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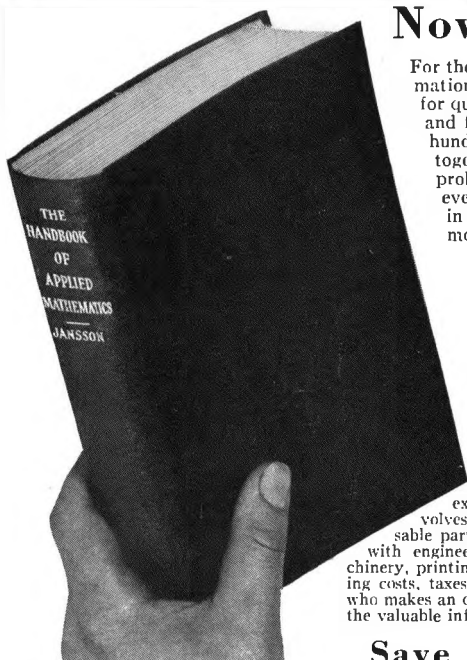
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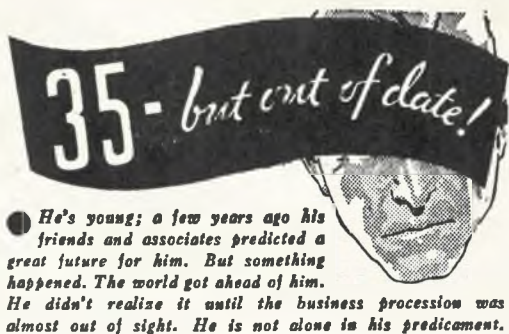
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Why don't you write?



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"Jenny promised to marry me—but I can't ask her to set the day, when I've only my pay as Flight Lieutenant."

The Gold Ship

A thrill-crammed adventure of the Anglo-American Intelligence officer known to the natives as the Red Wolf of Arabia.

By WILLIAM J. MAKIN

NIGHT time on the quayside at Port Saïd. Dazzling arc-lamps and two searchlights revealed the huge bulk of the liner *S. S. Koh-i-Nor* outward bound from London to Bombay. A chanting procession of black-smearing Arab coal-carriers padded over a floating barge to dump their heavy loads into the bowels of the ship. And that lean Intelligence officer known to the natives as the Wolf of Arabia, standing on the quay with a friend, was mechanically counting those Arab coal-carriers.

"There's only one snag," went on the enthusiastic young man in the bluish-gray garb of the Royal Flying Corps.

"There usually is," nodded Rodgers. His gray eyes were narrowed in the direction of the anchored liner. "What is the snag?"

"She's promised to marry me—but I can't ask her to set the day, when I've only my pay as Flight Lieutenant—and I have to send a bit of that to the old folks. If only I could get my promotion before she gets back here from Bombay! I could make it, then."

"Any chance of it?"

The young Flight Lieutenant shook his head sadly.

"Not a ghost of a chance on the horizon."

Those gray eyes did not turn from their scrutiny of the ship. But as he lifted his keen features to the bluish light of the arc-lamps, there was the suspicion of a smile.

"I shouldn't worry, my boy. Things happen in these parts. A little frontier raid, and you may be listed within a week. The fact that Jenny has promised to marry you ought to be enough for the moment."

"Now you're talking like an uncle, Rodgers," grinned the Flight Lieutenant.

"Perhaps I'm in a philosophic mood."

"Well, continue, and tell me why *you* haven't married. Half the women I meet between here and Heliopolis are crazy about you. Married ones too."

But Red Rodgers was not to be drawn. He shook his head, still with that queer smile on his features.

"I'm in love with the desert, not a woman," he explained.

"And yet all the desert Arabs believe in a plurality of wives, *Allah O akbar*," laughed the Flight Lieutenant.

That lithe, lonely Intelligence officer known to the natives as the Red Wolf of Arabia did not laugh in reply. The smile had been erased, and replaced by a mask of weariness. During the past two months rumor had given it out that he had been lost in the Libyan Desert. But he had limped into a little office in Cairo the other day, where he had handed over to the astonished Intelligence headquarters a complete plan of certain fortifications of a rival European power in Africa. He had been told to take a holiday after this achievement, and leaving the gloating officials with a casual nod, had run into his young friend Flight Lieutenant Browne.

"I've got leave to fly a machine over to Port Saïd and meet Jenny, who's on her way to Bombay. Come with me," Browne had suggested.

HERE they were, after an excellent dinner at the Hotel Savoy, watching the *Koh-i-Nor* making final preparations for the passage through the Suez Canal. Already the night was throbbing with the liner's deep-throated siren, and belated passengers were scurrying up the gangway.

"A night-cap for your thoughts, old fellow," volunteered Browne.

"I'm just tired," confessed the Intelligence officer. "I've not had a decent night's sleep for ages."

"Well, you can sleep at the hotel until four ack emma. Then we've got to flip back to Cairo."

"If only I could sleep!"

"Try counting sheep going through a gate," suggested Browne.

RODGERS turned and looked at him. "You know, that's what I have been doing. Or rather, I've been counting those black devils of coal-carriers as they disappeared into the ship."

"And hasn't it had a soporific effect?" laughed Browne.

"Just the opposite," observed Rodgers, narrowing his eyes at the liner again. "For I discovered something very curious."

"And what is that?"

"I counted one hundred and sixty-eight men carrying coal into that ship."

"Quite a hefty black-gang. But there's nothing remarkable in that."

"Perhaps not. But only one hundred and two men returned across the floating barge. And they've finished coaling now. Look, the Arabs are going away."

And he nodded toward the sweating black-grimed group of natives streaming away from the quay.

"Then where are the other sixty men?" asked Browne.

"Sixty-six," corrected Rodgers. "I can only suppose that they're still in the ship."

"That can't be," said Browne, shaking his head vigorously. "The trick *did* work, Rodgers. You were falling asleep and miscounted."

The Intelligence officer was about to reply when a little group of men came hurrying along the quay. One of the three was the harbor-master. The second was the pilot, a Frenchman who knew the vagaries of the Suez Canal as his father did a ditch on his farm in Normandy. The third was the chief clerk of the shipping company, with the papers and manifest of the liner in a portfolio.

The pilot nodded to Rodgers. Many an evening in Port Saïd he had sat entranced while the long, slim hands of Paul Rodgers had conjured Chopin from a badly tuned piano.

"Coming along with us, Rodgers?" he asked.

"No, not tonight."

"Will you sign here, sir?" said the clerk, pushing a paper before the pilot.

The pilot gave it a casual glance and scrawled his signature.

"Valuable cargo, *hein?*" he remarked. "Two million pounds in bullion."

"And two jute millionaires, three Indian princes and a couple of maharajahs, not to mention a famous cricketer," laughed the clerk. "Thank you, sir. Everything O. K."

"Who's taking over at Ismaïlia, Pierre?" asked the harbor-master.

"Johnson, I believe," replied the pilot. "I'll give you a phone-call when I get ashore there."

They moved toward the gangway of the liner.

"Two million pounds in bullion," whistled Flight Lieutenant Browne. "That's what I call a real cargo."

"Too real," grunted the Intelligence man. "Dangerous."

Then he drew in his breath sharply.

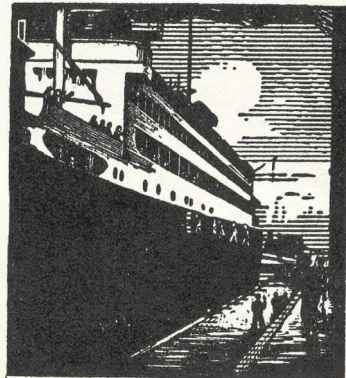
A jovial, podgy man was scampering up the gangway. There was a wave of a plump hand in the glare of the arc-lamps, and a hearty laugh as a sailor helped him aboard. Then the podgy figure disappeared into the crowd congesting the brightly lighted promenade deck.

But that one swift glimpse was sufficient. The hearty laugh confirmed the identification.

"Josef Talata!" murmured the Red Wolf of Arabia to himself. "I wonder what devilment has brought him back to the Red Sea."

This was the Czech whom Paul Rodgers had trapped in the Desert of Singing Sands, the man who took what were supposed to be iron bedsteads, on the backs of camels into the heart of Arabia, bedsteads whose bars were gun-barrels, to be assembled into rifles by the craftsmen of a rebel chief. A gun-runner and adventurer of a thousand and one resources!

And now Josef Talata had boarded the



gold ship. Moreover, one hundred and sixty-eight Arabs had carried coal aboard the gold ship, and only one hundred and two came ashore again. What did it mean?

As though his own brain was exploding with a medley of whirling thoughts, the siren of the *Koh-i-Nor* snarled its final warning through the night.

"*Au revoir, Jenny,*" roared Flight Lieutenant Browne, cupping his hands and shouting unashamedly to an evening-frocked figure fluttering a handkerchief from the promenade deck. "I'll be waiting for you, three months hence."

He took off his hat and waved vigorously.

"Give her a cheer, Rodgers," he said, turning.

To his astonishment, he found himself alone. And his amazement deepened as he saw a lithe figure in evening-dress clinging to the gangway which was already being drawn aboard by the sailors. It was Red Rodgers.

FOR a moment the Intelligence officer dangled over the inky waters of the Canal as the liner sheered away from the quay. Then the rough hands of two sailors dragged him aboard to safety.

"Near thing that, sir," growled one of the sailors. "We said we were sailing at eight o'clock, and it's now eight-fifteen."

"I'm interested to hear it," said Rodgers, and strolled unconcernedly along the promenade deck. . . .

"I'm behaving like a fool, purely on the impulse of a moment," decided the Intelligence officer after his first hour aboard the *Koh-i-Nor*. "I shall look an even bigger fool when they ask me for my ticket and I'm dumped ashore ignominiously at Ismaïlia. Anyhow, I shall have Pierre the pilot for company, and I know a café in Ismaïlia where they have a tolerable piano."

For that hour aboard the big liner had impressed Paul Rodgers. It was a floating palace of luxury and unobtrusive efficiency. On one of the decks a jazz band was playing the latest London melodies, and expensively garbed couples were dancing and flirting beneath colored lights. The stars above were almost shamed out of existence, and even the desert on both sides of the Canal had been humiliated by a giant searchlight in the bows into something resembling an untidy back garden.

But that lapping sea of sand still possessed a sinister aspect to the Red Wolf



Josef
Talata

of Arabia as he leaned over the rail and watched it slide past the liner into the darkness behind. It was still the Great Arabian Desert, through which trickled a ditch holding the great liner with its cargo of gold and millionaires—a ditch a few yards wide, cut out of the sand.

The glowing portholes almost grazed one of the banks as the liner slid through the night.

Two bells sounded.

"*Um deckty hai, aatcha sahib!*" sang out the Lascar look-out at the mast.

Slanting his eyes upward, Red Rodgers could see the brilliantly lit bridge, where the pilot Pierre, and the officers of the watch paced regularly up and down. And below-decks the engines throbbed in quiet but majestic power, sending this huge liner easily through the sandy waters of the Canal. In three hours they would be at Ismaïlia. The pilot would be changed, and the liner would then go on to Suez. The *S. S. Koh-i-Nor* would be clear of the Canal by morning.

"And because I saw Josef Talata scramble aboard, and sixty-six Arabs who failed to reappear, I've landed myself in this mess," decided Rodgers lugubriously.

His first thought was to confront the gun-runner and adventurer in his stateroom and cross-examine him. But he realized at once that Talata's jovial laugh would smother all suspicions. And the Czech had not hesitated to travel under his rightful name. Rodgers had secured a passenger-list and discovered Talata's name there in possession of one of the most expensive suites aboard.

IT was not like Talata to travel *de luxe*, in the company of millionaires, maharajahs and two million pounds' worth of bullion, except for a purpose. It might be a sinister purpose, in which the desert and the Arabs with whom the

jovial Czech had an intimate acquaintance, would play their part. Better, then, to avoid Talata and hope that the last-minute scramble of a red-haired man in evening-dress at Port Saïd had passed unnoticed.

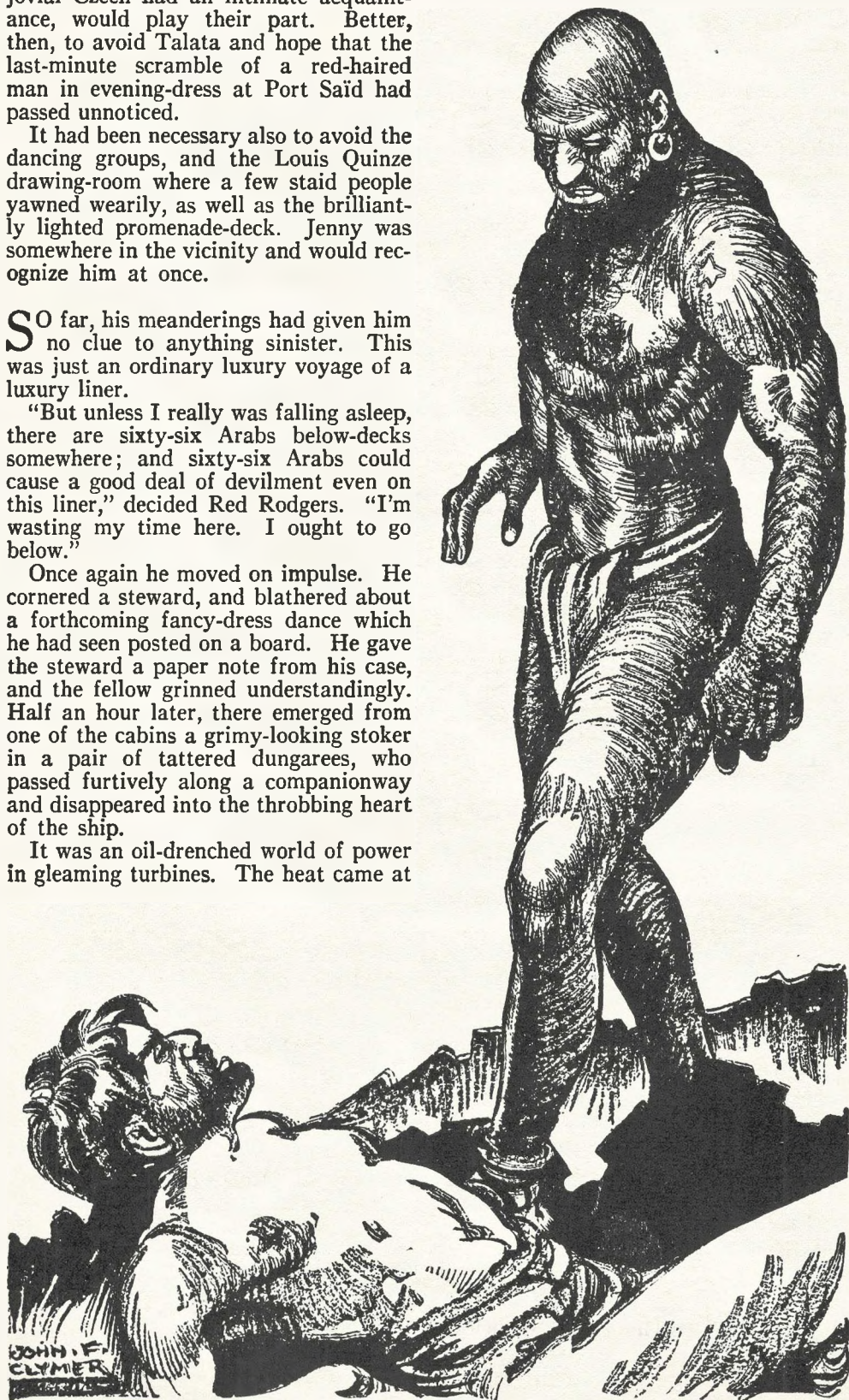
It had been necessary also to avoid the dancing groups, and the Louis Quinze drawing-room where a few staid people yawned wearily, as well as the brilliantly lighted promenade-deck. Jenny was somewhere in the vicinity and would recognize him at once.

SO far, his meanderings had given him no clue to anything sinister. This was just an ordinary luxury voyage of a luxury liner.

"But unless I really was falling asleep, there are sixty-six Arabs below-decks somewhere; and sixty-six Arabs could cause a good deal of devilment even on this liner," decided Red Rodgers. "I'm wasting my time here. I ought to go below."

Once again he moved on impulse. He cornered a steward, and blathered about a forthcoming fancy-dress dance which he had seen posted on a board. He gave the steward a paper note from his case, and the fellow grinned understandingly. Half an hour later, there emerged from one of the cabins a grimy-looking stoker in a pair of tattered dungarees, who passed furtively along a companionway and disappeared into the throbbing heart of the ship.

It was an oil-drenched world of power in gleaming turbines. The heat came at



Rodgers like an oil rag smothering his nostrils. Bells clanged; indicators shivered against dials. Men in dungarees moved with the precision of automatons. Here was the heart of the monster liner, and it pulsated rhythmically and with shining efficiency.

It almost convinced the grimy figure of the stoker descending to the bowels of the ship that the plot he envisaged was too utterly fantastic. Nothing could stop the majestic progress of this liner, not even sixty-six men. But there still remained Josef Talata. The cherubic Czech with the gurgling laugh believed in fantastic adventures. Red Rodgers continued his progress downward.

Eventually, worming his way past a gleaming dynamo, he reached a steel door. *Stokehold* was painted over it. He

hesitated a moment. He wanted the word, the "open sesame" for that steel door. Then his eye caught a well-worn shovel reclining by the door. He took it and clanged it against the steel plates. The steel door slid open.

The blinding white heat of an open furnace greeted him. An almost naked man was balancing himself, poised against the gaping white mouth with a shovel of coal in his hands. A twist of the sweating body, and the coal was spread over the flames. Another loud clang, and the door closed.

"Who the hell are you?" yelled a voice in his ear.

Rodgers turned. A giant of a fellow, with matted hair and sweat streaking a coal-grimed face, was standing over him. A hairy chest swelled dangerously.

"Another fool to stoke for you, Abdullah," the giant laughed. "Get him to work! —Come on, you!" And a boot thudded against Rodgers' ribs.



"My sheeft, sair," grunted Rodgers in a half-caste accent.

The next moment he was sprawled on the steel plates from a blow of the giant's fist. He lay half stunned against a heap of coal.

"Another fool to stoke for you, Abdullah," laughed the giant. "Get him to work. Every man is precious. Come on, you!"

A boot thudded against Rodgers' ribs. He staggered to his feet. It was then he saw Abdullah, a pock-faced Egyptian squatting on a heap of coal, an automatic in his hand.

"You stoke like hell!" ordered Abdullah, wagging the automatic.

Blood trickled from Rodgers' mouth. Without a word he took up his shovel and plunged it at the heap of coal. The door of a furnace swung open. Almost blinded by the white heat, he flung the coal into the white mouth. The door clanged back.

But in that moment he realized everything. The scared expression of another stoker, a negro, bleeding from a head wound, told him the piracy had begun. Abdullah, squatting with his automatic, was another proof. And the growling giant with the hairy chest and the ready fist was conclusive. Yet so far, the piracy was confined to the stokehold. The engine-room was still inviolate.

AS Red Rodgers, streaming with sweat, bent to his task, he could hear the hairy giant growling and laughing with Abdullah.

Voices were raised above the clang of shovels.

"In ten minutes we shall reach Ismaïlia. There we shall change pilots. Nobody must pass that steel door until we leave Ismaïlia."

"And what of the new pilot, Effendi?" asked Abdullah.

The giant let out a roar of laughter.

"He is in our pay. Trust old Josef."

"And when we leave Ismaïlia, Effendi?"

"My show begins," said the giant, thumping his chest. "Old Josef has his gang on deck. They are traveling third class. The toughest bunch we could collect at Marseilles. They attack the radio cabin first."

"And you, Effendi?"

"I manage the engine-room and send thirty men to the decks. Listen—isn't that the signal to slow down?"

Beyond the steel door, in the engine-room, a bell shrilled loudly. The throb-

bing engines ceased. It was an order from the bridge for the liner to stop.

"It is Ismaïlia, Effendi," smiled Abdullah.

In the silence that followed, Rodgers instinctively held himself tense. But once again that heavy-shod boot found his body.

"Get down to your stoking, you son of Satan!" snarled the giant.

Once again the Intelligence man staggered to the heap of coal and plunged his shovel into the black hill. He realized, in this humiliating moment, that he was powerless to prevent the greatest act of piracy of the century.

HE visualized the pilot Pierre shaking hands with the commander of the *Koh-i-Nor*, descending the ladder and being conveyed by launch to the twinkling lights of this junction of the Canal. A new pilot was climbing aboard, a man in the pay of Josef Talata. Perhaps some of the passengers were leaning over the rail, idly watching the incident. The band would have ceased now. Dancers would have drifted away to the dark corners of the ship, talking romance beneath the bright stars of the desert night sky. Last drinks were being drained, final cigarettes flung into the inky waters, and yawning, well-fed passengers proceeding to their bunks. Princes, maharajahs and millionaires and two million pounds in bullion stowed away in the liner's strong-room. . . . While down below a gang of desperate men waited.

Again the bell shrilled, and the rhythm of the engines began.

