity, conferred with her housekeeper about the impending luncheon, and slipped out of the house by the back door. Three minutes later, she was through the oleander hedge, following a path among the bay grape to their meeting place.

"Strong, as we know, had gotten off the train at a deserted halt, stolen his second bicycle that morning, ridden off some of his head along the St. George's causeway, built up a brand new one at the Swizzle Inn—and crashed through the sand dunes to the beach on the dot of ten-thirty."

I paused a moment.

"GAIL'S report of that meeting is on the meager side, but I think we can reconstruct it pretty well. She had admitted her connection with Adam Foster quite calmly, including the fatal tête-à-tête at the studio.

"Sensing instinctively that Strong had kept clear of the police after discovering the body, she had even congratulated him on his presence of mind. And then something in his look had stopped her dead. He started to talk.

"He accused her of using his hideaway as a rendezvous on other occasions—a fact which Gail had coolly admitted. Then he had accused her of poisoning Foster. She had denied this heatedly, with a wealth of illustrative detail that should have stymied anyone. Especially a punch-drunk young man who had once had the misfortune to be in love with her.

"Zoo-bug had stayed iron-jawed to the end, however—and continued to lead with his chin. When Gail had quite finished, he had spoken his piece. The sort of credo you might expect from a well raised Puritan who had tripped on the primrose path.

"He had spoken of the growing pangs of conscience, culminating in the horrible discovery at the studio. Then he had described the great peace that had descended on him—only this morning—when he had decided on a means of expiation.

"Gail, of course, had listened aghast. Could she believe her ears? Was this impossible young man insisting that Tony must have the whole story, at once? Was Strong really determined to offer himself, and her, as living evidence in any court his benefactor might select?

"After all, said Strong, it was an inevitable sacrifice, as far as he was concerned. Sooner or later the police would track him down as the lessee of that studio walkup. I think that was when Gail's horror had begun in earnest. You see, old Zoo-bug had been willing enough to pose as an artist when he signed his lease at that Village renting office. But some quirk of Puritanism had made him sign his *real name*."

Dave muttered something, and I went on quickly.

"They were howling at each other

in earnest now—two classic silhouettes of hate against a white curtain of rain. Gail insists that it was Strong who made the first move. A clumsy attempt to seize her wrist.

"She had not realized how fuddled he was, until she wrenched free and watched him spin into the shallows of the rain-blanketed sea.

"Naturally, she denies premeditation. On the other hand, she admits to the first violent push that sent him tottering from shallows to deeper water. She also admits following him, just to make sure he would not reach shore again—until that moment, almost three hours later, when the tide-rip delivered him on the private beach at Felicity.

"The idea that Strong's death might go down in the books as a suicide had occurred to her only when she began receiving her guests for lunch.

"She admits that she had never felt more pleased with herself than at that moment when she stood in the great hall, coolly competent in her Chanel original—the perfect chatelaine of great wealth, flattering the big-wigs of Bermuda for sweet politics' sake.

"UNFORTUNATELY for Gail, her sense of security lasted only a trifle more than twenty-four hours.

"Strong had spoken vaguely of expiation, a moment before she tumbled him in the surf. If only she had given him time to mention the fact that his expiation was a *fait accompli*—if only she had watched the mails the next morning."

Dave looked at me sharply. "Are you telling me that Strong put that business in 12th Street in writing?"

"Strong did everything but draw diagrams. Remember when we were chasing him down Reid Street? Remember when that fish wagon cut across the road, just in front of the postoffice? He must have had the letter in his teeth, and dropped it over the handlebars. At any rate, your brother was reading it in his study at nine the next morning.

"We have no way of knowing what Tony Yates thought at the moment. Gail is unable to explain why he sat tight for a while, with that dynamite in his pocket. Perhaps he was just bowled over at first. Perhaps, like all master traders, he was only trying to decide what he could get in exchange.

"Tony got the letter at nine, and we went aboard the *Columbia* at three. An hour later, he was reading the contents of that letter to Gail behind a locked cabin door—offering her a simple choice. Exposure at the first British police court, or immediate divorce on his terms. Then he had gone off to have a drink at von Merz's cabin.

"From that point on, Tony Yates played a cat and mouse game, enjoying it thoroughly. The sort of civilized sadism that reflects no credit on anyone; and yet, it was human enough, in the circumstances.

"Gail had kept her head, even then, though she admits that it is the first time since their marriage that she burst into tears. She had even made a compromise, where none seemed possible. She had made Tony promise to keep up appearances a little longer.

"Of course, she had ceased to trust him long ago. She knew that the letter was always on his person; she knew too that there was only one way to get possession of it. All she prayed for now was a moment alone with him—and a clean getaway at the end.