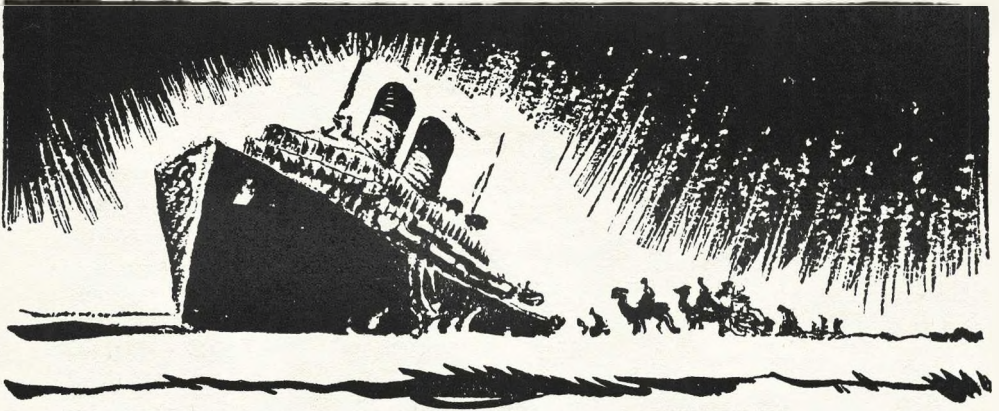
"Call out the Arabs!" shouted the giant.

A whistle, and a strange collection of men began to scramble from the coal-bunkers. Lean, desperate Arabs of the dark streets of Port Said; a few vagabonds from the desert; even vendors of obscene postcards, noted Rodgers, bitterly. Nearly all the cut-throats who made a precarious and desperate living along the Canal were present. Sixty-six of them, black with coal-dust and still carrying sacks over their naked shoulders.

The giant broke into fluent Arabic.

"Come on, you misbegotten children! Out with your guns. Anyone who disobeys my commands will find that even Allah cannot protect him."

The sacks were torn apart; still bending to his slavery, Rodgers was astonished to see automatic rifles of American



pattern disclosed, pistols, steel bludgeons and every imaginable weapon. Soon every man was armed. They stood like a straining army of black hounds, waiting to be unleashed.

"I leave you the stokers, Abdullah," said the giant. "Blow the head off any who cease work until we run aground."

"Allah be with you, Effendi!" laughed Abdullah.

"Open the door!" yelled the giant.

The steel door slid slowly back.

"Get to it!" he shouted to his army.

The pack of black hounds rushed for the engine-room. They scrambled after each other, yelling like fiends. A black avalanche, they spilled their way among the turbines. Shouts of surprise went up from the dungareed robots. A shot rang out. There was a scream. Another shot—and then the steel door slid back again.

The stokehold seemed dangerously quiet. Nervously Abdullah gripped his automatic and glared aggressively at the stokers. Then he jerked back his head in surprise. One stoker was missing. It was the man who had come in on the late shift.

"Where's your mate?" snarled Abdullah at the negro.

"Guess he went along wiv dose brown debbils, baas," he drawled wearily.

Abdullah hesitated. Then the Oriental asserted himself. He shrugged his shoulders.

What did one half-caste devil of a stoker matter, anyway?

And in the confusion of the fight that was going on in the engine-room, one of the Arabs observed a half-naked stoker fall through an opening in the steel plates into the night. A shot had rung out, and there was a soft splash in the darkness. The Arab bent down to re-

lieve the body beneath his foot of a wrist-watch.

What did one half-caste devil of a stoker matter, anyway?

THE sluggish waters of the Canal seemed to suck at the weary body of Red Rodgers like a suffocating swamp. He was striking out madly to avoid the slowly churning screws of the liner. It was as though he swam through a turbulence of sand and clay. Currents sucked at his feet. Surging water swept into his face. Like a piece of flotsam he was flung against the crumbling sandy bank of the Canal.

Sobbing with exhaustion, he cleaved his way up the slope. As he reached the top of the bank, he pitched forward on his face and lay there. His heart pounded. His lungs wheezed for breath. And all the time he was tortured with the knowledge that he must rouse himself and drag those dead limbs into life.

In five minutes he was on all fours, peering into the night like a questing beast. Far away in the darkness a string of bright lights told of the *S. S. Koh-i-Nor* voyaging to destruction, with murder and piracy loose in the engine-room. Now it was probably stalking the decks. Perhaps even at this moment Josef Talata was standing on the bridge alongside the pilot, chuckling at the success of his desperate adventure.

Even as Red Rodgers gazed, that string of bright lights was suddenly erased from the night. It was as though that great liner had been annihilated. The searchlight was sucked into the darkness, and the many electric lights switched off. The pirates had been successful. Josef Talata was in command of the *Koh-i-Nor* and its two million pounds in bullion.

With a groan Rodgers stood up and swayed. He glanced about him. A few yards away, a light gleamed from a window. And that light caused him to sob with relief; for he recognized it as one of the stations or *gares* which were placed at intervals along the Canal. Once inside, he could give the alarm and telephone to Port Saïd and Suez to send out police launches.

He staggered up the slope and lurched heavily against the door of the little, lighted station. He heard a mutter of surprise within. He knocked, feebly. A moment later the door swung open, and he almost pitched forward into the room.

"Who are you?"

The question was snapped at him in Arabic. For a few seconds Red Rodgers swayed there, a dripping, half-naked figure, unable to speak. But his gray eyes had photographed the astonishing scene that was revealed:

A small telephone switchboard against the bare walls; a table with a telegraphic instrument; a chair. And in a corner of the room what appeared to be a bundle of soiled linen, but in reality was the securely trussed body of an Eurasian.

"Who are you?"

Again the Arabic was snapped at him. He turned, and saw a powerful, brutish Egyptian leveling a pistol at him, and a dangerous gleam in the dark eyes.

The Egyptian turned; it was Rodgers' opportunity. The chair swung in the air and came crashing down. With a grunt the Egyptian collapsed to the floor.

"I come from Josef Talata," gasped the Intelligence officer.

He realized that he was again in the enemy's camp. The jovial Czech left nothing to chance. Even this telephone post was in his power.

"Why?" asked the Egyptian.

"Because the plan goes badly," went on Rodgers. He pointed to the window. "See for yourself!"



Mechanically, the Egyptian turned to look into the night. It was Rodgers' opportunity. The chair, on which his hands had rested for support, swung in the air and came crashing down upon the Egyptian's head. With a grunt, the fellow collapsed to the floor, and the pistol slid from his hand. Rodgers pounced upon it and dealt him a further blow with the butt.

"That gives me a certain two hours," grinned the Wolf of Arabia to himself.

He darted in the direction of the bundle of linen. But the Eurasian was also

unconscious. No assistance from him. Rodgers stood in the lamp-lit room considering the situation.

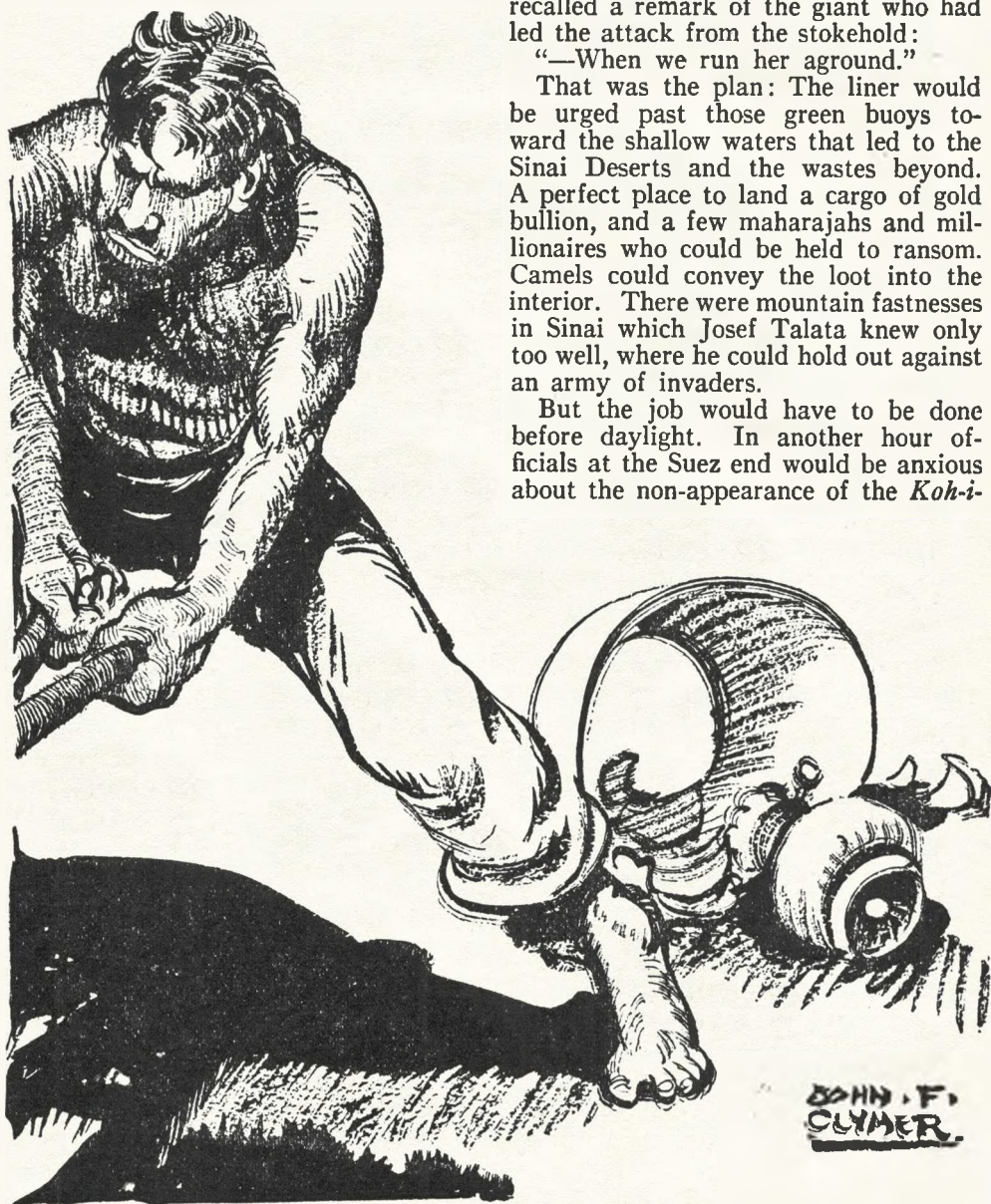
A map of the Suez Canal stretched across one wall. An arrow indicated the station in which he stood. It was Devesdir, and at the point where the Canal debouches into the Great Bitter Lake, the largest sheet of water along the whole length.

He glanced out of the window. No sign of the *Koh-i-Nor*, yet it was somewhere in the darkness. He caught a glimpse of the fixed green lights of buoys that marked the eastern edge of the channel that led through the Great Bitter Lake. At the same time, he recalled a remark of the giant who had led the attack from the stokehold:

"—When we run her aground."

That was the plan: The liner would be urged past those green buoys toward the shallow waters that led to the Sinai Deserts and the wastes beyond. A perfect place to land a cargo of gold bullion, and a few maharajahs and millionaires who could be held to ransom. Camels could convey the loot into the interior. There were mountain fastnesses in Sinai which Josef Talata knew only too well, where he could hold out against an army of invaders.

But the job would have to be done before daylight. In another hour officials at the Suez end would be anxious about the non-appearance of the *Koh-i-*



Nor. On the other hand, they might decide that the liner had decided to anchor in the Great Bitter Lake for a few hours, a not unusual occurrence. And if they telephoned to Devesdir for information, the cautious Josef Talata had arranged for one of his own men to speak and reassure them.

Yet even so, nothing could be done. It would take hours for police launches to come up the Canal. And the pirates who had seized the liner were well armed. At the moment, the landing of the gold was probably in progress. Before daylight the camels with the loot would be ambling through the desert toward the mountains.

Rodgers slanted his eyes at the clock: ten minutes to four. And the chance remark of Flight Lieutenant Browne came into his brain.

"You can sleep at the hotel until four ack emma. Then we've got to flip back to Cairo."

Nine minutes to four. He scrambled to the telephone switchboard. In a few seconds he was plugging into Port Saïd.

"Yais?" a sleepy voice whispered over the wire. "Port Saïd here."

"Devesdir here," said Red Rodgers. "Put me through to the Hotel Savoy."

"It ees irregular," came back the reply. "Private telephone-calls are not permitted."

A stream of Arabic oaths was sent over the wire from the Intelligence officer. It sufficiently startled the operator in Port Saïd to attempt to ring the Hotel Savoy. . . .

Five minutes to four! Rodgers knew the excessive punctuality of his young friend. He waited in a fever of impatience.

"Hotel Savoy here," murmured the voice of a tired porter.

"I want Flight Lieutenant Browne—urgent," commanded Rodgers.

"Sorry, sair. He's just left in a taxi for the flying-field."

ONCE again Rodgers cursed. . . . "Go to the door and see for yourself," he urged.

"Very well," replied the voice resignedly.

Four o'clock. Rodgers waited. He heard the click as the receiver was taken up at the other end.

"Flight Lieutenant Browne speaking," came a cheery voice.

Rodgers laughed his relief.

"Is this a joke?" asked Browne.

"Paul Rodgers speaking. I'm at Devesdir."

"Where the devil's that?"

"More than halfway to Suez."

"Have they chucked you off the *Koh-i-Nor*? You must have gone crazy, in Port Saïd, Rodgers!"

"I chucked myself off," said Rodgers. "But I haven't time to explain that. I want to tell you that your chance of promotion has come. Pirates are looting the *Koh-i-Nor*, less than five miles away from here."

"You're crazy!"

"There's two millions in bullion aboard, remember."

"I only know that Jenny's aboard," replied Browne. "Don't fool, Rodgers."

"I'm not fooling. My boy, you've got to telephone the Air Force at Heliopolis and make them send out a flight of machines. Machine-guns and everything. And if you want to be in the fun, I suggest you fly along the Canal yourself when you've done that."

"You must have taken leave of your senses, Rodgers."

"Listen!"

IN rapid, staccato sentences the Intelligence officer told of his adventures since he had clambered aboard the liner at Port Saïd. He told of the attack on the engine-room; he talked of Josef Talata; and he told of the liner plunged into darkness, drifting toward the sandy shores of Sinai. Finally, he explained the possibilities of camels and the mountain fastnesses beyond the desert.

"Good God—it almost deserves to succeed!" gasped Browne.

"It most certainly will if you don't get to work and persuade your C. O. to get some machines into the air at once."

"I will, by gosh!" spluttered Browne. "And—Jenny!"

"Yes, I expect Jenny's thinking of you," replied Rodgers.

"You all right, Rodgers?"

"A little battered, but still in the ring."

"Well, keep it up. You'll have us within the hour."

The telephone dropped from Rodgers' hand, and he lurched wearily against the table.

"I feel I could curl up and sleep for a couple of days, now," he muttered. "And yet sleep is the one thing I dare not do."

He bent over the unconscious figure of the Egyptian. His lithe fingers fum-

bled in the fellow's pocket. He gave a grunt of satisfaction as he discovered a packet of cheap Oriental cigarettes and a box of matches.

Calmly he seated himself in the chair, lit a cigarette and waited.

AT ten minutes to five, at the moment when a grayness was spreading over the landscape, the waiting Wolf of Arabia heard the droning of the first airplanes. They came from Cairo, flying in perfect duck formation.

He walked out on to the bank of the Canal to watch them go by. Then came a heavy droning as two huge machines followed: They were Vickers Victorias, the troop-carriers used by the Royal Air Force in the Near East. Each machine carried fifteen men and machine-guns.

Rodgers chuckled.

"They're doing me proud!"

Almost like the wafting-away of mist, the dawn came. Rodgers found himself gazing across the wide expanse of the Great Bitter Lake. The huge *S. S. Koh-i-Nor* was beached against the Sinai Coast. She lay slightly on her side. The davits on the port side held dangling ropes. The boats had been lowered for use by the pirates.

"Old Josef knew his job," nodded Rodgers approvingly.

The sandy beach beyond resembled the landing of a small army. Wooden cases were tumbled in the sand; camels knelt there in that inevitable attitude of superior contentment; and men were working frantically to burden the beasts with the last of the loot.

Through a pair of binoculars which he had discovered in the station, Rodgers watched the drama unfolding. He saw the first flight of airplanes dive and swoop over the beach, startling men and camels into a panic. The heavy troop-carriers droned steadily toward the desert. They obviously intended to land there, unload their machine-gun parties and attack the pirates from the rear.

The rattle of rifle-fire came from the beach. The Arabs were shooting at the airplanes. It was enough. With a zoom, the machines surged upward again. Then they banked, and droned steadily toward the beach again. At the same time the Arabs began using their rifles excitedly.

A moment later the first bomb was dropped. A heap of sand shot into the

sky as though the desert had become a volcano. When the sand-cloud had swept away, prone figures of men were lying still on the beach.

One convoy of camels was already hurrying away. A second bomb dropped from the air caught it. The camels stampeded. Arabs scurried about the beach. Then, as the third airplane swooped down, a burst of machine-gun fire sounded from the desert beyond. The troop-carrier planes had landed.

The rest of the story is known to the newspaper readers of today, for that well-known foreign correspondent Angus Quell had the good luck to be aboard the *Koh-i-Nor* when it was seized by the pirates in the Suez Canal. And his graphic dispatches to the newspapers of America and Europe were read avidly by millions over their breakfasts. His final description of the arrival of police launches from Suez, and the boarding of the liner with the eventual release of the commander and his officers, was, one remembers, adjudged the finest newspaper story of the year.

BUT of the fate of Josef Talata Quell wrote nothing. Frankly, he knew nothing; for although the bodies on the beach and in the desert were carefully searched, no trace of the Czech with the jolly laugh could be discovered. And how the Royal Air Force came in at the right moment, Angus Quell also failed to explain. Nobody of any consequence had seen a stoker fall overboard during the night into the Canal—and what did a half-caste stoker matter anyhow?

Only Red Rodgers smiled with pleasure when a fortnight later he opened an envelope that contained a folded copy of the latest promotions. One item was underlined in red ink. He read:

TO BECOME WING COMMANDER—FLIGHT
LIEUTENANT BROWNE. RETROACTIVE.

And scrawled in writing across this list of promotions was Browne's significant remark:

"So Jenny has to keep her word, next week."

"She will," decided Rodgers; and turned again to the piano at which he was sitting in a dirty Greek café in Suez. A drunken sailor roused himself to gaze curiously at the red-headed man who was playing Liszt's "*Liebesträum*."

"The Garden of T. N. T.," another fascinating adventure of the Wolf of Arabia, will be William Makin's contribution to the next (the March) issue.

News-Reel Rescue

A tremendously exciting drama of tempestuous airways and the men who fly them—by the pilot writer who gave us "Lost Hurricane."

By LELAND JAMIESON

"LET 'em drown!" Lieutenant Robert Hurley muttered grimly, and then corrected hastily: "I didn't mean that, Earl. Forget I said it. But I wish you'd go, and leave me here."

He looked up frowningly at his superior, his face beet-red with suppressed anger.

"It's your job," Commander Newsom answered tersely, impatiently. "It makes no difference who Duke Atcherson is—what he's done to you. I don't care what he's done. The Coast Guard's job is to get out there and bring him back alive. I can't go—you know that. There's no other pilot here to go, but you." He paused and there was heavy silence for an instant. "Are you going?" he demanded, then.

Bob Hurley shrugged. "Of course," he said, his voice an undertone. "But—Earl, I was supposed to make that trans-Atlantic flight with Atcherson. I wouldn't go on three mornings when he wanted to—because the weather wasn't safe. The night before we had planned to make the start,—when I thought the weather might be right,—he left a check for my interest in the airplane and then went out and took off by himself, and I woke up and found him gone! . . . Now he comes home famous—and pulls a hot one and tries to fly three hundred miles from the *Matawumpa* to Miami for the news-reel people, and falls in the big Atlantic doing that. And now I've got to fish him out. I hate him, damn him! You—"

"I know," Commander Newsom interrupted. "I knew something like that happened. But he isn't alone out there—it wouldn't make any difference if he were. His sister's with him—and two other men! Man, don't argue *now*—you get that Douglas and shove off!"

"Okay," Hurley said. "I'm going."

In the other room of the building, in the outer office of this Coast Guard base

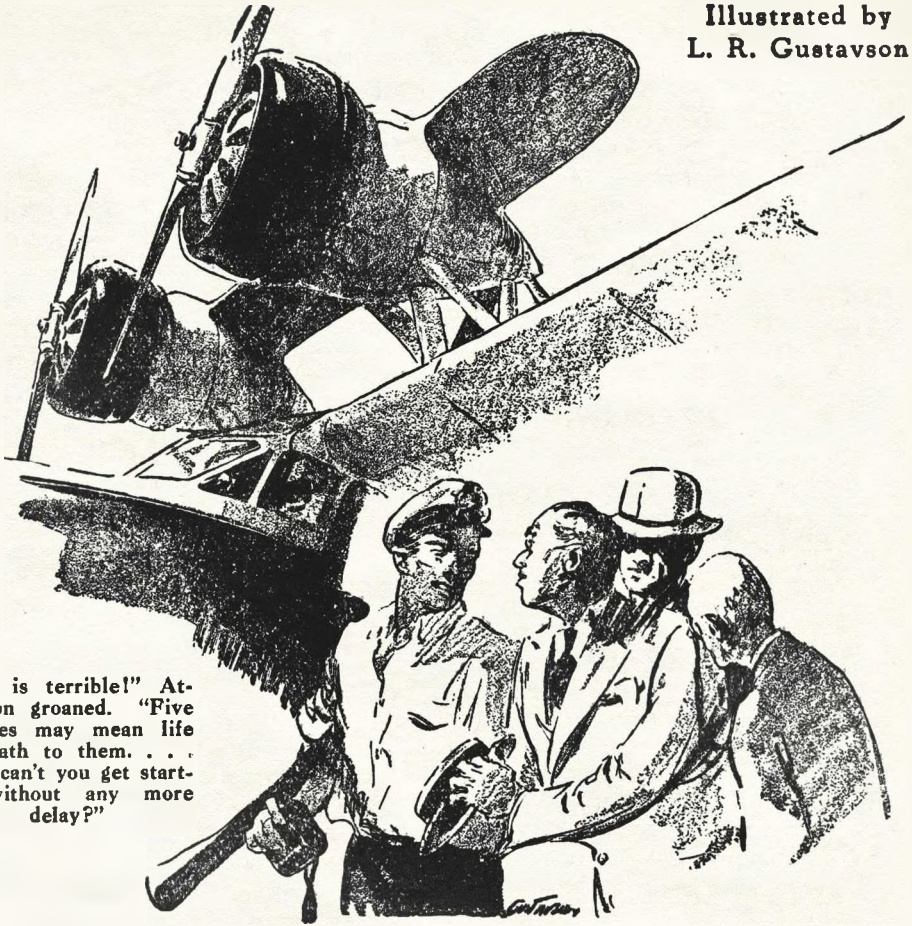
at Dinner Key, he could hear the voices of the three men who had come here ten minutes earlier with the excited word that Duke Atcherson, and Jane Atcherson, and a mechanic and a news-reel man, were down somewhere at sea. He heard Orville Atcherson, Duke's father, exclaim with frenzied insistence: "My son! My daughter! For God's sake, where did Commander Newsom go? Why don't they get started? Five minutes may mean life or death to all of them out there!"

Newsom, thin, sharp-featured, puffed nervously on a cigarette as they moved together toward the door. "He's right about that last," he said, referring to what they had overheard from Orville Atcherson. "You get the Douglas ready, and I'll get the charts and other data for you." He paused, his eyes speculative. "There are four of them on board that plane. You'll have to go alone—you won't be able to get off with all of them if you take a mechanic. . . . And," he added as an afterthought, "you may have trouble getting off, the way it is. There must be quite a sea, with all this wind we've had."

Bob Hurley nodded, and went through a side door to the hangar. There, after instructing mechanics to get out the plane, he stood for a few moments reviewing swiftly these various facts. An undercurrent of resentment filled his mind, an acute hatred of the man whom now, risking his own life, he must go out and try to salvage from the sea.

DUKE ATCHERSON'S solo flight to the western coast of Africa, even though he meant to go to Moscow but had missed his navigation on the way, fired the imagination of the people of this country. The newspapers carried banner headlines the morning of his take-off. Later on, when he passed the *Mauretania*, scareheads proclaimed "At-

Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson



"This is terrible!" Atcherson groaned. "Five minutes may mean life or death to them. . . . Man, can't you get started without any more delay?"

cherson sighted far off course in mid-Atlantic!" After that there were days of waiting, and no word came. Flying men shook their heads soberly, and in their own minds, at least, added him to that long list of intrepid pilots whom the Atlantic had destroyed.

Two months went by, during which Bob Hurley forgot to some extent the bitterness he had felt at being cheated of that flight. His leave of absence from the Coast Guard expired, and he went back to duty in Miami. Then, scarcely had he resumed his routine tasks, when the flash came in from Freetown, Sierra Leone, that Atcherson had walked into the town of Konakri in French Guinea, with a native guide who had picked him up after a bad smash on the beach.

For a week daily dispatches electrified the imagination of a dozen nationalities. During the crossing to Brazil, a feature writer "ghosted" for Duke Atcherson in spinning tales of what had happened. On the trip north to Miami a sob-sister journalist poured out thirty thousand

words of stuff about the sweet pain of adventure, the whimsy of fate, and the boyish human-interest of Duke Atcherson. Overnight Duke rode the heights of fame.

"Damn him!" Bob Hurley muttered.

And then, ten minutes ago, the chairman of the reception-committee, with Orville Atcherson and another man, burst into the Coast Guard office with word that the seaplane which had left the steamer *Matawumpa* at three o'clock yesterday afternoon with Duke and Jane Atcherson, a news-reel photographer and a radio mechanic, had not arrived. No word had come from them. The photographer, Hughes, had come down from New York by seaplane, had offered Duke five thousand dollars for an exclusive scoop of his return and his greeting with his family; and to insure the exclusion of the other news-reel men, he had taken Jane and flown out to meet the boat and bring Duke in with them. The boat was in; its captain verified the plane's departure. So there was no doubt the plane

had gone down somewhere *en route*, upon the open sea. . . .

Bob Hurley went out on the ramp and climbed up into the cockpit of the Douglas for a personal inspection of the controls and instruments. He saw Earl Newsom, a rolled chart underneath one arm, and a pair of cased binoculars in the other hand, come from the office, followed by the trio who had brought this news. They stopped underneath one wing of the plane, and Bob heard Newsom's rather nasal voice. "It's bad," he said. "If they left the *Matawumpa* at three o'clock, that's been almost twenty hours! The boat at that time was at least three hundred miles away. Mr. Atcherson, why the devil didn't you say something sooner?"

The elder Atcherson, his eyes feverish, nervously twirled a straw hat between thick and shaking fingers. His face, once full and square, was now almost gaunt beneath its folds of skin.

"I wasn't sure they'd fly back," he declared. "Hughes said they might not try it—he flew out to be sure of getting the scoop he'd paid for. I didn't know they'd left the boat, for sure, until I met it at the dock and saw the captain. Oh, it's terrible! Terrible!" His voice trailed off to silence.

Newsom, a worried expression in his face, mechanically opened and closed the case containing the binoculars. "Three hundred miles," he muttered. "That's a lot of ocean! Do you know how small a seaplane is, floating on the open sea? Do you know how little chance they have of holding out until we find them? If a—"

Lawson, the chairman of the Atcherson reception committee, shot a warning glance at the chief officer. Newsom broke the sentence in the middle. Orville Atcherson fumbled with a cigarette and finally got it lighted. He groaned: "I know—I know! But man, can't you get started without any more delay?"

THERE was a short silence. Mechanics worked upon the Douglas, checking it a final time. Newsom asked: "Was it a bi-motored plane this fellow Hughes was flying? Could he really fly?"

"Single motor," Lawson supplied. "He was a licensed pilot."

A mechanic stepped up and called through the window to Bob Hurley: "All set, Lieutenant." Commander Newsom, hearing that, detached himself from the

others there and hastened through the cabin to the cockpit. He handed Bob the chart, then the binoculars. "I'm giving you my own—they're stronger," he said. "Now, I've plotted the *Matawumpa's* route in coming in here. The plane should be down somewhere along that course. I'd allow for drift, but not too much; they may have had a sea-anchor. But I don't know, Bob—don't know if there's much hope. With ordinary trouble, they'd have let somebody know with radio—they had an operator. But you look sharp. Don't go too far—look things over carefully, and don't get into something you can't get out of. Good luck. Keep in touch by radio."

"Right," said Bob. "Don't expect me back until my gas is just about exhausted."

"I hope to God they're still alive," Newsom added, shaking Hurley's bony hand, "when—or if—you find them."

"If," Bob muttered, under his breath.

MECHANICS slid the bi-motored plane into the water from the ramp as soon as Newsom had stepped to the ground. Bob started his engines, and taxied into Biscayne Bay, watching the oil-temperature gauges. He turned into the wind and blasted both engines together, and checked his switches on the take-off run.

Heavy with her gas load, the plane climbed up upon the step at last, and finally slid sluggishly into the air. Bob turned, and headed southeast toward the open sea. Dinner Key and the Pan-American hangars faded. The city of Miami, white and clean against the facing sun, dropped steadily to the horizon and disappeared, leaving blue water on all sides that touched the sky. Here and there, below him now, small fishing-boats bobbed ceaselessly upon the swells; but there were few of these, and quickly they were left behind.

The wind was from the southwest, fresh, here where nothing hindered it; and whitecaps burst into broken lines of rolling snow, ten thousand to the minute. A thunderstorm, small but black, was gathering slowly on the horizon east of him. For an hour Hurley held steadily to his course, and then picked up the microphone and called, got his position, reported all well but no signs of the missing plane.

Constantly, as he carried on the search, the bitterness which had welled up in him these two months past re-

turned with added force. Duke Atcherson had simply bought his interest in the plane and gone on with the flight alone. But in doing so, he had robbed Bob Hurley of any chance for the fame which, now, they should be sharing. And there was something else, something deeper and more embittering than that: in the minds of those men who had watched the preparations for the flight, Duke Atcherson had implanted the idea that Bob Hurley was afraid to try to fly across an ocean. There had been almost unguarded whispers of cowardice among these men. Nothing will or can bring a pilot into the contempt of other pilots quite so quickly.

So this flight, which should have been just another task of that type for which the Coast Guard was created, was something else entirely. It was personal.

From time to time—at intervals of perhaps two minutes—Bob raised the glasses to his eyes and scanned the water's surface for traces of the plane. A tramp steamer wallowed through the white-flecked sea below, her sides splotched red with paint from stem to stern. He saw a little schooner with reefed sails running with the wind, quartering his course, and for the first time he realized how strong the wind actually must be. It was not at all impossible that it would prove unsafe to land.

He calculated the wind, and tried to estimate how far a plane would drift in twenty hours, floating on the sea. From three thousand feet, through his binoculars, he could see easily thirty miles; he could cover a strip of water sixty miles in width in going out, and sixty more in coming back. The disabled plane certainly would not be to the windward of her course; he swung to the eastward, flew for twenty minutes, and took up a new track fifty miles away.

But time passed, with nothing breaking the monotonous smoothness of the surface except tiny spurts of froth as whitecaps formed beneath the whipping of the wind. Bob checked his new position by radio with Miami, reported the surface craft which he had seen, and went on with constant vigilance.

IT was a long grind, a strain upon the eyes. He ran into a minor thunderstorm, and for a few seconds fought the rudder in the violent air. The cockpit was too small for his long legs; his muscles cramped and he shifted his position now and again and tried to rest them.

He went on, until he felt sure he must have come past the place where Atcherson had gone down, until he felt sure there was no hope of finding them. And always in his mind was a small yet plaguing fear that he had failed to see them, and had passed them by.

He turned around at last, a long slow turn downwind, and started back upon the homeward trip. Time after time he raised the glasses and surveyed the open sea. And then suddenly he saw a new, a bigger glint of sunlight than the reflection of a wave. He looked long, until his eyes, strained from acute focusing, grew blurred and watery from the effort. He rested them, and tried again. The thing there on the water still remained. He changed his course and flew for ten minutes. When he looked this time he saw the plane, its yellow wings.

WHILE he was in a shallow glide he called Miami and gave a quick description of the scene. "*Seas rather heavy,*" he declared. "*I'm not sure it's safe to land. Stand by for details.*"

After the acknowledgment, he came down until he was flying at two hundred feet. The floating plane was headed into the wind, riding deep in the water, as if her hull had sprung a leak. Even as Hurley watched it he could see a comber almost bury that tiny hull as it raked past. She was a cabin type, a biplane with a single pusher engine set behind the upper wing. And now the lower wings were stark and almost bare, the fabric ripped to shreds. One wing was half gone. It was a surprising thing to Bob that she even floated, that she hadn't long since sunk. It was no seaplane to withstand a heavy sea.

He circled, seeing no one. But as he watched, a figure emerged from a forward hatch and stood upon the catwalk just behind the bow—a girl dressed in white, who waved her arms, and then tore from around her throat a bright red scarf and waved it wildly. A smother of froth bore down upon that helpless plane and buried it just as plane and girl passed from Hurley's view, the girl still waving frantically. He circled, came back and cut his engines and then blasted them to let her know she had been seen. But still she waved.

From this low altitude he could make sure of the violence of the seas. It wasn't safe to land, regardless of the danger to those in the disabled plane. Yet he could not leave them. Their

craft, from its appearance, might not last until he could summon, and guide to this spot upon the open sea, a surface vessel to pick them up. He called Miami. Static, which throughout the trip had been bothersome when he was in the vicinity of the scattered thunderstorms brewed by this summer day, was fairly heavy now. He asked for a repeat, and then another one, before he understood the operator there.

"Heavy sea," he said. "*Doubt if I'll get off if I go down. Don't think it's safe to land. Is there a surface boat you can contact to get out here and pick them up?*"

"Stand by," the order came, thrice repeated in the crackle of the static. Hurley circled, looking for the thunderstorm which caused this harsh effect upon his radio. He saw it, far off to the southwest, perhaps twenty miles away.

Slowly he wheeled above the floating, drifting plane, his engines throttled to conserve his gasoline. The girl down there still waved occasionally. Two men, now, had come up and were standing with her on the bow, and all three went under water to their thighs each time a whitecap broke upon the hull.

"I hope to hell a boat's close by!" Bob muttered, and turned his eyes back to the plane. "They must have taken a beating, riding out those choppy seas."

WELL, let them! Duke Atcherson deserved this, and anything else he might have happen to him. Bob wondered what he would say, when Duke stepped aboard this plane of his, hauled in from certain drowning. What explanation would Duke make for that morning two months ago when he had branded Bob, and gone off in search of fame alone? Damn him, he had found it! And Bob Hurley was still a Coast Guard pilot, fishing dead men, and half-dead men, from the sea.

The Miami station broke in on these thoughts, and he pressed the earphones to his head and tried to understand through the crash of static picked up by his receiver. "*SS Berkshire — miles south — — — position proceeding full speed period how long can you remain — — — Starting back account your gasoline — — — question period that's all. Go ahead.*"

"Repeat," said Bob. "*How far away is the Berkshire?*"

The information was repeated, but again the crash of static broke up the

sequence. "*How far?*" Bob asked once more. "*How long before the Berkshire gets here?*"

"—two hours period drop the plane a sea anchor and return to your base period Berkshire will pick up Atcherson and party."

"Stand by," said Bob. He swooped low above the floating plane, trying to make sure that it would stand the seas until the *Berkshire* got there. He could see two men bailing from a rear hatch now, and the hull was no lower, if as low, as it had been when he arrived. If they could bail, they could survive the seas two hours, anyhow. It was something of a relief to know that he would not have to go down and risk his own plane trying to take them off. How, he wondered as he climbed again, would he have got them off, in such rough water, anyhow?

He climbed, calling Miami as he did so. "*Will drop sea anchor and then return,*" he said. He thought he could distinguish a confirmation of this message, but the static was increasing. At any rate, there was no doubt about the order telling him to return. He reached three thousand feet, and at this altitude changed the stabilizer-setting enough to counteract for the shift of weight, then got up from the cockpit and walked back to the luggage compartment.

Quickly, before the airplane could change its altitude materially, he obtained the sea anchor and the line, and brought them forward. While he spiraled down again he tied the line inside the canvas bag, and tied a life-preserver to the bag. As he swooped over the disabled plane at fifty feet, almost stalling into the wind, he threw the anchor overboard. It struck ten feet from the bow.

One of the men dived off, came up with it a moment later, and started swimming with it to his plane.

Bob Hurley came over once more, cut both throttles and bellowed at them: "Help coming! Boat! Two hours!"

BUT even if they understood, they seemed unwilling the Coast Guard plane should abandon them. Bob could see one man motioning with his hand, signaling to come on down and land. So Bob went over still another time, and yelled. Then he zoomed, and turned northwest toward Miami.

The thunderstorm, which had been slowly approaching from the southwest—and from which the static came—was



Jane Atcherson looked across the water at her brother. "You're not going to leave that man out here to die!" she cried.

nearer now, he saw. It had, he estimated, been twenty miles away at least thirty minutes earlier; now it was not more than ten, and it had increased in size. No longer was it only a collection of cumulus clouds from which lightning flashed occasionally. The clouds were cumulo-nimbus now, and there was a pronounced "anvil top" that towered perhaps fifteen thousand feet into the sky. The base was black with rain; the lightning was more frequent and more violent. And, more important than either of these things, was the pronounced presence of a squall line now which marched steadily before the storm, containing, Bob well knew, winds of tornadic violence.

He watched it between narrowed eyes, debating, and arguing with himself. There was more chance that the storm

would miss the drifting plane than that it would strike it; yet if it should strike, if that squall line should swoop upon the seaplane, it would not live five minutes in the seas blown up before the wind.

Yet landing meant risking destruction of his own plane. If he went back and landed, and the storm did not strike, and still he lost this Douglas, he would perhaps be disciplined for disobedience. His orders were to return, and let the *Berkshire* make this rescue.

With quick decision he called Miami on the radio, to explain the situation. He could not merely "stand by" at the scene, and wait to see if the thunderstorm would strike there. If he did that, the gasoline supply would not last to take him to Miami when he did finally depart. So whatever he did he must do now: either land and run the risk of cracking up, or follow instructions and go on to Miami.

Static crackled in his earphones like the sound of water dripping in burning oil. No answer came to his repeated calls, or, if one did come, he was unable to discern it. So, sending "blind," not knowing whether he was heard, he explained the situation. Then, his face impassive, he turned back, throttled down and descended once more to that helpless plane upon the sea.

The storm was slowly rising in the west, a black cloud mass which now had blotted out the sun. Yet it was impossible to know whether it would strike here or pass harmlessly to one side.

"Gas!" thought Bob. "If I had an extra hour's gas to sit up here and wait and see."

But he didn't have the gas, and it was impossible to wait. He smiled grimly for an instant at the irony of what he now was going to do—of the chance he would be taking in settling deep into those pounding swells to pick up a man and bring him out to fame and wealth and the accolade of a hundred million people.

He cut the engines a quarter of a mile downwind from the floating plane, came in on his glide, turning gradually crosswind. He leveled off, and held his altitude with just the right amount of motor until the proper instant came, and then settled skillfully into a trough between roaring swells which wore a comb on each crest.

The Douglas turned into the singing wind, and climbed a swell and hovered there and then pitched down before it climbed another one.

"Sea boat!" Bob muttered. "Not so bad!" Each time he topped a swell he saw the other plane, but at other times it was completely lost to view. Spray from whitecaps drenched the windshield as, with slow caution, he taxied to within some thirty yards of it, and then sat considering the method he must use to transfer these people quickly from one plane to the other.

His problem was to come close enough for the transfer, without risking a collision. It would be a dangerous undertaking, requiring delicate maneuvering of his plane. The swells were short and choppy, treacherous. Both planes, riding there, pitched violently, changing altitude ten feet or so with each repeated lift and fall.

He kept steerage-way, moving very slowly forward through the waves. He came to within fifteen feet of the disabled plane's tail section before he idled his engines completely. There he lifted his cockpit hatch, stood up and called to the two men and the girl who watched him from the bow. "Shift your sea-anchor line from the bow to the rudder-post—tail into the wind. I'll come up again and get as close as possible. Is everybody all right? A surface vessel will be here in two hours, but I was afraid that thunderstorm would hit you."

DUKE ATCHERSON, peering intently from the other plane, said suddenly: "I'll be damned!" He held Bob's

eyes for an instant, then dropped his gaze. "Hello, Hurley," he said at last. "Even if it's you, I'm glad to see you. I wondered why a Coast Guard man would go off and leave a plane in trouble—"

"We'll talk about that later," Bob cut in coldly, sharp anger rising in him. "If that thunderstorm over there comes this way—well, it won't be healthful to be here! Is everybody all right?"

The man beside Atcherson replied: "One man's in pretty bad shape. Got an awful beating out here. . . . No time to explain about that, now, however," he declared. "I'll change that anchor-line."

JANE ATCHERSON had said nothing so far. Standing behind the men, her clinging dress soaked to the waist, she grasped a center-section strut and braced herself against the plunging of the plane. But now she cried: "Oh, do hurry!"

There was drastic need for haste, too. The storm, gathering rapidly now, rose like a black curtain from the sea, its slanting top above them even as they waited here. The Douglas, without the thrust of its propellers, had drifted back with the wind, and was a hundred feet away by the time the disabled seaplane's crew had hauled in their sea anchor. The anchor-line was rigged to the rudder post, and the seaplane suddenly swung around, rolling violently across the swells, until it tailed into the wind. It sank lower with the wind pressing downward on the upper wing; water seemed now and then to rise up past the cabin windows.

Bob held his throttles and drifted back until he had sufficient space in which to maneuver and approach head-on. He came up to within fifteen feet again, safe there because the sea-anchor prevented the other plane's drift, and because the wind tended to drift him back when his engines were cut off. But in that position he was unable to give aid; he could not come close enough to take off anyone.

At last, disregarding the hazard and pressed by the increasing danger of the storm approaching from the west, he cut the switches, leaped out upon the bow through the cockpit-hatch, threw a line across to the other plane. He made his own end fast. Atcherson hauled the line taut and took a turn around the bow cleat. With the Douglas' drift against it, and the sea anchor holding the other plane, the line would support

anyone who might attempt to come across.