"There was no definite plan to kill Tony at ten this evening. Certainly, the two of them had no arrangment

to meet at the outdoor tanks, as I romantically supposed. Gail had just slipped into the lagoon some time before, wearing that same rubber bathing suit, a pair of fishermen's gloves, and one of Frank's bait-knives in her belt.

"When Tony was talking to us on the sandspit, she was floating quietly not a hundred feet from shore, noting just how far gone he was in liquor, and the route he followed down the beach. She was out of the water and on his trail from that moment on. At ten-ten, that letter was in her possession, and Tony lay at the bottom of the devil's cauldron.

"Nothing could have been simpler, or more efficient, than her removal of this obstacle. Nothing had miscarried —until Jim Flagg snapped his Leica from the rowboat, and von Merz swam across the lagoon, just as she sprinted out to snatch the camera."

I LET it ride on that, and relaxed in the depths of the deck-chair. It seemed that I'd been talking for a long time, on a subject familiar to every schoolboy since the beginning of history. When Dave's hand fell heavily on my shoulder, I looked up with a sleepy smile.

"Surely you've a complete blueprint now?"

"What made you hook von Merz up with Flagg's missing camera?"

"There's nothing occult about that reasoning. Von Merz was the only member of our party who had a bird's-eye view of the terrain. Besides, he could be in and out of that cubby-hole window in the shortest time. Now that I've checked again on that detail, he even had time to dry his hands on a towel and hide the film indoors. Furthermore, he was the only person on the island who stood to benefit from any change in the *status quo*."

"How much of this has von Merz admitted to the inspector?"

"Not a word, so far. He's still standing pat on his diplomatic immunity. Let's not labor that point too strenuously. Unless I misjudge the Nassau police, it'll be a cold day before he gets another British visa—anywhere."

"D'you honestly believe he would have had the nerve to swear he saw Elsa?"

"Without a doubt. Providing he could make a deal with Gail."

"Getting back to Gail—how on earth did she manage to keep up her poker face?"

"Gail seems to be a remarkable woman in many ways. One of her most surprising accomplishments is fighting a rear-guard action, after she's lost the battle.

"Look how cleverly she faced it out with me, admitting all the motives before the police could track them down. Look at the cool way she soothed herself to sleep with luminal. . . . Speaking of sleep, will you join your girl-friend under the coco palms, and let me catch up on mine?"

"Not until you answer one more question. You told me that you could name the murderer, *before* von Merz made his jail-break. Why didn't you spring it on Gail then?"

"With that Austrian sitting tight on the one clue that made sense?"

"When did you first suspect Gail?"

"She was a possibility from the word go. What really set off the spark in my lazy brain was Tony's sudden change of front, the day we sailed from Bermuda.

"Remember how anxious he was to play district attorney then? I guessed what he was holding out, when he

froze up on my questions aboard the *Columbia*. When we had our last talk on the beach here, I knew he was in the driver's seat."

Dave nodded. Then he said:

"This is really the last question, Jack. You say von Merz had plenty of time to hide that film. How did you ferret out the hiding place in fifteen minutes?"

"I didn't. According to Inspector Tucker, the police are still hunting."

"But I saw you take that film from your belt—"

"So did Gail." I reached into my belt again, and tossed the roll of celluloid into the sea. Then I reached reluctantly under my deck-chair, hauled up my portable, and set it firmly on my knees.

"A fake, Jack?"

"Don't put it so bluntly. Say it's one of the best performances I ever gave—with a fresh roll of film, from Jim Flagg's kit, for a hand prop. . . . For the last time, will you take your girl for a swim? Tucker's bound to find out I'm not a detective any moment now—and I've a story to write."

THE END

Argosy's Discovery of 1940!

THE HARP AND THE BLADE

A stirring tale of an Irish troubadour by

JOHN MYERS MYERS

Beginning in the June 22nd Issue

Argonotes.

The Readers' Viewpoint

ALL right, all right; we can take a hint when we're struck violently over the head with it. Next month we are going back permanently to the good old custom of running three serials in each issue. If you haven't happened to notice that we have cut down on serials lately, you are unique; you are practically the only person in the United States who hasn't written us an indignant letter about it.

So the former serial quota will shortly be resumed, and it's perfectly all right with us. We would just like to point out that if you readers make enough noise, you can get anything that the harried and all too fallible editors are able to give you. It's your magazine, not ours; we just work here.

It's been some time since a well known correspondent of ours has sent in one of his discriminating ratings. But here he is with the year 1939 carefully analyzed and tabulated.

NORMAN W. SIRINGER

My list of the best stories in ARGOSY in 1939 is as follows:

Serials

1. Seven Footprints to Satan—A. Merritt.
2. The Ringer—Charles Rice McDowell.
3. Minions of the Moon—William Gray Beyer.
4. Wild River—John Stromberg.
5. Lords of Creation—Eando Binder.
6. Maker of Shadows—Jack Mann.
7. Remember Tomorrow—Theodore Roscoe.
8. Calling Dr. Kildare—Max Brand.
9. Lost Harbors—Allan Vaughan Elston.
10. Dark Thunder—Robert Carse.