They worked tensely, silently, knowing the danger of delay. The only sounds were the rush of waves, the whisper of wind through the wires, the flapping of the soggy, tattered linen on that lower wing which repeatedly swung down until it dipped into the water.

"All right, Sis," Atcherson said then. "Scram. You won't get any wetter than you are already."

Jane Atcherson, holding the taut line in one hand, slipped down into the sea, and then worked herself across and reached the Douglas' bow. Bob Hurley noticed, glancing up from watching her, that the third man on the crippled plane had come up from below, and had brought with him a movie camera. As Jane battled her way between those rearing bows, this man calmly made a record of it.

There was an incongruity in this, it seemed to Bob. It was so out of place it angered him. "Cut it, fellow!" he demanded. "We're not putting on a show!" And then he remembered that some one had said one man was in a dangerous condition. There were only four aboard this plane, he had been told, but there were really five! Four would be all he could take off, if he could, by some miracle, get off with four!

Mechanically he reached down and helped Jane Atcherson aboard. Seeing her, he did not notice the frightened beauty of her face, the lines of youth so frankly revealed by her wet clothing. "Go below," he said almost curtly, thinking of this other thing. She moved away, and he called across: "Atcherson, how many did you have aboard?"

"Five," Duke Atcherson replied.

FOR perhaps five seconds Bob Hurley stood there, hands in his pockets, looking across that gap of blue-green water at the others there. Duke was a thick young man, thick in a way that camouflaged his physical agility. His hair was thick and black, bare now in the wind; his face was dark with beard stubble that extended high upon his cheeks. Hughes, the pilot-camera-man, was tall and lean and brown, dressed now in dirty white flannels and a white shirt—a shirt which had been white—open at the throat. The third, the radio mechanic, was a slight, fair-haired youngster.

"I was going to leave this till later," Hughes said in quick explanation. "I

landed to pick up a man—a poor devil clinging to a little overturned boat. Our radio transmitter had blown out a tube just after we left the *Matawumpa*—we couldn't send out word after we got down. I knocked off the wing-tip, landing. The hull began to leak last night. It's been—"

Bob Hurley interrupted in a low strained voice: "That makes one too many. I can't get off with more than four—if I succeed in making it with four." He paused, not knowing exactly how to word this ultimatum, and finally added bluntly: "One of you will have to stay and take his chances in that storm."

There was no doubt now that the storm would strike here, and there was no doubt in Hurley's mind, at least, what its result would be. No seaplane—neither one of these, at least—would live through it. Whoever stayed would have perhaps one chance in a thousand of coming through alive.

THE three standing there before Bob seemed to know this without deliberation on the matter. As one man they turned and for an instant watched the gathering, boiling clouds five miles behind their plane. Rain poured down from that blue-black base of violence in such a torrent that the rain seemed itself part of the cloud. Lightning raced in half a dozen places from the sky to sea even while they looked, and as they turned back to the Coast Guard pilot, thunder rolled forth across the water and burst upon them in a quivering cannonade of sound. The sun was gone, and a peculiar dusk had begun to settle on the sea. The wind, gusty before, had lulled a little—the first warning of the coming of the smashing blow.

Atcherson laughed shortly, a hollow, mirthless sound. "And if you have your way, I'll be the one to stay?" he asked sarcastically. "Well, you big punk, if you have nerve enough to keep me here, I'll stay. If you're man enough, I mean!" His face was savage suddenly, his eyes pale blue slits of fire. "Oh, no—you won't keep me here! You're going to take us all! I'll come across there and show you something about how to take a seaplane off!"

Hughes, the camera-man, was taking pictures of the scene again, Bob Hurley saw; but he made no comment on that now. The storm was near. They had ten, perhaps twelve minutes in which to get away now. The Douglas, through

these churning seas, could not possibly get off with more than four of them, and yet Bob knew it was no use to argue that point now.

"You touch that line, and I'll cut it!" he snapped. "The four of you—you make up your minds who's going to stay behind. Quick about it! Draw straws—any way you want. Count your sister out of it. She's a woman."

"Very dramatic," Duke Atcherson sneered. "And you, being who you are, a great pilot of the Coast Guard, don't have to take the chances with us!" He spat angrily into an eddy near the bow. "Well, I'll tell you who's going to stay: We landed here to pick up a sponge fisherman who was half dead when he found him. He would have died anyhow. That's who we're going to leave."

Jane Atcherson, Bob Hurley discovered then, had not gone below as he had told her to. She stepped up to the bow, beside him, and looked across the water at her brother. "You're not just going to leave that poor man out here to die!" she cried. "Duke, you're simply not!"

"You keep out of this," Duke barked. "You don't know—"

"You're not!" Jane defied him hotly. "He needs a hospital and a doctor—he's been floating in the water for two days. I'll stay with him if you make him stay!"

The storm was nearer, Bob Hurley noted desperately. He suppressed the mad desire to cut the line and drift away to leeward and take off only with this girl. He could not abandon four men to certain death, when three of them could live.

"Quick!" he snapped. "I'm going to cut loose in three minutes!"

"Oh, hell!" said the youngster, the radio-operator. "I'll match with you. Odd man has to stay." His face, tanned in odd contrast to his yellow hair, had turned to ash. His voice was thin and sharp.

"You go to the devil!" Atcherson snarled savagely. "I'm not going to risk it—I'm going back. By God, we're all going back! Either that, or we're all going to Davy Jones together!" He looked up with burning eyes at Bob. "You let me fly that crate, and I'll take her off with all of us! You haven't got the guts to shove off and leave us here!"

Bob Hurley had his pocket-knife open in his hand, but he did not cut the line. Better, he decided in a flash, to give way to Atcherson. Better take them all



aboard and run the risk of losing them, himself with them. Perhaps he might get off. Or perhaps he could run from the storm, still on the water, and get around it and then wait for the coming of the *Berkshire*. It all depended on his riding out that storm. And he knew full well he never would.

"If you think that's fair to the others," he said quickly, "I'll take my chances. But step on it!"

Atcherson nodded, a queer expression of relief around his mouth. He dived below, and the radio-mechanic followed hastily. A moment later they came up again, carrying between them, by the feet and shoulders, a sagging, inert figure.

The radio-operator slipped down into the water, holding with one hand to the line stretched to the Douglas' bow. Duke half rolled, half shoved the injured man from the seaplane's foredeck, himself followed with a catlike movement; together he and the operator worked their way across that space of surging sea. Hurley helped them up, and they dragged the fisherman down through the hatch into the cabin.

Hughes, the camera-man, was on the Douglas when Bob came back from below. Scarcely glancing at the man, Bob cut the line, and the plane instantly began drifting backward with the wind. He dived inside, his every thought intent upon speed, upon the difficulties confronting him, with the knowledge that on this take-off only his skill would lie between them all and death.

There was now no time for experiment, for caution. They must get into

one, canting sharply, slid off into thin air and then crashed back again; when the next swell bore down upon it, it buried its blunt nose beneath the sea.

Hurley cut the throttles instantly, and with the subsiding of the engines heard a high-pitched warning shout behind him. At that same moment he felt the sudden list, and looked out the right side toward the descending wing while a new and awful fear seemed to paralyze his lungs. The wing was down, its tip riding in the water. The right



the air before the squall hit them. The engines barked into life at Bob's touch upon the starter-buttons. He swung away, quartering the wind. The storm was now so close that he could see the line of frothy white water kicked up by the coming wind two miles or so away. He ran up both engines with a quick thrust forward of his throttles, did not try to test the switches. The right motor cut suddenly; the plane swung for an instant before Bob snatched back the throttle on the left one. Cold, the engines would not take the gun.

He waited torturing seconds while the motors warmed. He tried again, and this time both of them took the gun wide open without faltering. Heavily the plane picked up slow speed. It climbed a swell and dived into the trough beyond. It slithered up another

"Help me lift the tank," Bob ordered curtly. "We'll throw it overboard."

pontoon, which supported the right wing above the sea, had sheared off in that violent impact with the water. The right wing-tip had a wrinkled look, as if from the breaking of a spar.

Bob sucked a deep breath into his lungs, and sat there unable to decide what should be done. The plane was canting steeply to the right, the wing still riding in the water. A wave slapped

it sharply, lifted it, and the hull rocked back until the left pontoon was in the sea again, the right wing clear. But it would not stay that way; with the next surge of the sea it dipped far out of sight again.

AHEAD, lightning burned fantastic streaks in the air; the crash of thunder was continuous, faint against the slow staccato reports of the exhausts.

"Too heavy," he said dully; and repeated it: "Too heavy." And then suddenly he leaped up from the cockpit seat and stumbled back into the cabin. Atcherson looked from the damaged wing-tip to his face as he passed through; and Duke's eyes were wide with apprehension. The young radio-operator said hoarsely: "Something I can do? You got a radio?"

"Yes!" Bob barked, thinking of the radio for the first time in many minutes. "You tell Miami what's happened—tell them I'm going to try to drop one gas-tank and lighten this crate enough to get off before that storm hits us—then I'll try to dodge the storm until the *Berkshire* gets to us—tell 'em I just lost a pontoon in the seas. Static—they can't hear you. But you tell 'em, anyway!"

The youngster jumped from his seat and pitched forward with the motion of the plane across a swell. Duke Atcherson said, his voice as rough as newly broken stone: "You can't drain the gas—you won't have time!"

"Not going to drain it—going to lift a tank out," Bob retorted. "If you want to help, you get out on that right wing."

Atcherson made a quick motion with his head, looked out across those flowing, writhing seas. The Douglas was shuddering with each repeated impact of the water on her hull. "You can't work out there—no footing!" he said hollowly.

"Watch me!" Bob snapped. He went on back. Jane Atcherson looked up at him, touched his arm as he went by. "I'm sorry," she declared. "We couldn't let them leave that poor man there to drown."

"Sure!" he said explosively, his voice almost like a gun-report in his haste to be at this task. He went on, saw the supine, half-drowned fisherman stretched out in a seat, and a pang of pity crossed his mind and then was gone. He found his tool-kit in the rear compartment,

opened it and jerked out a pair of side-cutters and a pair of big-jawed pliers. "Quick!" he muttered to himself. "If that squall catches me working on the wing!" He turned forward and ran through the aisle.

The rain was close now—too close, it seemed, to give him time. He opened the cockpit hatch, brushing roughly against the radio-operator as he stepped up and outside. When on the center-section, he looked down, shouted, not knowing the violence of his tones: "Tell Atcherson to come up here! When you finish there, you come too. Step on it."

The operator flung down the microphone and clambered up. Atcherson was just behind him, unable to get through.

The right gas-tank was in the wing just beyond the engine on that side, a tank which fitted down into a cavity made for it. The cavity was closed, and the upper surface of the wing was furnished with a laced cover held in place by hooks not unlike those used on some types of heavy boots. This tank was still almost full of gasoline, for Bob had come out here on the left tank. And the right one held a hundred gallons—six hundred pounds—the weight of more than three ordinary passengers. Without that weight, if he could do away with it in time, he could get off! He cut the cord, unfastened it with flying fingers, tossed the cover into the sea.

LYING on his stomach and leaning far down over the leading edge of that tilting, bobbing wing, he reached forward with the pliers and unscrewed the coupling which held the feed-line to the bottom of the tank. With ten movements of his wrist he got it free, and raised himself and looked around, to find the radio-operator on his hands and knees crawling out to give him aid.

"Get 'em?" he demanded sharply. "Get Miami?"

"No!" the boy admitted. His face was almost white beneath his tan, and he was frightened, Hurley knew. And well he might be now! If this desperate, time-pressed effort failed, nothing in the world could save them when that wind smashed down in five minutes.

"Help me lift the tank," Bob ordered curtly. "Heavy—get your fingers under the corners—we'll throw it overboard. Careful you don't let it fall and break the wing!" He noticed Atcherson coming gingerly from the cock-

pit, but there wasn't time to wait for him. They fought to lift that weight. And gradually they got it up, and got a better hold upon it; and at last raised it and slid it with a splash into the foaming waves.

"Inside!" Bob snapped. He saw Atcherson moving back, and turned to look for an instant at the coming storm. The wind-line on the water was plain now, a long straight line of white, with rain behind it blue and black. He looked back, saw a head disappear into the cockpit. The radio-operator dived below, and Bob slid in after him and closed the hatch.

WITH quick motions he started the engines again. The rain was now a half mile away. He could not take off into the wind in that short distance—he might get into the air just in time for the backlash of that wall of wind to smash him down again with force enough to sink them then and there. But he had to get off—the take-off was his only chance. He turned left, so that the wind got under the crippled wing. Running on the few gallons of gasoline in the left tank—Bob didn't know for sure how much remained—and being lighter now by six hundred pounds, he got up speed. The right wing, free of all that weight above it, stayed clear of the water.

It seemed forever before they got up on the step, and actually they were not much on the step; and while that mad, careening run across the water was in progress, the question of the damage to the right wing came to Bob. He hadn't looked at it; he'd forgotten to, in his excitement. What if they got off, and hit the wind, and the wing collapsed beneath the strain? Well, that wouldn't be much worse than the other way.

It seemed forever that they bounced from swell to swell, and slithered down the valleys of the troughs, and then bounced over swells again. With grinding effort, after repeated shocks of impact which seemed like to smash the bottom every time, they struggled to the air, and settled, and then fought and held their precious, meager altitude.

For half a minute, while the seaplane fought for speed, Bob flew straight ahead, afraid to try to turn. A spatter of rain sent beads of water sliding back upon his windshield. He felt the warning shudder from the wind, and fear stabbed through him at what that wing might

do; he eased the plane around enough to parallel that marching front of storm, and slowly climbed.

So it was that he got off, and up, and finally around. He dodged the storm, and with engines throttled, lean until they spat and starved for gasoline, tried to stay there in the air to await the coming of the *Berkshire*. For there was no possibility of getting to Miami on the gasoline he had. There wasn't, actually, a chance for him to wait until the *Berkshire* reached the scene. . . .

The engines sputtered out and died when they had been forty minutes in the air.

He sank once more into the sea—far, now, from the thunderstorm. He tried to settle in a trough the way he had the first time, but, without his engines, failed in doing this. The plane plowed through a massive wave, and there was the crunch of breaking wood. The right wing, deep in frothing, blue-green water for an instant, came up with five feet missing from its end. They saw that fragment, later, floating peacefully away.

Static had subsided with their removal from the thunderstorm. Bob got Miami, and gave them this new location, reported what had happened. He couldn't tell much of what was said to him, but he did receive an acknowledgment.

THEN, as he settled down to await the coming of the *Berkshire*, the reaction set in. Weary, depressed at the thought of having wrecked the plane, he leaned forward on his elbows for a long time and smoked a cigarette. Then at last he turned around, and looked at those five people in the cabin just behind him. And he said: "Well, Atcherson, if flying the Atlantic is no more than what I've seen today, you should have let me go along with you." He paused a moment. There was nothing to be gained by opening an old wound like this one, but he had held it in his mind so bitterly that he added almost involuntarily: "Were you right sure I was afraid to go, when you started putting out the dope that I didn't have the nerve?"

Atcherson colored beneath his black beard-stubble. "Bob," he said with perfect frankness, "I thought you didn't. I really thought you didn't. But I was altogether wrong."

The photographer, Hughes, laughed wryly. "Wrong?" he repeated. "You

don't know how wrong you were! . . . This has all been very interesting. For me, it's been once in a lifetime—I bought a scoop, and boy, did I get a scoop, or did I get a scoop! I just got pictures of everything today! Just pictures of that storm, and Hurley working on that wing to keep us out of it, and a couple of take-offs that will make them get up off their seats and howl! Boy—oh, boy!"

The wash of water on the hull was then the only sound; but finally Atcherson said heavily: "Yes, I didn't know how wrong I was. . . . Well, this stuff you got out here—that rescue of the fisherman, and all—that should go well with the pictures of my meeting Jane on board the *Matawumpa*, anyhow." He stopped, was silent, almost brooding. And at last he turned to Bob, and added stiffly: "I offer my apologies."

Bob Hurley said uncomfortably: "Forget it!" His old animosity for Atcherson was somehow gone, but they were not friends, and never would be. There was, when Hurley thought about it, an irony in the situation. The way it had worked out, he had saved the lives of all of them; he had saved Atcherson's life, so that grandstander could come home alone to thundering acclaim they should be sharing. It was almost funny, in a way. . . .

After a long time Hughes spoke suddenly. "Well, here comes the *Berkshire!*" They all looked eagerly, and saw a thread of smoke flying flat before the wind, and the superstructure of a steamer hull-down in the surging seas some miles away. "Now," Hughes added, turning to Bob, "you come up with me to the wing—I want a close-up of that ugly mug of yours!" He laughed, picked up his camera and led the way.

THE pictures of Atcherson and his sister aboard the *Matawumpa* apparently were of inferior quality. Anyway, they never reached the screen. Nor did others of Atcherson. I don't know, fully, why. I asked Hughes about it once, when I saw him, and he only smiled evasively, and said: "I hear he's down in Mexico somewhere. I lost track of him entirely for a while." So, too, had I.

But Bob Hurley has been easier to follow. That news-reel shot of him went into almost every theater throughout the country. . . . Last week they decorated him, in Washington. He is, in fact, quite a famous man.

Mr. Whimple Wins

The hero of "Mr. Whimple Rebels" deals in his own peculiar fashion with a crooked race-track.

By WILLIAM
C. FORD

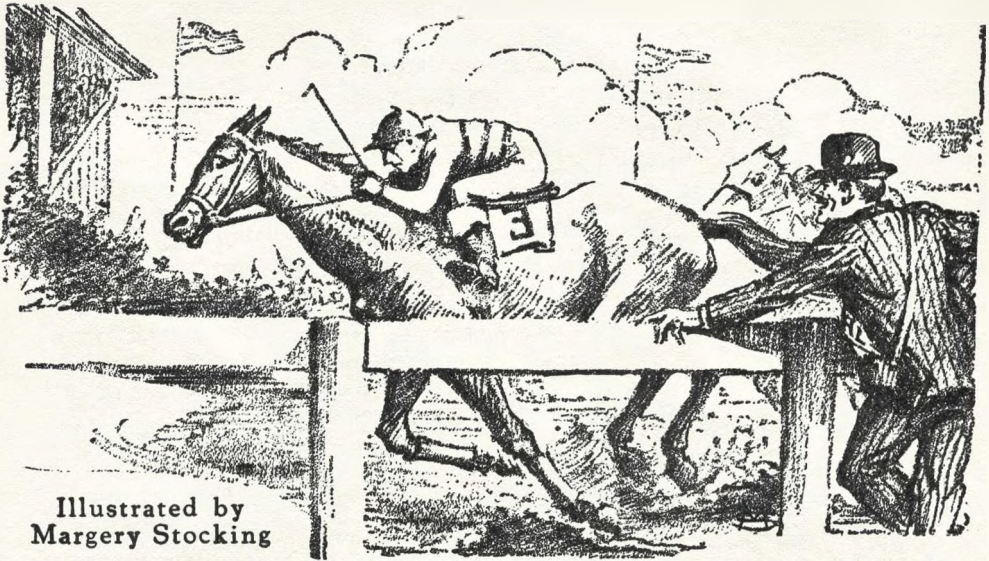
THERE was no reason in the world why Mr. Whimple should have gone to the races. He had plenty of places to put his spare cash, if any, without that. In fact, he could have handed over every dollar he possessed to his creditors without even slowing them up. He had racing enough to keep ahead of them. But some one gave him a pass, so of course he went.

And there hadn't been more than two or three people ask him what he thought was a good one in the first race, before he asked himself the same question. And he answered it by stepping over to the window marked "\$2—Straight," and buying a ticket on Sure Thing, who was generally conceded to be the best horse in the first race, though none of the wise ones seemed to want to bet on him.

And after Mr. Whimple bought the ticket he hung around and watched the people delaying their bets and looking out toward the paddock, waiting for the guy that was coming to tell them what the jockey's brother said, before they placed their money. He watched the crowd filter back to the grandstand, and when the cries of "Last call!" "Step lively!" resounded, he saw the last-minute boys hurry in from somewhere and slip up to the "\$10—Straight" windows, with a little flutter of eager hangers-on behind each of them.

Then he went up to the grandstand and found a seat and watched the horses parade before the customers. And the horses didn't show a whole lot more intelligence than the customers themselves had shown at the pari-mutuel windows.

Most of the noble animals knew enough to parade past the openings that



Illustrated by
Margery Stocking

led to the betting windows without going absolutely nutty, though some of them tried to stand on their heads, turn around, go backward and so forth. And they all knew enough to get over to the barrier eventually, though there were some who thought it would be more restful to do it sidewise, and one thought it was over in another county altogether, and had the courage of his convictions.

At the barrier there developed a difference of opinion among the contestants as to whether they had gathered for a race or a dance, with the dance having the majority for quite a while, and in this they seemed to be aided and abetted by their riders. Sure Thing, the horse who was carrying Mr. Whimple's two dollars, was carrying also the most weight, namely a hundred and fifteen pounds, including a jockey who kept letting him break out ahead and come back, and break out again, till that hundred and fifteen pounds felt like three hundred, and he was safely beaten.

At last the barrier shot up and they strung out along the track, and everybody turned to his neighbor and said, "They're off!" on the theory, probably, that anyone who would bet blind on a race would have to be told whether the horses were running or standing still.

The horse that won was a very long shot indeed, and by a strange coincidence was the very one that the very wise had bet on at the very last. And Sure Thing, Mr. Whimple's hope, came a good seventh. Mr. Whimple felt aggrieved.

He studied up for the next race. He read the "One Best Bet for Friday" in

the metropolitan papers which were on sale at the track. He consulted (1) a friend who knew an owner's cousin, (2) an acquaintance who sold beer to one of the jockeys, and (3) a little guy he'd never met before, who hadn't heard that horseshoe stickpins are no longer in style, but who evidently knew horses. And all agreed that Parnassus was by far the best horse in the next race; but none of them intended to bet on him, because they all said everybody would be backing him, and the wise boys wouldn't let him win, but would be backing some long shot. Each of Mr. Whimple's advisers had had a different guess as to which the winning long shot was going to be, and each was going to back his judgment with his money.

Mr. Whimple's answer to all this was to walk up to a window where it said "20—Straight" and buy two tickets on Parnassus. Then he walked over to the paddock and watched the horses and riders come out.

The jockeys didn't look smart, like the wise ones that Mr. Whimple had just seen betting on the race. They knew enough to stay on the horse's back so long as he kept on his feet. And they knew enough to fall off if he fell down. But aside from that, they seemed no smarter than Mr. Whimple.

But they knew who was going to win this race, which was a thing worthy of being catalogued as a piece of useful information, and could be turned into more cash money than a knowledge of all the Greek verbs, with a medal for Economics thrown in.

Mr. Whimple gazed on them thoughtfully and went back to the pari-mutuel windows to watch the last rush of betting. Sure enough, it came. The wise boys were in action. There was a horse in the race that didn't know what it was all about. He had never won anything in his life, and nobody would bet a dollar on him to do anything but drop dead. His name was Captain, and each of the last-minute wise boys slipped up to a window and planted his money on him right on the nose, so that Mr. Whimple, standing as close as he could, heard that valiant name Captain over and over again. And he knew it was all up with Parnassus and his forty dollars unless he acted, and acted quickly.

HE turned to go toward the track; his movement was so sudden that he brushed against an important-looking man, who was wearing a ribbon marked "Official." The man wasn't really as important as he looked, but who of us is? And the badge was really only complimentary to make sure he'd continue to vote for the race-track in the legislature of which he was the member from Turnip Hollow. So much for the important-looking man. He now walks out of our story; but he goes without his badge, for Mr. Whimple deftly unpinned it, as they passed.

Mr. Whimple needed that ribbon marked "Official." It fitted in with the plans which with lightning rapidity were forming in his brain. For the first time the sure-thing boys were up against Mr. Augustus P. Whimple.

The horses had finished parading before the grandstand. The one who had broken away and started a race of his own had been led back. Everybody was watching them single-file slowly to the barrier. And Mr. Whimple pulled down his coat, straightened his tie, pinned on the badge, and walked across the track. An attendant of some sort stepped up to bar his way, but Mr. Whimple withered him with one word "Official!" and waved indefinitely toward the judges' stand. Mr. Whimple is a handsome, imposing man when he is angry; the attendant stepped back and pretended to be fixing the fence.

When horses are proceeding from the grandstand to the post, they go about an eighth of a mile along the track in solitude. Horses and jockeys are alone together. They are in line. They walk, or dance, or go backward, or any way

that seems best to them. The spectators are all massed by the stands, hundreds of yards away. The officials await them at the barrier. Halfway to that barrier they are alone with their consciences, if any.

Halfway to the barrier, Mr. Whimple met them. He had walked out briskly and waited by the rail. His businesslike air and the red ribbon marked "Official" had carried him through.

Mr. Whimple raised his right hand as the first jockey came abreast, and he spoke crisply.

"You, Johnson!" he yelled. "On Parnassus! You win this race or take a six-month suspension! The stewards know what's going on here. We're watching every one of you! You, Medvey, on Captain, look out for yourself, or you'll be ruled off this track! And no delay at the barrier from any one of you! Get out there! Keep in line and watch your step! I'm warning you."

Mr. Whimple waited only long enough for them all to get a good look at the red ribbon marked "Official." Then he turned slowly and paced back toward the judges' stand.

WELL, never were horses sent off more quickly and easily. The starters were amazed, for it was next to the last day of the meet, and anything might have been expected. But no! The race started smoothly, and everybody behaved as if he was in Sunday school. Parnassus, that good old Greek something, was agreeably surprised to find that nobody was pressing hands on his neck just behind the ears to shut off the circulation, and that nobody was lambasting him to run him to death in the first quarter, and nobody was jerking his head around to break his stride just when he was going good; so he just naturally galloped out front and won by three lengths.

And his owner had such a bad spell that night that he drank some imported Canadian whisky made with his own alkali, and nearly died. And the wise boys were a little wiser still, even though sadder. And Captain came in last, where he belonged.

And all owing to Mr. Whimple, who was cashing in lots of money at a pari-mutuel window that said "\$20—Straight." "Straight!" That was the word. That was the way he wanted it. For while it is true that the race is not always to the swift, yet it *is* to the swift when Mr. Whimple has anything to do with it.



The Hard Hombre

The range country breeds men of individuality, character and humor—virtues sometimes ground away by the industrial machine. The vivid reflection of these qualities makes this story fascinating.

By CONRAD
RICHTER

Illustrated by Monte Crews

HIS name was Nick Hardman. The Puerco country called him the Hard Hombre. Lean, taut, his body had no more fat on it than the trunk and limbs of a desert willow. His brown face might have been a wedge of rimrock. Sometimes the eyes in that hard-bitten face were chips of granite. Sometimes they had the sardonic glitter of the devil.

Right now they were chips of granite. He was standing outside the railing of the Cattlemen's Bank—owned lock, stock and barrel by Ed Reyburn. And Reyburn was on the inside, a handsome, pompous figure with iron-gray hair.

"Can't do a thing for you, Hardman," he was saying smoothly. "Your and Morg's mortgage note for five thousand to Clint Martin is due Saturday. If it isn't paid, I understand that Clint's going to push foreclosure through the court. Naturally I'm sorry to see any man lose his ranch now when the cattle market is so poor."

"It'll break yore heart," leered Nick, "buyin' in a ranch for five thousand that's worth twenty in good times."

The banker flushed.

"I merely have the note here for collection, Hardman. I have nothing to do with the foreclosure."

"No, I reckon not," mocked Nick. "You and Clint Martin are only closer'n two horns on the same cow. Fact is, most people figger Clint's one horn and yo're the hull rest of the critter. But that aint what I come to see you about. Morg's ol' man left twelve thousand with you on interest to get when he was thirty—"

"Thirty-two!" interrupted the banker. Nick Hardman's eyes froze.

"I savvy it reads thirty-two now. But it read thirty when Morg's ol' man wrote it."

"Are you insinuating I altered it?" flashed the banker.

"Insinuat' nothin'!" Nick said coldly. "I plumb know you changed it. If you'd 'a' paid that money to Morg when he was thirty, he'd 'a' got it Monday in time to pay off Clint's mortgage like he figgered. And you and Clint Martin'd plumb lost a ranch."

The banker's face was fiery red.

"Be careful, Hardman!"

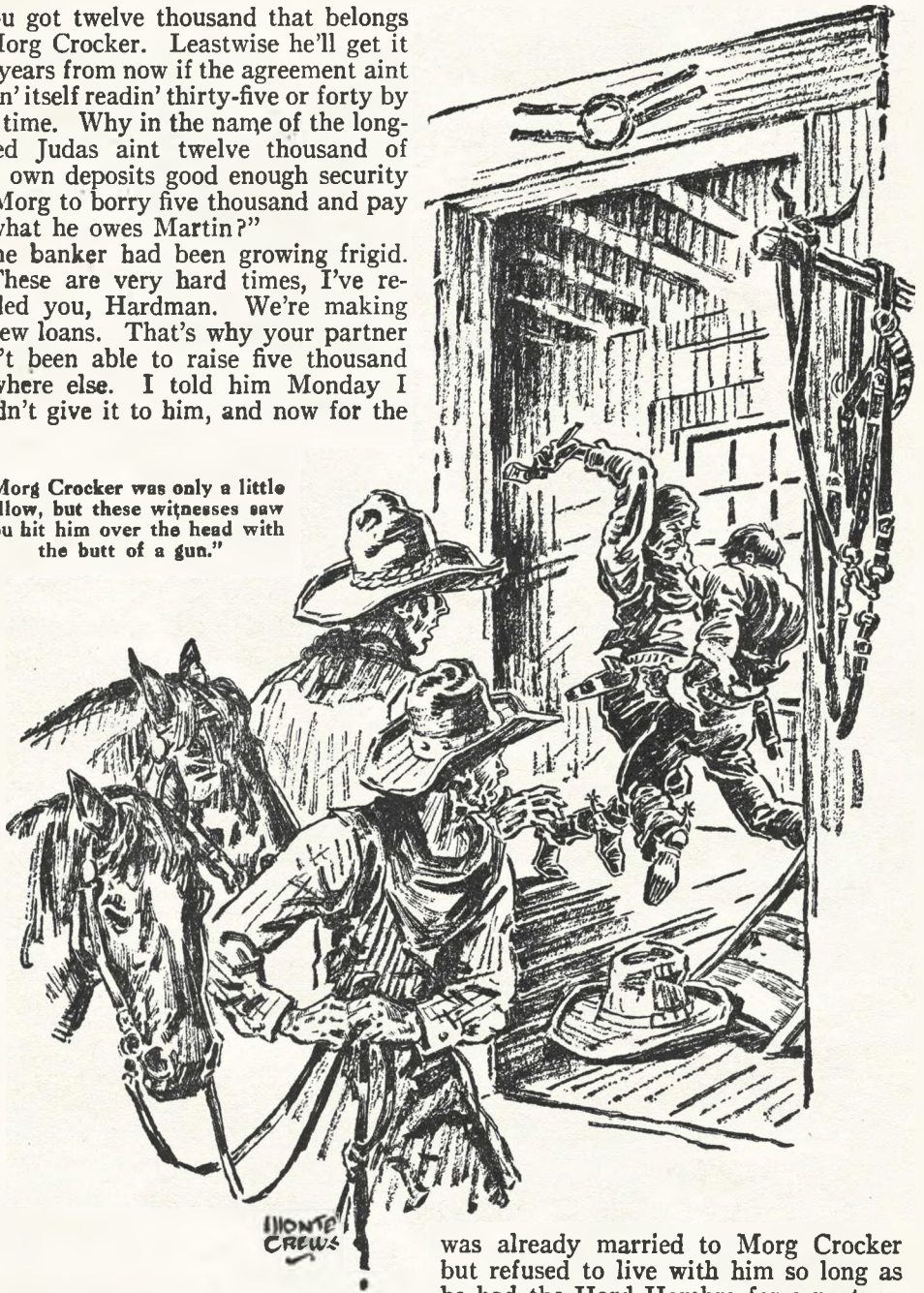
"Never been careful yet," the Hard Hombre answered grimly. "And I aint startin' now. But what I'm gettin' at is

—you got twelve thousand that belongs to Morg Crocker. Leastwise he'll get it two years from now if the agreement aint findin' itself readin' thirty-five or forty by that time. Why in the name of the long-haired Judas aint twelve thousand of your own deposits good enough security for Morg to borrow five thousand and pay off what he owes Martin?"

The banker had been growing frigid.

"These are very hard times, I've reminded you, Hardman. We're making no new loans. That's why your partner hasn't been able to raise five thousand anywhere else. I told him Monday I couldn't give it to him, and now for the

"Morg Crocker was only a little fellow, but these witnesses saw you hit him over the head with the butt of a gun."



last time I'm telling you!" He turned away to his desk.

The Hard Hombre's eyes were frosty as his spurs sang down Wagon Tire's unpaved sidewalk. He passed the immense green cottonwood where his chestnut stood dozing beside a smaller pinto. Townsfolk saluted him, but Fanny Claycomb, his partner's sweetheart, nodded coldly as she passed. She had told someone that Nick Hardman reminded her of a rusty coyote trap. People said she

was already married to Morg Crocker but refused to live with him so long as he had the Hard Hombre for a partner.

When they rawhided Morg about it, he had snorted. Shuck Nick Hardman! He was the whitest partner between the Pecos and the Divide, and Morg pointed to the brand on his horse to prove it. The mark was the double slash circle double slash, — Nick and Morg called it the Clasp'd Hands, but Fanny said that Nick Hardman would clasp his partner's hand only long enough to break it.

Two minutes after leaving the Cattle-men's Bank, the Hard Hombre turned in

at the Mile-high Saloon. Except for its proprietor, the barroom was empty. Bart Hatfield and Nick Hardman's partner had slept under the same blanket for the Bar Eleven west of Socorro.

"Hello, you ol' whisky-thinner!" Nick greeted him. "How's the delirium tremens business?"

"They aint none," replied Bart mournfully. He went behind the bar and drew a tall glass of beer for his customer. "If I don't take more trade away from the other barrooms, Reyburn's closin' me up."

"Never borry from a banker," advised Nick. He drained his glass. "Borry from a gambler. They got more heart." He drew his long tan handkerchief from the crown of his hat and wiped his mouth. "Get me a pencil and about a yard of paper. Mebbe I can make you some business."

Bart looked skeptical, but he produced a rickety pen, some clotted ink and a long sheet of paper seared to a shade of yellow by the Southwestern heat. The Hard Hombre twisted himself into a tense knot over the bar and composed the following gem on the discolored paper:

*Bein the Clapsed Hands is broke
and goin to be took over by Clint
Martin, we hearby subscribe the fol-
lowing amt cash to bury Morg
Crocker deceased.*

Bart Hatfield \$3.00

The saloonkeeper gave a start as he read it. "Morg dead! Why, what happened to him?"

The Hard Hombre lighted a cigarette.

"Bart, yo're slow on the trigger. If you'd be alive as Morg is right now, you'd plumb figger you had the Saint Vitus dance."

Bart Hatfield's round face wreathed. Nick went to the door. A solitary figure was passing down the sidewalk. The Hard Hombre hailed him solemnly.

"Hi, Bandana! Hear about Morg?"

IT was the owner of the pinto horse under the cottonwood. He came in, a heavy figure, with square face as red as a new bandana out of Babcock's store.

"Morg dead!" he scowled. "That's too dang bad. Shore, I'll help bury Morg Crocker." He took up the pen in his stubby fingers and wrote, "Jonathan Hughes—\$1.00." Then he passed over a silver dollar.

"Wahoo!" yelled Nick suddenly like a Comanche Indian, and slapped the coin

on the bar. "Beer for me, ol' timer. What'll you have, Bandana?"

The victim's face had gone an explosive purple.

"Listen!" he began angrily, then as understanding broke over him. "You danged, lowdown road agent! Give me back that dollar."

"Come on, Bandana, you got front-footed, you might as well like it," Hatfield grinned, pouring Nick and himself drinks.

The pudgy rancher squirmed and blustered, but before the others started a second round, he came across.

"Whisky!" he growled. "But I knowed Morg wasn't dead all the time."

WHEN the dollar was spent, Bandana wiped his mouth.

"I mighta been the fust," he admitted. "But I aint the last." He started out of the door. In three minutes he was back. "I tol' Effie Chadburn. They'll be plenty more in here till sundown."

For an hour or two the Mile-high saloon echoed to a steady filter of men intent to hear what had happened to Morgan Crocker. Each newcomer was met by the sober, growing crowd of sympathetic mourners until his contribution toward burying expenses was paid. Then wild rebel yells, wahoos and yipees made the bottle jiggle on the shelves, and all hands surged to the bar while the latest victim squirmed and cursed.

When the list of contributors had reached well down the sheet of paper, Bandana grinned.

"I reckon I got my dollar back—if she did come back a little damp." His grin was cut hastily short as two newcomers entered the saloon. They were Sheriff Tom Claycomb, the tall older brother of Fanny, and Ed Reyburn of the Cattlemen's Bank. Reyburn pushed the proffered subscription list away with a snort, but Claycomb laid down five dollars. The crowd yelled with delight and started for the bar.

"Wait a minute!" the Sheriff called. "That money goes toward buryin' Morg Crocker."

"You can't bury him, Tom, when he aint deceased!" Bandana yelled.

"That so?" The Sheriff's steely voice cut a drill through the room. "I just come from the Clapsed Hands. Morg Crocker's dead, and has been since about Monday evenin'."

It grew strangely hushed in the Mile-high saloon. Eyes were turned toward



Nick Hardman. He stood at the bar, his lean form almost lounging, his hard-bitten wedge of face unreadable, the familiar glitter in his gray-green eyes.

At the sight of him standing impudently there, Bandana's face grew crimson. "This true what Tom says, Nick?" he demanded harshly.

"What do I know about it?" the Hard Hombre retorted.

Bart Hatfield's fist clenched about the neck of a bottle.

"So you lied to me, Nick?"

Nick Hardman shrugged. Bandana's face twitched with emotion.

"You lowdown, laughin' hyena!" he lashed. "You had the nerve to come in here and pull off this mockin' business when yore pardner was dead all the time?"

A faint hint of color showed under the tan that covered Nick Hardman's cheek bones, but it was the only flicker of feeling he showed. He leered at the crowd while a rumble of ominous questions ran over the room.

The Sheriff's cheeks grew leaner.

"I'll answer every one in time, boys." He turned to Nick Hardman. His eyes narrowed to black points. For ten seconds the two men faced each other in smoldering silence. You could see there was natural friction between them. The Sheriff was earnest, direct, soldierly—the Hard Hombre, lounging, pantherish, mocking insolence in his eyes.

"This mornin' early," the Sheriff went on, controlling himself, "two men come to see me. I know them both a long time, and their word's good as their bond.

They were ridin' by the Clasped Hands late Monday afternoon. Hearin' a ruckus in the house, they rode up. You didn't hear 'em, Nick, because right then you were jumpin' on your pardner. Morg Crocker was only a little fellow, but these witnesses saw you hit him over the head with the butt of a gun till he dropped to the floor. Before they could climb down, you spun around and saw 'em. They weren't armed, and you run 'em off. They talked it over about a day here in town. Then they told me."



A taut treble voice spoke: "Put up your hands, Nick Hardman, or I'll send you where you belong!"

"Nervy gents!" the Hard Hombre mocked, but spectators noticed he had moved a step or two nearer the window.

"This mornin'," the Sheriff went on grimly, "I drifted out the back trail to the Clasped Hands. Nobody was at the house, but I found plenty signs of a ruckus. A chair had been busted, the table pushed over and a lamp smashed. Somebody tried to wash bloodstains off the floor, but he hadn't done a good job of it. I found a trail of blood clean to the river." His voice grew harsher. "Whoever the blood come from hadn't walked. He'd been packed down and thrown in the river."

"Mebbe it was a calf I slaughtered Monday," Nick jeered.

"Maybe," the Sheriff said quietly. "I rode down the river a piece. On a sand

bar I picked up this." He took something from his coat and unrolled it.

"Morg's hat!" several men said.

"He never took it off till he went to bed, neither!" Bandana added.

The Sheriff's eyes were boring relentlessly into Nick Hardman's.

"After findin' the hat," he went on, "I rode to Ochoa's Crossin' and back the other side tryin' to find the body. But that muddy quicksand bottom had too much start on me. If a hundred men couldn't locate the horse and wagon of that drunken Mexican that got off the flats at La Milpa, I reckon I couldn't expect to find a little *hombre* like Morg Crocker when I didn't know inside of five miles where his body was at." The Sheriff's voice grew slow with significance. "All I found out was that Morg Crocker was buried by God Almighty himself. And you, Nick Hardman, had the crust to come in here and collect for the job!"

The faces of the crowd had gone bleak.

"Morg Crocker was as white a man as ever come to this country," one man said with feeling. "What did Nick want to kill him for?"

The Sheriff glanced at the banker, who cleared his throat.

"I think I can answer that. Morgan Crocker and Nick Hardman were losing their ranch for debt. But if Morg died, the money I hold in trust agreement from Morg's father had to be paid on his debts and then to his heirs. That meant Nick would still have had the ranch. In fact, he made a threat to me before he left today that Clint Martin would never get the place. That's one reason why he wanted to kill Morg."

"What was the other?" several voices demanded.

"Fanny Claycomb, perhaps," said the banker meaningly. "Nick wanted Morg out of the way."

Angry mutters of understanding had been breaking from the scowling men. The Hard Hombre still leaned against the bar as if oblivious of the ugly tide of feeling rising against him.

"Got it all figgered out, haint you, Sheriff?" he derided.

The Sheriff's voice was like the chink of steel on stone.

"It didn't take much figgerin', Nick. What stumped me for a minute when I came in here was why you pulled off this cold-blooded mockery business today. Now I reckon I see. You figgered we'd figger that no guilty man'd have the nerve to ride into town and make a mock-

ery out of the man he'd murdered. Well, I don't know any *hombre* cold-blooded enough to pull off a thing like that—but one!" His voice rose. "I'm arrestin' him now for killin' his pardner, Morg Crocker."

As the Sheriff stepped toward the prisoner, Bart Hatfield in nervous excitement behind the bar knocked over a bottle. It cracked like a pistol. Several men jumped. The Sheriff turned his head to see what had happened. In that second the Hard Hombre came to life.