Novelets

1. Death Due North—Allan Vaughan Elston.
2. Nonstop to Mars—Jack Williamson.
3. The Great Green Serpent—Paul Ernst.
4. A Package for Paris—Frederick C. Painton.
5. Tomorrow—Arthur Leo Zagat.

Undoubtedly the worst story of the year was Walter Ripperger's stock-formula mystery novel, "The Man from Madrid," which was even poorer than his last novel. Ripperger should study Fred MacIsaac. MacIsaac writes the strictly formula mystery and adventure novels, but he convinces the reader and makes him swallow the hokum. Witness: "The Unknown Island" and "The Band of Death," two of the most exciting novels ever written (ARGOSY 1932).

Allan Vaughan Elston is your best novelet writer, probably the best of all pulp authors. Get him, Joel Townsley Rogers, Frederick C. Painton and Robert Carse (good Carse novelets like "Maximilian's Men" and not hastily written gestures: "Puritan's Progress") to form the core of your complete-story staff.

Theodore Roscoe is decidedly an off-and-on writer. Off when he gets too lurid and imaginative ("Then Placid John Adams," "The Man Who Hated Lincoln"), but otherwise excellent.

1940 looks like a pretty good year. I'm eager to dig into the two C. M. Warren novels and I don't think I'll be disappointed.

LAKEWOOD, OHIO.

THANK you, Mr. Siringer; we don't think you're going to be disappointed in the 1940 ARGOSY. Or in the Warren stories, which are saluted with enthusiasm in the next letter.

WILLIAM F. OLSEN

I just have to get a load off my chest by telling you how good C. M. Warren's "Bugles Are for Soldiers" is. I enjoyed his first story, "Then I'll Remember," so much that I read it twice, which is something I very rarely do.

I like any well written story, but my favorites are fantastics. Costume stories are okay just as long as Cleve and d'Entreville are in them. It's my opinion that Robin the Bombardier should stuff himself into one of his bombards and ask someone to blow him out of it.

There is a lot of fault finding going on, so I'm curious as to the reason. It wouldn't surprise me if some of those error hunters simply wanted to see their names in print.

Being only nineteen, I am not one of your marathon readers, but I can remember one Peter the Brazen serial and I would jump for joy if I could read another. See you in Argonotes. BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

THE next note rather surprised us. Generally the editors of ARGOSY remain anonymous for all time; but our correspondent below quite accurately recognizes an author who was a distinguished editor of this magazine.

THEODORE MAHAFFEY

I have just finished Chandler Whipple's "Kill Your Own Tigers" and must say that I found it a very gratifying pleasure to see his name back in ARGOSY. This time not as one of its greatest editors but as a contributor who had started off with a good yarn. Chandler did a great job of editing ARGOSY while he was at it; I am sure he will do equally as well as a contributor.

While I am at it, let me commend your taste for the cover of Marshall Frantz on the April 13th issue. Good color scheme.

EL CENTRO, CALIFORNIA.

Looking Ahead!

STARS IN MY CROWN

There was a good deal of talk, conjecture, and just plain dope-guessing being passed around last year about whether Joe Bryan would meet the champ to win back his title. Remember? Well, you know what happened—but here's the story behind it all that only one man could tell—the how, the why, the wherefore. A vivid novelet of the squared circle by

CLARK BODEY

TO RIDE A CROOKED TRAIL

Saddle old Paint for the last time, and ride to the Far Divide—but, cowboy, don't leave your name to another man. For those that travel under an outlaw brand are apt to head into a stampede of disaster. Novelet of the West by

C. K. SHAW

ALSO: Max Brand, Arthur Leo Zagat, Maurice Beam, and Others

COMING IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY—JUNE 15th

GET A NEW ROYAL PORTABLE

ON FREE HOME TRIAL

We did!

EARN MORE MONEY!

"... When opportunity knocks, you have to be ready. A Royal Portable helped me make a correspondence course pay real dividends ..."

GET AHEAD FASTER!

"... A Royal Portable makes a student and his work stand out. Besides, what better time to perfect a money-earning accomplishment like typing!"

MAKE WRITING FUN!

"... I never realized until I tried a Royal how simple typing is. Actually, since we traded in our old typewriter on a New Royal Portable, being secretary to my entire family is fun."

Maybe you've never used a typewriter —never thought of owning one ... Then it's high time you tried a New Royal Portable. You owe it to yourself, your future, to see with your own eyes the fine typing, the beautiful letters you—yes, YOU—can turn out.