HIS lean, taut form sprang for the window only feet away. By night the green shade was kept down. But it was up by day. In a split second the room was filled with the crash of breaking pane and splintering window-frame. When Tom Claycomb fired, his shot went into a gaping and empty rectangle in the wall of Bart Hatfield's Mile-high saloon.

Cut with glass and bleeding in five or six places, Nick Hardman hit the ground on his feet and kept going. He threw himself around the rear corner of the adjoining house. As he ran he could hear the shouts of men pouring from the door and wrecked window of the saloon. He didn't emerge into the street until he was even with the big cottonwood.

A dozen men yelled at the sight of him. Bullets started to cut through the tree over his head. Fleshy cottonwood leaves drifted down as he struck the saddle. On impulse he grinned and grabbed the reins of the pinto. Another moment and he was galloping out of Wagon Tire on his chestnut with the riderless pinto dragging after. Far behind he heard the raging curses of Bandana Hughes.

Once in the sand hills he let the pinto free. Behind him he knew that Tom Claycomb and a hastily organized posse were saddling horses. Every fighting man in Wagon Tire would join the pack. Morg had been well liked throughout the country. Nick threw his first look back toward town. Dust was already rising between him and the brown walls of Wagon Tire. As he topped the next rise he saw horsemen swarming up the slope of the first sand hill. And belated joiners were still coming from town.

"Loosen up, you ol' sand-kicker!" the Hard Hombre coaxed. "You gotta do some tall steppin' or by tomorrow some other rider will be scratchin' yore ribs."

His horse was already doing his best—leaping salt-bush hummocks, plunging

down into numberless washes, climbing the opposite bank in long rangy leaps, cutting a bee-line toward the sheltering red hills that raised themselves above the distant ranch.

When Nick looked again, the leaders of the posse were nearer. The fast white mare of Tod Dunning ran in the lead. Close behind raced the buckskin Sheriff Claycomb rode when his grullo wasn't fresh. The Sheriff hadn't drawn his gun, but when the land settled down into a long rolling mesa, Tod Dunning and others began shooting. At first the nasal whine of the lead long preceded the report of the gun, but steadily the interval between grew less and the bullets sang closer.

He could hear the exultant yells of his pursuers now. Nine or ten miles of rolling mesa still stretched between the chestnut and the safety of the tumbled red hills. But the Hard Hombre knew his country. Even now a cañon was opening in front of him where it had looked like solid ground a few minutes before.

It was Hondo Wash that drained the red hills, a long trough with almost perpendicular dirt sides two and three hundred feet deep. For a dozen yards Nick raced his mount along the edge of it. At an opportune spot he forced the chestnut over the brink. Leaning far back on his haunches and with nostrils dilated and quivering, the horse slid the steep bank. Behind him the red earth rose in a blinding cloud. At the bottom the rider cut up-cañon across to the muddy stream that foamed down the center of the wash. But once in the water, he whirled his mount about and raced downstream.

A dozen splashing leaps, and horse and rider were out of sight around the steep, curving red dirt walls. For several miles Nick let the horse run through the grateful coolness of the water. Then he slapped the sweated walnut-black neck.

"You can ooze along easy now, ol' leather-mouth. Yore friends is chasin' back to the hills huntin' where yore trail quits the water."

IT was late dusk when Hardman re-entered Wagon Tire. He left his tired mount in the shadows of the big cottonwood and sauntered up the street. As he passed through the stream of light from the windows of the Babcock store, a boy on the steps gave a smothered cry

and burst into the store. Nick Hardman's spurs sang coolly on. A few doors beyond he stepped into Santiago's barber-shop.

The old Mexican rose eagerly at the sound of business on a night when the men of town were hunting down a killer in the hills. As he came forward he recognized his caller, and his brown face turned a yellowish green. The Hard Hombre hung his dusty creased hat on the home-carved pine rack and slipped into the worn barber-chair.

"*Si, señor!*" the old Mexican stammered. His hand trembled as he filled a mug with warm water from the kettle on his small, burning kerosene stove.

FROM time to time as Hardman lay back luxuriating in the lather, he was conscious of eyes watching from the darkness outside. Once he detected the tense undercurrent of excitement, but no one appeared. The old Mexican barber finished scraping the last patch of stubborn stubble and bathed the brown wedge of face with bay rum. Nick Hardman got to his feet and reached into a pocket to pay.

A taut treble voice, husky with feeling, spoke from behind him.

"Put up your hands, Nick Hardman, or I'll send you where you belong!" Through the broken mirror on the wall, he saw the figure of a girl in the doorway to the street. It was Fanny Claycomb. Her face was flushed with excitement, her gun bigger than the white hand that held it. The barrel swayed slightly but the eyes above it were burning hot and unforgiving.

"I was jes' gettin' presentable to see you, Fanny," the Hard Hombre said, as he raised his arms.

With quick steps the girl crossed the floor and snatched the gun from his holster. She faced him with a weapon in either hand.

"Back up in that corner and stay there!" she ordered.

He obeyed, retreating until he felt the touch of Santiago's kerosene stove behind him.

"Anythin' else?" he drawled. "Stand on my head for you? Juggle some o' Santiago's razors?"

"Don't talk to me!" she flashed, hatred in her eyes. "You're the lowest human being that ever came to Wagon Tire. I told Morg I didn't trust you, but he wouldn't listen. If he had, he'd be alive now."

"Fanny," he said in a low voice. "I want to say something to you—something private that none o' these big ears can hear." He started toward her.

"Get back!" she flashed at him, and her finger tightened on the trigger.

He saw deep in her eyes that one more step toward her, and she would shoot. He halted. Deliberately then he backed into the oil stove. He felt it tilt at a dangerous angle.

"Look out!" she screamed. "It's lit!"

He pushed back another step, and the stove turned over. In a moment the kerosene had streamed over the floor and caught fire. Dropping her guns, she snatched up an old Navajo rug from the doorway to the rear room. Before she could use it, the Hard Hombre had it out of her fingers. He slapped it down on the flaming oil, then beat out the remaining blaze with his dusty, creased hat. Through the corner of one eye he saw the girl reaching for her guns. Whirling, he caught her from behind and pinioned her wrists.

"Listen, Fanny!" he said. "Come along down the street. I have something I gotta tell you private."

The girl was fighting like a wildcat.

"I wouldn't take a step with you!" she panted. "Let go of my arms!"

ALL the defensive glitter had faded from his eyes.

"It's something I promised I'd tell you, Fanny!" he begged.

"I wouldn't believe you if you swore it on a pile of bibles!" The words came out violently as she twisted in his grasp.

He saw that she was hurting herself. Wrenching the guns from her resisting hands, he let her go. Defeated, empty-handed, her white wrists red and chafed, she turned on him.

"You murderer!" she cried. "You figured you could do away with Morg and get the ranch! You figured, maybe, you could get me, too! You figured everybody in Wagon Tire would be scared to touch you because you were such a hard hombre! Well, I'm not scared of you! And neither is Tom. And I won't give him a minute's rest till he has you locked up in the murderer's cell and hangs you in the jail yard!"

For nearly a minute after she had gone, Nick Hardman stood in the center of Santiago's barber-shop, a look of pain in his gray-green eyes. Mechanically he ejected the shells from Fanny Claycomb's gun and laid it on a high shelf.

He didn't notice the beady, frightened eyes of Santiago and his old wife watching from the dimness of the rear room. He paid no attention to the shadowy forms that fled as he started for the street. A little wearily his high-heeled boots creaked down the unpaved sidewalk.

At the Babcock store he found the windows dark. He tried the door. It was locked. He shook it. There was no answer. He knew it couldn't be later than eight-thirty. Babcock usually kept open until after nine. It came to him then. Babcock was a friend of Morg's, and he would have no dealings with the murderer of Morg Crocker. . . .

He glanced up and down the long stretch of Wagon Tire. It looked strangely dark. He understood now. The women, children and old men left in the town were afraid of him. They believed that the man who had killed his partner could do any vile deed. He was an outcast, a hunted creature, and there was no food or drink for him in Wagon Tire.

His chestnut whinnied softly as he approached the big cottonwood. Out of every living thing in the town, only his horse, he told himself, had faith left in him. Warmly he ran his hand over the firm neck and shoulders.

As he lifted foot to the stirrup, he heard the sound of approaching hoofs. He waited until they had passed in the darkness—four or five of the posse coming back empty-handed. He heard doors thrown open, saw shafts of welcoming light fall into the dusty street, heard voices calling to the returning riders to watch out for the Hard Hombre. Then Nick Hardman rode rigidly out of Wagon Tire into the starlit night.

SOME hours later he forded the Puerco to the home range. There was still no moon. And no light burned in the Clapsed Hands ranch-house. Yet something warned him. On the river flat where the grass was heavy and wet, he hobbled his chestnut and started down the river on foot. He had not eaten since early morning. Once in the ranch-house he could lay his hands on flour, coffee, side pork and utensils. Within an hour in some secluded cañon he could be cooking supper over a guarded fire.

Before he reached the house he saw the shape of a hobbled horse grazing near the river. It was Tod Dunning's white mare. He stopped. There was lead waiting him in his darkened house! He

tramped silently back to his grazing chestnut. A thought made him grin in the darkness. Presently he had tightened his belt and was riding up into the cedar hills, humming a humorous ballad of the border.

It was just breaking daylight when his tired mount nosed out of the endless cedars in sight of a log house and two corals of cedar poles lashed with rawhide. Down in the arroyo was water, and Nick could hear the tinkle of belled mares in the blue grama among the cedars. Across the cañon he saw the familiar pinto and knew that Bandana was at home.

Letting his horse graze in a hidden depression, Nick stealthily approached the small ranch-house on foot. Blue smoke was rising from the chimney now. Bandana must be starting to get breakfast. Nick kept one cedar or another between him and the cabin until he reached the open door. Inside he saw the florid-faced rancher waddling across the kitchen with a paper bag in his hands.

WITH a dry grin, Hardman drew his gun.

"Reach for the ceilin', Bandana!" he said.

In stark, utter amazement, Bandana stopped and stared at the threatening figure in the doorway. His expression turned to hate.

"You!" he sputtered, but he didn't lift his hands.

"Up, I said!" Nick clicked. "I'm countin' three. One—two—"

"I can't, Nick!" Bandana stammered.

"I got—"

"Three!" yelled the Hard Hombre.

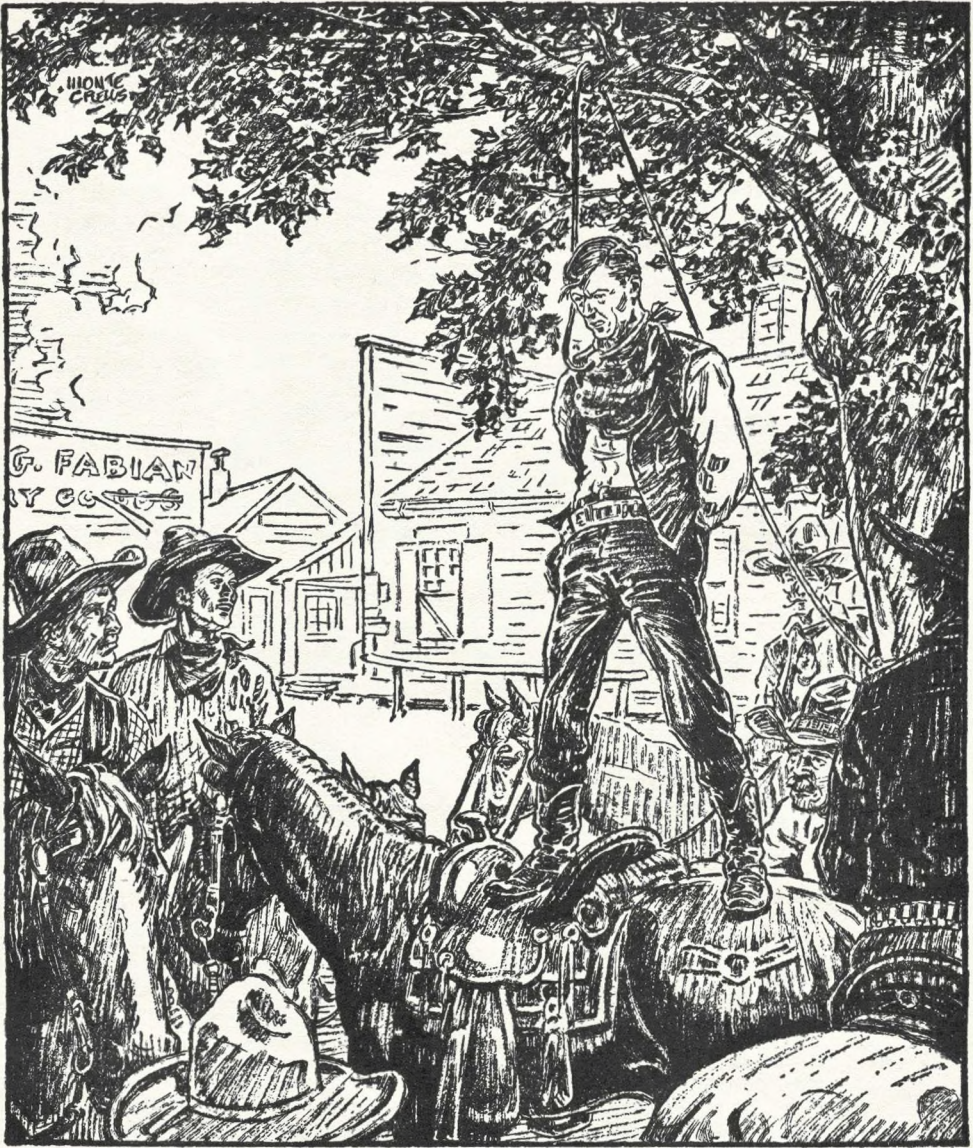
With a groan Bandana threw up his stubby arms. The bag dropped to the floor. There was a peculiar sickening crash. Gazing down, Nick saw that the bag had split open and the yellow contents of a dozen eggs was seeping over the floor.

"Hell!" said Nick Hardman, looking hungrily at the mess by Bandana's huge feet. "Why didn't you lay 'em down on the table?"

"And have you shoot me like you did Morg? Not me."

"You got me wrong, Bandana," the Hard Hombre drawled. "I wouldn't kill my cook." He pointed with his gun-barrel. "Scoop 'em up, pick out the shell and we'll have gravel omelet for breakfast."

Scowling, Bandana started to obey. Nick stepped inside, holstering his gun



"Boys," said Hard Hombre, "I got one favor to ask. If you want justice done so damn' bad, make Ed Reyburn turn over the money to Morg's widow. Let that short-card sport pay while I still got my eyes open to see it hurt him."

as he came. A sly look crept into the bent rancher's face. Nick was puzzled until he heard a slight movement behind him. Before he could whirl, a gun-barrel rammed him in the back. He saw an openly triumphant look flame into Bandana's eyes.

"Bust my eggs, will you, after I packed 'em all the way from town!" he exulted savagely.

The Hard Hombre made no movement toward his holster. Slowly he elevated his hands and turned. In the doorway to the other room stood Tom Claycomb. He had his boots off. Evidently he had

been snatching a few hours' sleep in Bandana's spare bunk.

"I was hopin' you'd draw!" the Sheriff said significantly.

Nick's thin lips twisted into a smile,

"You can fire now and claim I tried to!" he jeered.

"I don't play the game thataway," the Sheriff said. "Besides, you're meetin' your Maker plenty soon enough."

BANDANA hurried out for rope. He brought back Nick's chestnut, a fresh horse for himself and Claycomb's buckskin that had been picketed in a

thicket of cedars. After coffee they were on their way. Bandana wanted to sling their prisoner over the saddle, feet-down on one side and head on the other. But Tom Claycomb said he didn't want any silly town women to start pitying Nick Hardman. The latter sat upright in his saddle, rope biting into his wrists behind him, his lean whalebone body lashed to his horse. The Sheriff rode on one side of him, Bandana on the other.

Down at the Boxed K in the widening cañon, the Hard Hombre asked to send a letter to Ricardo, his Clapsed Hands rider. The Sheriff nodded. Nick wrote it in Spanish and gave a Boxed K rider a dollar to deliver it to the Mexican—he said the rider would probably find him at the *jacal* in Cienega Cañon.

When the little cavalcade went on, several hands from the Boxed K joined it. At the river Matt Yount of the Drag Y rode along with two of his men. By the time they had crossed the sand hills, a dozen grim-faced horsemen surrounded guards and prisoner. Before they reached Wagon Tire, a score of stony-eyed riders swarmed out from town.

NO one uttered a word, but the Hard Hombre sitting erect in his saddle noticed that the horsemen were mostly friends of Morg and that they were wedging closer. Sheriff Claycomb's face had begun to show the strain. Suddenly a cowhand from Grass Mesa snatched the Sheriff's gun from his holster. As if that were the signal, the mounted mob moved. The resisting Sheriff was forced aside. Bandana, protesting loudly, was pushed far to the rear. New hands grabbed the tired chestnut's lead rope. Then the grim-faced mob swept down the dusty street with its prisoner.

Vainly Tom Claycomb rode abreast, demanding that his prisoner be returned to him. He promised a speedy trial and, if guilty, a prompt hanging, but his ringing young voice fell on deaf ears. Nick, looking about coolly, told himself that he didn't remember when he had seen such a crowd in Wagon Tire. The news about Morg must have spread over the range. Hitching-racks were black with saddled horses and buckboards. Crowds of men poured from the saloons.

The mob stopped at the big cottonwood under which Nick had so often left his horse. A rope was thrown over a limb. Knives slashed at the thongs that had lashed the prisoner's body to his saddle. Rough hands forced him to stand

upright on the wide leather seat. Looking down with mocking eyes, he saw scores of faces he knew. Some had once been his friends, but there was no friendship in their faces now.

The Hard Hombre leered at the comments that rose to his ears.

"Look at him—no more feelin' than a lizard."

"That's the way he musta looked when he killed his pardner."

"He tried to get his pardner's girl to run off with him last night, but she told him she wouldn't have nothin' to do with the skunk."

"Santiago said he pretty near killed him before he'd shave him. The Mex never expected to get out of his shop alive."

"There's his pardner's girl now on Winfield's porch."

Looking across the sea of heads, Nick Hardman saw Fanny Claycomb standing with other tense women on Winfield's gallery. Her face was a strained white mask out of which her dark eyes burned feverishly.

"Run that dirt-colored hoss out from under him!" the flushed cowhand from Grass Mesa yelled.

Some one grabbed the chestnut's bridle. The Hard Hombre's eyes glittered. He spoke his first words since the mob had seized him.

"Most places they give even a hoss-thief a chance to talk before they give him the air to stand on."

Several riders held back the chestnut. "Talk!" they told him grimly.

Nick Hardman took a steady breath. His gray-green eyes swept the mob.

"If you boys want justice done so damn' bad," he jeered, "why don't you make Ed Reyburn turn over to Morg's widow the money Morg's ol' man left under trust agreement?"

THE pompous, gray-haired banker on the edge of the crowd looked annoyed. Seeing all eyes turned on him, he stiffened.

"Morgan Crocker didn't leave any widow."

"She's standin' over on Winfield's *portal*," the Hard Hombre said coolly. "You call her Fanny Claycomb. She and Morg were married in Socorro last fall. It was a secret. If you don't believe it, ask the Sheriff. He'll get you her marriage-certificate."

The banker squirmed. "I'll take care of it later, at the bank," he promised.

"Boys," said Hard Hombre, "I got one favor to ask before you hang me. Let that short-card sport pay over the money while I still got my eyes open to see it hurt him."

Ed Reyburn drew back and coldly protested. But when the lusty cowhand from Grass Mesa suggested hanging the banker on the same limb, he paled.

"I'll go to the bank and get it," he promised nervously. A dozen or more men trooped along with him. He was back in a few minutes with a long stuffed envelope and a receipt which he asked Fanny Claycomb to sign.

"Count it fust, Fanny!" Nick called. "If it's all there, give the old eagle-squeezer five thousand for Clint's mortgage note on the ranch. Make him give you the note, even if you do have all Puerco County for witnesses."

WITH the eyes of the crowd on her, Fanny tensely counted out the money. Reluctantly the banker accepted it and wrote across the face of a wide, folded note. The Hard Hombre grinned. Not that he had been watching all the time. Mostly his keen gray-green eyes had been peering through an opening in the leaves at a dust cloud drifting across the sand hills. For the last few minutes a black speck had become visible. Now he recognized the horse.

The crowd turned back to the cottonwood. Several riders prepared to run off Hardman's chestnut. At that approximate moment the sound of hoof-beats reached a few ears.

"Some rider comin' like hell!" Bart Hatfield observed.

Bandana was in the street on his pinto.

"I'll be chawed till I bawl like a calf," he shouted, "if it don't look like Morg Crocker!"

The hoofs were ringing out loudly now. Men were staring at the approaching rider. He was short, sandy and hatless. His taffy-colored hair had been rumped by the wind.

He flung himself from his horse at the sight of Nick Hardman standing on his saddle under the tree.

"Outa my way, men, if you don't wanta get hurt!" He pulled a gun. "I'm a-goin' to kill that pardner of mine dead-er'n a fence-post!"

Sheriff Claycomb had been staring at the oncoming rider. Now he forced his way into the scattering mob.

"Wait a minute, Morg!" he called. "What did Nick Hardman do to you?"

"Do to me?" yelled the little sandy man. "I come back to the ranch from town Monday to get a gun to kill Ed Reyburn. But that dang' pardner of mine wouldn't let me. He took my gun away, and in the ruckus he knocked me plumb out with it. Since Monday he's had me tied up and a Mexican guardin' me in Cienega Cañon. He took my hat and God knows what he done to it. When I come to the ranch-house today I found he'd smeared calf blood all over the place—"

"Morg!" a feminine voice cried, and Fanny rushed up to him. "Are you all right?" She pressed into his hands the envelope of money and the mortgage note marked, "*Paid in full.*"

He stared at it dazed, then up at his partner still standing on his saddle. For the first time he seemed to see the rope stretching from the limb.

"You dirty dogs!" he shrilled. "What d'y' mean puttin' a rope around my partner's neck?"

Men drew away in embarrassment.

"I reckon we were kinda mistook, Morg," some one stammered. "We sorta figgered Hardman had done you up and chucked you in the river."

"Why you insultin' hounds!" the little sandy man lashed at them. "If they wasn't so many of you, I'd make you swallow lead."

HE scrambled up on the weary chestnut's back and slashed the rope on Nick Hardman's wrists. Then he drew the noose up over that mocking face.

"Hard Hombre, you call him?" he raged, facing the crowd. "I'll tell you what kind of hard *hombre* he is. If it hadn't been for him, we'd 'a' lost our ranch this comin' Saturday—stock, land and buildin's. And right now I'd be rottin' in the calaboose or dodgin' across the border for killin' a lowdown outlaw banker my pardner handled easy as an ornery calf." His voice rose triumphantly. "That's the kind of hard *hombre* he is!"

When Nick leaped down from the saddle, he was surprised to find that a change had come over Fanny.

"Let's go to the house where we can talk," she said. "I want to find out how soon I can move out to the ranch and give you half-starved boys some real chuck."

Wedging herself between the two partners of the Clapsed Hands, and slipping a proprietary hand through an arm of each, she piloted them through the crowd.

After Worlds Collide

The tremendous adventures of desperate men and women chosen to risk flight in a space-ship away from Earth before the cosmic collision which destroyed our world—and who have now become pioneers of a new planet and a new civilization.

By EDWIN BALMER
and PHILIP WYLIE

The Story Thus Far:

NIGHT after night the astronomers studied the two new planets growing steadily brighter in the southern skies, and they discovered that one of these onrushing planets was sweeping toward the earth on an orbit that would bring about a collision. It must destroy the moon and then the earth—destroy them utterly.

Its companion planet was smaller; its path, while carrying it close to the world, would bear it by; it would approach but not collide with the earth; and it would make its closest approach before its huge comrade destroyed us.

So, before the cataclysm, there might be—*might be*—a chance of escape.

How some human beings prepared their escape from the earth, and how they accomplished it, by means of an ark of the air—a giant space-ship driven rocket-like by the new atomic engines—already has been told. This is the chronicle of their adventures on this new world of Bronson Beta.

They had landed near the coast of a great sea. And directed by their leader the old scientist Cole Hendron, they established a temporary camp and explored the immediate vicinity. They found a river of sweet water near by, and a valley green with mosses and ferns whose spores had withstood the age-long cold which Bronson Beta had endured since it had been torn away from its original sun—until now, when our sun was warming it again. They found a forest of dead trees, preserved through the ages, that supplied them with wood for shelters and for fires. More, they found a long smooth-paved road extending into the far distance, and a tablet of some unknown substance inscribed with what might have been writing. And they came

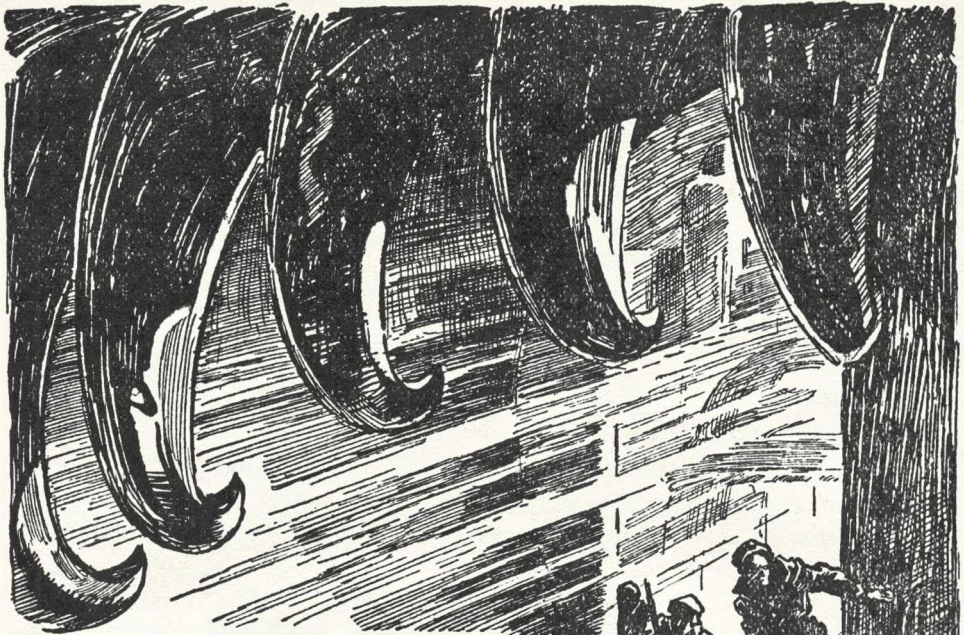
upon the wreck of a machine, a vehicle, apparently, built of some unknown crimson metal. Had it been driven, æons ago, by human beings, or by creatures of another sort?

And then one night—they heard the drone of an airplane overhead, caught the flash of a wing-surface. But the visitor vanished without signal or landing.

Definite perils, moreover, beset this loneliest company of adventurers in all history. Terrific showers of meteors—presumably fragments of the old earth—bombarded them from time to time. And three of the men—three of those who had examined the wrecked machine—died of a strange illness. Had that curious crimson metal some malign power?

It seemed essential to learn more of this new world they had exchanged for the old; and to this end they had almost ever since their arrival been at work on a small airship made out of parts of the gigantic ark of the air which had brought them to Bronson Beta and which had been worn out in that tremendous flight. Now at last this contrivance, driven also by an atomic engine, was completed and successfully tested. And Hendron's right-hand man Tony Drake, with the writer Eliot James, was chosen to make an exploration flight.

It was a thing astonishing indeed which these two pioneers of a new planet found some hundreds of miles away: a great city of the Unknown People who æons ago had inhabited Bronson Beta, perfectly preserved under a gigantic dome of some transparent metal. More, in exploring this long-dead city, they came upon the portrait of a woman, differing but slightly from the women of earth! God then indeed had made man in His Own image!



"This building was open; things were disturbed. . . . Ever since, I've been conducting a search."

After three days, Drake and James set out again, but soon became aware of a curious searchlight beam in the night sky. Landing, they approached its source on foot—and found David Ransdell with those of another American space-ship who had survived a disastrous landing. Most of their equipment had been lost, as well as many lives; and Tony's arrival was for them a promise of rescue. They too, moreover, had been visited by a strange airplane which neither landed nor signaled.

Leaving James and taking Ransdell, Tony flew back to Hendron's camp, then returned alone with a radio and other urgently needed supplies to the survivors of the second ship. Having delivered these, he took two men—Peter Vanderbilt and Jack Taylor—with him, and set out once more for the first encampment.

"Not a person in sight!" Taylor yelled suddenly as they slid down the air toward a landing.

Then they saw clearly.

Below were human figures, the people of the cantonment; all of them lay on the ground, oddly collapsed, utterly motionless. (*The story continues in detail.*)

TONY circled above the stricken camp of the colony from earth. He could count some sixty men and women lying on the ground.



Illustrated by Joseph Franké

They looked as if they were dead; and Tony thought they were dead. So did Jack Taylor at his side; and Peter Vanderbilt, his saturnine face pressed against the quartz windows of the plane, believed he was witnessing catastrophe to Hendron's attempt to preserve humanity.

The Death spread below them might already have struck, also, the other camp—the camp from which these three had just flown. They might be the last survivors; and the Death might reach them now, at any instant, within their ship.

Tony thought of the illness which had come over the camp after the first find-

ing of the wrecked vehicle of the Other People—the illness that had proved fatal to three of the earth people. He thought: "This might be some more deadly disease of the Other People which they caught." He thought: "I might have brought the virus of it to them myself from the Sealed City. It might have been in or on some of the objects they examined after I left."

This flashed through his mind; but he did not believe it. He believed that the Death so visible below was a result of an attack.

HE looked at his companions, and read the same conviction in their faces. He pointed toward the earth, and raised his eyebrows in a question he could not make audible above a spurt from the plane's jets.

Taylor shook his head negatively. The people below them were dead. Descent would doubtless mean their own death.

Vanderbilt shrugged and gestured to Tony, as if to say that the decision was up to him.

Tony cut the propulsive stream and slid down the air in sudden quiet. "Well?"

"Maybe we should take a look," said Vanderbilt.

"What got them," Taylor said slowly, "will get us. We'd better take back a warning to the other camp."

Tony felt the responsibility of deciding. Ransdell was down there—dead. And Eve?

He lost altitude and turned on power as he reached the edge of the landing-field.

Neither of his companions had been in the Hendron encampment; but this was no time for attention to the equipment of the place. The plane bumped to a stop and rested in silence.

No one appeared from the direction of the camp. Nothing in sight there stirred. There was a bit of breeze blowing, and a speck of cloth flapped; but its motion was utterly meaningless. It was the wind fluttering a cloak or a cape of some one who was dead.

Tony put his hand on the lever that opened the hood of the cockpit.

"I'll yank it open and jump out. Looks like gas. Slam it after I go, and see what happens to me."

Either of his companions would have undertaken that terrifying assignment—would have insisted upon undertaking it; but Tony put his words into execution

before they could speak. The hatch grated open. Tony leaped out on the fuselage; there was a clang, and almost none of the outer air had entered the plane.

Taylor's knuckles on the hatch-handle were white.

Vanderbilt peered through the glass at Tony, his face unmoving. But he whispered, "Guts!" as if to himself.

Tony slipped to earth. The two men watching expected at any moment to see him stagger or shudder or fall writhing to the earth. But he did not. There was no fright on his face—his expression was locked and blank. He sweated. He sniffed in the air cautiously after expelling the breath he had held. Then he drew in a lungful, deeply, courageously. A light wind from the sea beyond the cliffs fanned him. He stood still—waiting, presumably, to die. He looked at the two men who were watching him, and hunched his shoulders as if to say that nothing had happened so far.

A minute passed.

The men inside the plane sat tensely. Taylor was panting.

Two minutes. . . . Five. Tony stood and breathed and shrugged again.

"Gas or no gas," Taylor said with an almost furious expression, "I'm going out there with Tony."

He went.

Vanderbilt followed in a manner both leisurely and calm.

The three stood outside together watching each other for effects, each waiting for some spasm of illness to attack himself.

"Doesn't seem to be gas," said Tony.

"What, then?" asked Taylor.

"Who knows? Some plague from the Other People? Some death-wave from the sky? Let's look at them."

THE first person they approached, as they went slowly toward the camp and its motionless figures, was Jeremiah Post, the metallurgist. He it was, Tony remembered, who first was affected by the illness that followed the finding of the Other People's car. There was no proof that Post was the first to have been affected by this prostration. They happened upon him first; that was all.

The metallurgist lay on his side with his arms over his head. There was no blood or mark of violence upon him.

"Not wounded, anyway," Vanderbilt muttered.

Taylor turned him over; and all three men started. Post's breast heaved.

Tony leaped out. The two men watching from within the plane expected at any moment to see him stagger and fall.



"Good God!" Tony knelt beside him and opened his shirt. "Breathing! Heart's beating—regularly. He's—"

"Only unconscious!" Taylor exclaimed.

"I was going to say," Tony replied, "it's as if he was drugged."

"Or like anesthesia," observed Vanderbilt.

"Is he coming out of it?"

"He's far under now," Vanderbilt commented. "If he's been further under, who can say?"

"Let's look at the next!"

Near by lay two women; the three men examined them together. They were limp like Jeremiah Post, and like him, lying in a strange, profound stupor—like anesthesia, as Vanderbilt had said. The sleep of one of them seemed, somehow, less deep than that which held Post insensible; but neither of the women could be roused from it more than he.

"Feel anything funny yourself?" Tony challenged Taylor across the form of the girl over whom they worked.

"No; do you?"

"No. . . . It was gas, I believe; but now it's dissipated—but left its effect on everybody that breathed it."

"Gas," said Vanderbilt calmly, "from where?"



Tony's mind flamed with the warning of Kyto's words. A third Ark from the earth had reached Bronson Beta bearing a band of fanatic, ruthless men who would have the planet for their own, completely. They had brought with them some women, but they wished for many more in order to populate it with children of their own bodies and of their own fanatic faiths. These men already had obtained the Lark planes of the Other People, and mastered the secrets of their operation. These men long ago had entered some other Sealed City and had begun an exploration into the science of Dead People. Perhaps they had found some formula for a gas that stupefied, but was harmless otherwise.

Their plan and their purpose, then, would be plain. They would spread the gas and render Hendron's people helpless; then they would return to the camp and control it, doing whatever they wished with the people, as they awoke.

Tony scanned the sky, the surrounding hills. There was nothing in sight.





Tony fired his tube. There was a noise like the opening of a door to hell. The plane vanished in a blistering core of light.

Yet he leaped up. "Peter! Jack! They'll be coming back! We'll be ready for them!"

"Who? Who are they?"

"The men who did this! Come on!"

"Where?"

"To the tubes!" And Tony pointed to them, aimed like cannon into the air—the huge propulsion-tubes from the Ark, which Hendron and he had mounted on their swivels at the edges of the camp. From them could be shot into the air the awful blast that had propelled the Ark through space, and which melted every metal except the single substance with which they were lined.

The nearest of these engines of flight, so expediently made into machines of defense, was a couple of hundred yards away; and now as the three made hastily for it, they noticed a grouping of the limp, unconscious forms that told its own significant story.

Several of the men seemed to have been on the way to the great tube when they had collapsed.

"You see?" gasped Tony; for the three now were running. "It was an attack! They saw it, and tried to get the tube going!"

Two men, indeed, lay almost below the tube. Tony stared down at them as his hands moved the controls, and felt them in order.

"Dead?" Tony asked of Taylor, who bent over the men.

Jack shook his head. "Nobody's dead. They're all the same—they're sleeping."

"Do you see Dodson? Have you seen Dodson anywhere?"

"No; you want Dodson, especially?"

"He might be able to tell us what to do."

Tony threw a switch, and a faint corona glowed along a heavy cable. The air crackled softly. "Our power-station's working," he said with satisfaction. "We can give this tube the 'gun' when we want to. You know how to give it the gun, Peter?"

"I know," said Vanderbilt calmly.

"Then you stand by; and give it the gun, if anything appears overhead! Jack, see what you can do with that tube!" Tony pointed to the north corner of the camp. "I'll look over some more of the people; and see what happened to Hendron—and Eve—and Ransdell and Dodson. Dodson's the one to help us, if we can bring him to."

He had caught command again—command over himself and his companions; Taylor already was obeying him; and Vanderbilt took his place at the tube.

Tony moved back into the camp alone. At his feet lay men and girls and women motionless, sightless, deaf—utterly insensible in their stupor. He could do nothing for them but recognize them; and he went, bending over them, whispering their names to himself and to them, as if by his whispering he might exorcise away this sleep.

HE repeated to himself Eve's name; but he did not find Eve. Where was she, and how? Had this sleep dropped into death for some? He wanted to find Eve, to assure himself that she at least breathed as did these others; but he realized that he should first of all locate Dodson. . . . Dodson, if he could be aroused, would be worth a thousand laymen. Then he recollected that he had last seen Dodson in Hendron's dwelling.

Tony rushed to it and flung open the door; but what lay beyond it halted him.

He found Eve. She lay where she had fallen, face forward on the desk; and Ransdell lay slumped beside her. His left hand clasped her right hand; they had been overcome together. Both of them breathed slowly; but they were completely insensible. Dodson had crumpled over a table. There was a pen in his hand, a paper in front of him. Cloth—Tony saw that the cloth was from dresses—had been stuffed around the door. In a bedroom lay Hendron, the rise and fall of his chest almost imperceptible. Tony shook Dodson.

SUDDENLY he realized that his head was spinning.

He plunged to the door and staggered into the fresh air. He breathed hard. But his head cleared so slowly that his thoughts ran slow as minutes. Gas, after all. The people in Hendron's house had seen it strike the others, and attempted to barricade themselves. They thought it was death. There were still fumes in there.

Dodson—he must get Dodson.

He ran back, and dragged the huge man into the open.

He stood over him, panting. Then he remembered that Dodson had been writing. A note—a record. Tony went for it. So strong had been the poison in the air that he found it hard to read.

"We've been gassed," Dodson had scrawled. "People falling everywhere. No attack visible. We're going to try to seal this room. They're all unconscious out there. I got a smell of it, closing a window. Nothing familiar. I think—"

Tony shook Dodson. He brought water and doused him. He found Dodson's medical kit and tried to make him swallow aromatic spirits of ammonia, then whisky. Dodson could not swallow.

Tony jerked about, as he heard some one move. It was Vanderbilt, who had left his post at the tube.

"Nothing's in sight out there," Vanderbilt said calmly. "Taylor stays on watch. I ought to be more use in here."

"What can you do?" Tony demanded.

"I'm two-thirds of a doctor—for first aid, anyway," Vanderbilt said. "I used to spend a lot of time at hospitals. Morbid, maybe." While he spoke his slow, casual words, he had taken Dodson's kit and had been working over the physician. . . . "I gave him a hypo of caffeine and strychnine and digitalis that would

have roused a dead elephant. He's still out, though."

"Will any of them come to?"

"Only one thing will tell."

"What?"

"Time, of course," Peter Vanderbilt said. "Then, if it proves my treatment may have helped Dodson,—and not killed him,—we might try it on others."

Tony bent again over Eve and Ransdell; their respirations and their pulses seemed the same; and Hendron's, though much weaker than theirs, had not further deteriorated.

"They don't seem to be slipping," Tony said.

"No. Anything in sight outside?"

"No," said Tony, but he went out for a better inspection, and for another patrol past those that lay senseless on the ground.

He returned to Peter Vanderbilt and waited with him. They pulled Dodson and Eve and Ransdell out into the open air and laid them on the ground; they carried out Hendron too, and stretched him upon his mattress in the breeze and the sunlight.

NOTHING remained to do; so they sat watching the forms that breathed but otherwise did not move, and watching the sky. Three hundred yards away, Jack Taylor stood at his tube watching them and the sky, and the scattered, senseless, sleeping people.

"Our other camp!" said Vanderbilt. "What do you suppose is happening there?"

"I've been thinking of that, of course," said Tony. "We ought to warn them by radio; but if we did, we'd warn the enemy too. He's listening in, we may be sure; he'd know we were laying for him here; our chance to surprise him would be gone. No; I think our best plan is to lie low."

Vanderbilt nodded thoughtfully. "I agree. In all likelihood our enemy is taking on only one of our camps at a time. Having started here, he'll probably finish here before beginning on the other."

"We've no idea what forces they have."

"No."

"There might be enough to take on both our camps at once."

"Yes."

Tony and Peter Vanderbilt moved toward their radio-station; and they were debating there what to do, when their dilemma was solved for them: The

sound of a plane came dimly to his ears. Both stepped out of the radio-room and lay down on the ground where vision in every direction was unhampered. Tony saw Taylor slumping into an attitude of unconsciousness.

Then his eye caught the glint of the plane. A speck far away. He lay motionless, like the others, and the speck rapidly enlarged.

It was one of the Bronson Betan ships. It flew fast and with a purring roar which was caused not by its motor but by the sound of its propellers thwacking the air.

It came low, slowed down, circled.

Tony's heart banged as he saw that one of the faces peering over was broad, bearded, strongly Slavic. Another of its occupants had close-cropped hair and spectacles. The slip-stream of the plane fanned him furiously and raised dust around him. People from earth! They completed their inspection, and rushed out of sight toward the northwest.

Tony and Vanderbilt jumped up and ran toward Jack Taylor. The three men met for a frantic moment. "They'll be back." Tony shook with rage. "The swine! They'll be back to take over this camp. I wonder if they'd kill the men. We'll be ready. I'll take the west tube. Wait till they're all here. Wait till the first ship lands—I can rake hell out of that field. Then get 'em all! We can't fool. We can't do anything else."

They went to their positions again.

An hour later a large armada flew from the northwest. They did not fly in formation, like battle-planes. Their maneuvers were not overskillful. Some of the ships were even flown badly, as if their pilots were not well versed in their manipulation.

Tony counted. There were seventeen ships—and some of them were very large.

THE three defenders acted on a pre-arranged plan: They did not follow the fleet with their tubes. They did not even move them from their original angles. They could be swung fast enough. They hid themselves carefully.

The ships circled the camp and the unconscious victims beneath. Then the leading ship prepared to land.

Tony fired his tube. The crackling sound rose as the blast began.