SEND NO MONEY! Spend no money! Try a New Royal Portable right in your own home—FREE! See how it thrills the children—helps students; grammar, high school or college—makes their writing faster, easier, more interesting. See how quickly everyone in the family takes to it—starts setting down ideas, letters, reports. Know *without risking a penny* exactly what a Royal can mean to YOU—now—*and in the days and years to come.* Get the FACTS—they cost you nothing—then *decide!*

with MAGIC* MARGIN the most sensational of all typewriter improvements

ANYONE CAN USE IT ... ANYONE CAN TURN OUT BEAUTIFUL WORK

• AND HERE'S WHY! Only Royal gives you MAGIC Margin—it sets the margin *automatically 3 times faster;* Locked Segment Shift Freedom, Touch Control*, Touch-set Tabulator, Time-Saver Top and many other office typewriter features. Standard, full-sized keyboard and all controls. Tested, proved, guaranteed. Made by Royal, world's largest company devoted exclusively to the manufacture of typewriters.

*Trade-mark, Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

COUPON BRINGS DETAILS ... MAIL TODAY

FREE!

Royal's Instant Typing Chart shows you how to type RIGHT.

INCLUDED

with every Royal Portable at no extra cost — a handsome Carrying Case.

Royal Typewriter Company, Inc.
Dept. D-12, 2 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Tell me how I can get a genuine New Royal Portable on FREE HOME TRIAL; also tell me how I can own one for ONLY A FEW CENTS A DAY including small carrying charge.

NAME _____ STREET _____

CITY _____ COUNTY _____ STATE _____

MAKE THAT OLD TYPEWRITER HELP PAY!

Please quote trade-in allowance on a _____ Typewriter, Serial No. _____

STUDENTS BUSY AT WORK IN LARGE COYNESHOPS

Learn ELECTRICITY

Pay For Your Training After You Graduate

Find out all about this wonderful offer. My big Free Book tells you how you can train for your start to a big pay job in Electricity . . . And through my "Pay Tuition After Graduation" Plan you can get your training now and pay for most of your tuition in easy monthly payments after you graduate.

"LEARN BY DOING"

12 Weeks Practical Training in COYNE Shops

In the Big Coyne Shops you have individual help by expert instructors so that you quickly and easily learn Electricity by actual work. No advanced education or previous electrical experience is needed. You are taught . . Not by correspondence, just by books or embarrassing reciting . . . but by the Famous Coyne "Learn-By-Doing" training method which has helped hundreds of successful graduates to get and hold the job they like, or go into business for themselves.

At Coyne you do PRACTICAL ELECTRICAL WORK on real electrical equipment. You wind real armatures . . . run real motors, dynamos, generators. When you have finished each step, you KNOW HOW because you have done it yourself. If you are ambitious here is your chance to get the PRACTICAL TRAINING to qualify you for your start in the great electrical field.

H. C. Lewis

AN EXTRA 4 WEEKS COURSE IN RADIO INCLUDED

PART TIME WORK WHILE TRAINING

EMPLOYMENT HELP AFTER GRADUATION

If you are short of money and need part-time work to help pay for your room and board while training, my Employment Department will help you get a part time job. When you have graduated, they will give you Lifetime Employment Service.

READ WHAT THESE GRADUATES SAY

I like the "pay after graduation" plan . . . offers the fellow who wants to get ahead in life a wonderful opportunity . . . I am now employed by the ——— Power Co. I have been employed by this Company ever since graduating from COYNE . . . I make almost double what I did at my previous work . . . COYNE School helped me in landing the job I now have. James Dible

I owe a lot to COYNE . . . I secured a job after returning home wiring cranes for the ——— Machine Co. Before going to COYNE I was clerking in a grocery store earning the usual clerk's wages. I was in doubt about quitting my job but I have **tripled** the cost of the entire course . . in the first ten months. The school is everything you say it is and more. I was completely satisfied. Thanking you for your kind cooperation while at school and since returning home.—Jack E. Stroup

GET THE FACTS

Don't let lack of money keep you from sending in the Coupon now. My Big FREE Book is full of facts and photographs which tell you about Coyne Training. It also gives you the details of my Pay After Graduation Plan, Spare Time Employment Offer, Graduate Employment Service, Lifetime Scholarship and other advantages.

MAIL COUPON

COYNE occupies this entire Modern, fireproof Building

ELECTRIC REFRIGERATION AIR CONDITIONING

At this time I am including additional valuable instruction in these two important branches of electricity.

COYNE H. C. LEWIS, President FOUNDED 1899
ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. AO-13, Chicago, Ill.

Send Today for this FREE Book!

H. C. LEWIS, President,
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL,
500 S. Paulina Street,
Dept. AO-13, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Lewis:—Without obligation send me your big free illustrated catalog, with all facts about Coyne Training and details of your "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" Plan, as well as the details of your 4 weeks Radio Course you are including.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Mail in envelope or paste on a postcard