The enemy plane was almost on the ground. He could see lines of rivets in its bright metal body. He could see, through a small peephole, the taut face of the pilot. The wheels touched.

Tony heaved, and the counter-balanced weapon described an arc. There was a noise like the opening of a door to hell. The landing-field became a volcano. The plane vanished in a blistering, tumultuous core of light. The beam swung up, left the ground instantaneously molten.

It curved along the air, and broken and molten things dropped from the sky. Into that armada probed two other orange fingers of annihilation; and it melted, dissolved, vanished.

ments of twisted metal glowed and blistered.

The sun shone. It warmed them from the green-blue sky of Bronson Beta.

Jack Taylor, student, oarsman, not long ago a carefree college boy—Jack Taylor sucked in a tremulous breath and whispered: "God! Oh, God!"



The three examined the wreckage; they collected a host of trifles—and found more grisly items which they did not touch.

It was not a fair fight. . . . It was not a fight.

The blasts yawed wide. They were fed by the horrible energy which had carried the Ark through space. Their voices shook the earth. They were more terrible than death itself, more majestic than lightning or volcanic eruption. They were forces stolen from the awful center of the sun itself.

In less than a minute they were stilled. The enemy was no more.

Tony did not run, now. He walked back to the center of the camp. There he met Vanderbilt and Taylor.

No one spoke; they sat down, white, trembling, horrified.

Around them lay their unconscious comrades.

Here and there on the ground over and beyond the landing-place, great frag-

Vanderbilt rose and smiled a ghastly smile. He took a battered package of cigarettes from his pocket—tenderly, and as if he touched something rare and valuable. They knew he had been cherishing those cigarettes. He opened the package; four cigarettes were left. He passed them. He found a match, and they smoked. Still they did not speak.

They looked at the people who lay where they had fallen—the people who

had come through that hideous destruction without being aware of it.

One of those people moved. It was Dodson.

They rushed to his side.

Dodson was stirring and mumbling. Vanderbilt opened his medical kit again and poured something into a cup. Tony



held the Doctor's head. After several attempts, they managed to make him swallow the stuff.

He began a long, painful struggle toward consciousness. He would open his eyes, and nod and mutter, and go off to sleep for an instant, only to jerk and

writhe and try to sit. Finally his fuddled voice enunciated Tony's name. "Drake!" he said. "Gas!" Then a meaningless jumble of syllables. Then "Caffeine! Stick it in me. Gimme pills. Caffalooaloclooaloo. Gas. Rum, rum, rum, rum, rum—headache. I'm sick."

Then, quite abruptly, he came to.

He looked at them. He looked at the sleeping forms around him. He squinted toward the field, and saw what was there. He rubbed his head and winced.

"Aches," he said. "Aches like sin. You—you came back in time, eh?"

"We laid for them," Tony answered solemnly. "We got them."

"All of them," Jack Taylor added.

Dodson pointed at the sleepers. "Dead?"

"All breathing. We wanted to get you around first—if anybody could be revived."

Dodson's head slumped and then he sat up again. "Right. What'd you use?"

"I gave you a shot of caffeine and strychnine and digitalis about an hour ago," Vanderbilt said.

Dodson grinned feebly. "Wake the dead, eh? Adrenalin might be better. Di-nitro-phenol might help. I've got a clue to this stuff. Last thing I thought of." He looked at the sky. "It just rained down on us—out of nothing."

"Rained?" Tony repeated.

"Yes. Rained—a falling mist. The people it touched never saw or smelled it—went out too fast. But I did both. Inside—we had a minute's grace." He struggled and finally rose to his feet. "Obviously something to knock us out. Nothing fatal. Let's see what we can do about rousing somebody else. Probably'd sleep it off in time—a day, maybe. I want to make some tests."

He was very feeble as he rose, and they supported him.

"I'll put a shot in Runciman and Best and Isaacs first, I guess. They can help with the others." Tony located Runciman, the brain-specialist. Dodson made a thorough examination of the man. "In good shape. Make a fine anesthetic—except for the headache." He filled a hypodermic syringe, then methodically swabbed the surgeon's arm with alcohol, squeezed out a drop of fluid to be sure no air was in the instrument, and pricked deftly. They moved on, looking for Best and Isaacs.

AS they worked, Dodson's violent headache began to be dissipated. And the persons they treated presently commenced to writhe and mutter.

Hendron was among the first after the medical men. Dodson lingered over him and shook his head.

"Heart's laboring—bad condition, anyway. I'm afraid—"

Vanderbilt and Taylor and Tony knew what Dodson feared.

In two hours a number of pale and miserable human beings were moving uncertainly around the camp. Best entered the Ark and brought other drugs to alleviate their discomfort. Tony had sent a warning to the southern camp. They replied that they had seen nothing, and were safe.

The three men who were heroes of the raid went together to the landing-field. They walked from place to place examining the wreckage. They collected a host of trifles—buttons, a notebook, a fountain pen made in Germany, a pistol half melted, part of a man's coat, fire-warped pfennig pieces—and found more grisly items which they did not touch.

After they had made their telltale harvest among the still-hot débris, they stood together staring toward the northwest. An expedition in that direction would be necessary at once. It would not be a safe voyage.

CHAPTER XI

"TONY, I THROW THE TORCH TO YOU!"

NIGHT came on with its long, deliberate twilight; and with this night came cold.

The sentinels outside stood in little groups together, listening, and watching the sky. No lights showed. Wherever they were necessary within the offices and dwellings of the camp, they were screened or covered. The encampment could not risk an air-attack by night.

Tony found himself continued in command; for Hendron held to his bed and made no attempt to give directions. Ransdell was quite himself again, but like all the others but Tony and Taylor and Vanderbilt, he had lain insensible through the attack and the savage, successful defense the three had made.

Everybody came to Tony for advice and orders. Eve, like all the rest, put herself under his direction.

"You'd better stay with your father," Tony said to her. "Keep him quiet as you can. Tell him I'll keep him informed of further developments; but I really expect no more tonight."

Eve disappeared into the darkness which was all but complete. In the north, toward Bronson Alpha's pole, hung a faint aurora, and above it shone some stars; but most of the sky was obscured. There was no moon, of course. Strange,

still to expect the moon—a moon gone “with yesterday’s sev’n thousand years.”

Another girl joined the group of men standing and shivering near the great cannon-like tube aimed heavenward.

“Anything stirring?” asked Shirley Cotton’s voice.

“Not now,” replied Tony.

“IT’S cold,” said Shirley. “It’s surely coming on cold, these nights.”

“Nothing to what it will be,” observed a man’s voice gloomily. It was Williamson, who had been insensible all through the fight, like the rest of the camp. Now he had completely recovered, but his spirits, like those of many of the others, seemed low.

“How cold will it be—soon?” asked Shirley.

“Do you want to know?” Williamson challenged. “Or are you just asking?”

“I’ve heard,” said Shirley, taking no offense, “an awful lot of things. I know we’re going out toward Mars. But how cold is it out there?”

“That’s been figured out a long time,” Williamson returned. “They taught that back in school on earth. The surface temperature of a planet like the earth at sixty-seven millions miles’ distance from the sun—the distance of Venus—would be one hundred and fifty-one degrees Fahrenheit. The mean temperature of the earth, at ninety-three million miles from the sun—where we used to be—was sixty degrees. The mean temperature of the earth, if it were a hundred and forty-one million miles from the sun—the distance of Mars—would be minus thirty-eight—thirty-eight degrees below zero, Fahrenheit.

“The earth went round the sun almost in a circle—it never got nearer to the sun than ninety-one million miles, and never got farther away than about ninety-four million; so our temperatures there never varied, by season, beyond comfortable limits for most of the surface of the earth.

“But riding this planet, we aren’t going around in the sun in any such circle; our orbit now is an ellipse, with the sun in a focus but not in the center. So we’ll have a very hot summer when we go close to Venus, where the surface temperature averages a hundred and fifty-one; but before we get that summer, we go into winter out by Mars where normal temperatures average about forty below zero—a hundred degrees less than we’re used to. We’re headed there now.”

“Didn’t—didn’t *they* know that, too?” Shirley gestured a white-clad arm toward the landing-field where the attackers of the camp had been annihilated.

“They must have.”

“Then why—why—”

Peter Vanderbilt’s urbane voice finished for her: “Why didn’t they spend the last of the good weather trying to capture or kill us? Because they also came from that pugnacious planet Earth.”

The reality of what had happened, while they were sunk in stupor, still puzzled some of Hendron’s people.

“Why weren’t they content to let us alone? There’s room enough on Bronson Beta. . . . Good God! Imagine two groups of human beings as stranded as ourselves, as forlorn in the universe, as needful of peace and cooperation—fighting!”

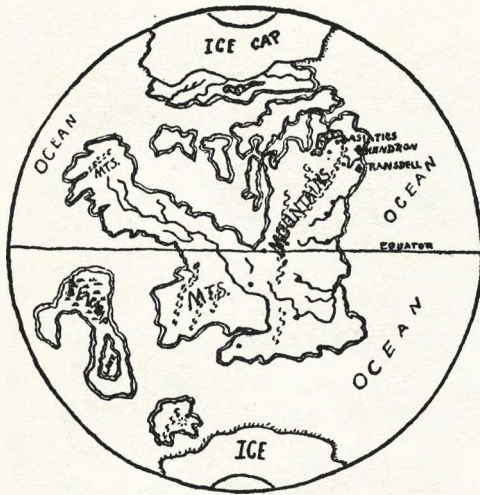
“Men never fought for room,” Walters, a biologist, objected. “That was just an excuse they gave when civilization advanced to the point when men felt they ought to give explanations for fighting. There surely was plenty of room in the North American continent in pre-Columbian times, with a total population of perhaps three million Indians in all the continent north of Mexico; but the principal occupation—or pastime or whatever you call it—was war. One tribe would sneak a hundred miles through empty forest to attack another. It wasn’t room that men wanted in ancient America—or in medieval Europe, for that matter.”

“WHAT was it, then?” asked Shirley.

“Domination!” said Walters. “It’s an essentially human instinct—the fundamental one which sets man off from all other animals. Did you ever know of any other creature which, by nature, has to dominate? Not even the king of the beasts, the lion. To realize how much more ruthless men are than lions were, imagine a man with the physical equipment of a lion, among other beasts, and imagine him letting all the weaker ones go their own way and killing only what he needed for food.

“You might imagine one lion-man doing that, but you couldn’t imagine all lion-men so restrained. You know they would have cleaned up the neighborhood, just to show they could, and then fought among themselves to the finish of many of them.

“That is the nature we brought with us from the world; it is too much to ex-



1. A sketch of one of the hemispheres of Bronson Beta made by Tony from the globe in the Other People's city. Tony noted on the copy that, "the black dots which mark cities are absent in the western portion of the continent which was for unknown reasons apparently uninhabited," and also that "the ice caps may be melted entirely now—as they were when Bronson Beta passed the sun."

pect it to desert us all here. It couldn't; it didn't."

"That's certainly clear," Williamson agreed.

"That element in our nature," the biologist proceeded, "scarcely had opportunity to reassert itself because of our difficulties in merely maintaining ourselves. The enemy—the party that attacked us—solved their difficulties, evidently, by moving into one of the Other People's cities. From what Tony told us of the city he examined, their city probably supplied them with everything they lacked, and with more equipment and appliances of various sorts than they dreamed existed.

"They found themselves with nothing to do; they found already built for them dwellings, offices and palaces; they found machinery—even substances for food. They were first in possession of the amazing powers of the original people of this planet. They learned of our presence, and decided to dominate us.

"I have come to believe that probably they would not have killed us; but they wanted us all under their control."

Eve returned to the group. She did not speak, and in the dim light of the stars she was indistinguishable from the other girls; yet Tony knew, as she approached him, that it was Eve.

She halted a few steps away, and he went to her.

"Father asks for you, Tony," she said in a voice so constrained that he prickled with fear.

"He's weaker?" said Tony.

"Come and see," she whispered; and he seized her hand, and she his at the same time, and together through the dark they went to the cabin where lay the stricken leader.

A CLOTH covered the doorway so when the door opened it let out no shaft of light to betray the camp to any hovering airman of the enemy. Tony closed the door behind him and Eve, thrust aside the cloth and faced Hendron, who was seated upright in bed, his hair white as the cover of his pillow.

His eyes, large and restless, gazed at his daughter and at his lieutenant; and his thin white hands plucked at the blanket over him.

"Have they come again, Tony?" he challenged. "Have they come again?"

"No sir."

"Those that came, they are all dead?"

"Yes sir."

"And none of us?"

"No sir."

"Arm some of yourselves unto the war, Tony."

"What, sir?"

"'Arm some of yourselves unto the war,' Tony! 'For the Lord spake unto Moses, saying:

"'Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterwards shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.

"'And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites.'

"How many of the Midianites have you slain, Tony?"

"More than fifty, sir," said Tony.

"There might be five hundred more. We don't know the size of their ship; we don't know how many came. It's clear they have taken possession of one of the cities of the Other People."

"Yes sir."

"Then we must move into another. You must lead my people into the city you found, Tony—the city I shall never see."

"You shall see it, sir!" Tony cried.

"Don't speak to me as if to a child!" Hendron rebuked him. "I know better. I shall see the city; but I shall never enter it. I am like Moses, Tony; I can

lead you to the wilderness of this world, but not to its promised places. Do you remember your Bible, Tony? Or did you never learn it?

"I learned whole chapters of it, Tony, when I was a boy, nearly sixty years ago, in a little white house beside a little white church in Iowa. My father was a minister. So I know the fate of the leader.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die; call Joshua—that is you, Tony—and present yourselves, that I may give him a charge.

"Charge Joshua and encourage him, and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.' Joshua—my Joshua, Tony, we must move, move, move tonight. Move into one of their cities. 'Thou art to pass over Jordan this day,' Tony, 'to cities great and fenced up to heaven.'"

HENDRON stopped speaking and fell back on his pillow. His eyes closed.

"Yes sir," Tony said softly.

"The cities I shall never see!" Hendron murmured with infinite regret.

"But Father—" Eve whispered.

The old man leaned forward again. "Go, Tony! I throw the torch to you. Your place is the place I occupied. Lead my people. Fight! Live! Become glorious!"

"You'd better leave," Eve said. "I'll watch here."

Tony went out into the darkness. He whispered to a few people whom he encountered.

Presently he stood inside the circular room that was all that remained of the Ark. No vent or porthole allowed light to filter into the cold and black night. With him were Ransdell and Vanderbilt and Jack Taylor, Dodson and Williamson, Shirley Cotton and Von Beitz, and many others.

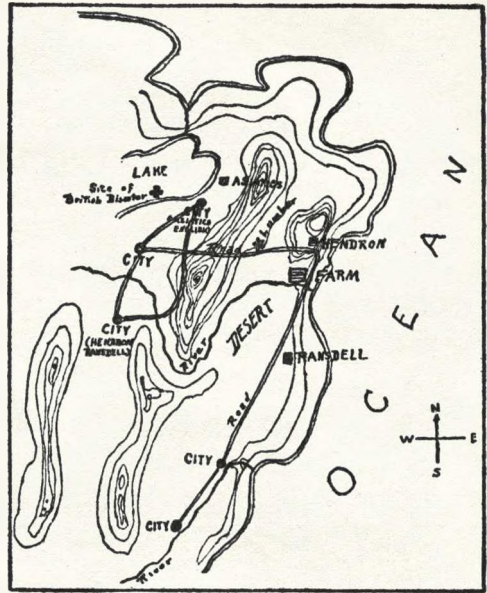
Tony stood in front of them: "We're going to embark for one of the Other People's cities—at once. The night is long, fortunately—"

Williamson, who had once openly suggested that Tony should not become their leader, and who had welcomed the reappearance of Hendron, now spoke dubiously.

"I'm not in favor of that policy. We have the blast tubes—"

"I cannot question it," Tony answered. "Hendron decided."

"Then why isn't he here?"



2. A hasty drawing of the portion of the continent upon which the various space-ships landed. The map was made by Ransdell from Tony's, and shows the original places of descent, as well as the cities eventually occupied. The contour lines mark the locations of ranges, and not the scale. Ransdell has also placed Hendron's camp inshore too far. It is possible that he had never been to the edge of the cliff and realized how near it was to the water.

There was silence in the room. Tony looked from face to face. His own countenance was stone-like. His eyes stopped on the eyes of Ransdell. His voice was low.

"Hendron turned over the command to me."

"Great!" Ransdell was the first to grasp Tony's hand. "I'm in no shape for the responsibility like that I had for a while."

Tony looked at him with gratitude burning in his eyes.

"Orders, then?" Ransdell asked, grinning.

That was better for Tony; action was his forte in life. He pulled a map from his pocket.

"Copy of the globe James and I found in the Other People's city," he said.

They crowded around it: a rough projection of imaginary parallels and meridians marked two circles.

"Here," said Tony, pointing with a pencil, "is where we are. To the south, Ransdell's camp. West, the city we explored. The Midianites—" He smiled. "That's Hendron's term for the Asiatics

and Japs and Germans; it comes from the Bible—the Midianites are camped somewhere to the northwest. You note a city at this point. They doubtless occupy that city. Now—”

His pencil moved south and west of the position where they were camped. “You see that there’s another city here. It’s west of a line between here and Ransdell’s camp, and about equidistant from both. I suggest we go to that city—tonight, by the Other People’s road—and occupy it. The distance can’t be too great. We’ll use the tractors.”

He then addressed those who could not see the map: “Imagine that we are camped in New York, Ransdell in Washington, the Midianites in Utica—then this other city is about fifty miles west of where Philadelphia would be, while the city James and I explored is say a hundred miles north of Pittsburgh. That’s about correct.”

“We’ll move?” Vanderbilt asked. “Everything?”

“No. People—necessities. Come back for the rest.”

Williamson stepped forward. “Congratulate you, Tony. Glad.”

Others congratulated Tony. Then he began to issue orders.

The exiles from earth prepared to march at last from the wilderness. They prepared hastily and in the dark. Around them in the impenetrable night were the alarms of danger. They hurried, packing their private goods, loading them onto the lumber-trucks, and gathering together food-supplies and those items of equipment and apparatus most valuable to the hearts of the scientific men who composed the personnel.

AN hour after issuing his orders, Tony stepped into Hendron’s house. Eve was there.

“How is he?”

She shook her head. “Delirious.”

Tony stared at the girl. “I wonder—”

She seized his hand. “I’m glad you said that!”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps because I’m half-hysterical with fatigue and anxiety. Perhaps because I want to justify him. But possibly because I believe—”

“In God?”

“In some kind of God.”

“I do also, Eve. Have your father ready in half an hour.”

“It’ll be dangerous to move him.”

“I know—”

Their voices had unconsciously risen—and now from the other room came the voice of Hendron: “Ten thousand shall fall at thy right hand—but it shall not come nigh thee.”

They whispered then. “I’ll have him ready,” Eve said.

“Right. I’m going out again.”

“Tony!” It was Hendron again. “I know you are there! Hurry them. For surely the Midianites are preparing against you.”

“Yes, Cole. We’ll go soon.”

IN the night and the cold again, Tony looked toward the aurora-veiled stars, as if he expected almost to catch sight of God there. To his ears came the subdued clatter of the preparation for departure.

Vanderbilt called him, called softly. It was perhaps foolish to try to be quiet as well as to work in the dark—but the darkness somehow gave rise to an impulse toward the stealth.

“Tony!”

“Here, Peter!”

The New Yorker approached, a figure dimly walking. “The first truck is ready.”

“Dispatch it.”

“Right. And the second will start in thirty minutes?”

“Exactly.”

“Which will you take?”

“Second.”

“And who commands the first?”

“Ransdell.”

Vanderbilt went away.

Tony watched the first truck with its two trailers—one piled full of goods, the other jammed with people. They were like soldiers going to war, or like refugees being evacuated from an endangered position. They lumbered through the dark and out of sight—silhouettes against the stars. . . . Motor sounds. . . . Silence.

When the second convoy was ready, Tony and Williamson carried Hendron aboard on a litter. The old man seemed to be sleeping. Eve walked beside him.

The motor ahead emitted a muffled din. Wheels turned; the three sections tumbled into the blackness toward the Other People’s road. When they had reached it, travel became smooth; a single ray of light, a feeble glow, showed the way to the driver.

The people in the trailer wrapped themselves in an assortment of garments and blankets which they had snatched up against the somber chill of this early

autumn night on Bronson Beta. Tony did not recognize a shawled figure who crowded through the others to his side until he heard his voice.

"It is a shame to be driven out like this!"

"It is, Duquesne."

"But by whom—and for what?"

"I don't know."

The Frenchman shook his fist toward the northwest. "Pigs!" he muttered. "Beasts! Dogs!"

For an hour they traveled.

They crossed through the valley where they had cut lumber, and they went over the bridge of the Other People. They reached a fork in the road among foothills of the western range. It was a fork hidden by a deep cut, so that Tony and Eliot James had not seen it on their flight of exploration. Then, suddenly, the light of the truck-tractor went out, and word came back in the form of a soft human shushing that made all of them silent.

CHAPTER XII

A SURPRISING REFUGEE

TONY leaped over the side of the trailer in which he had been standing near Hendron's litter.

He ran forward. "What is it?"

The driver of the truck—Von Beitz—leaned out in the Stygian dark.

"We saw a light ahead!" he whispered.

"Light?"

"Light. . . Light ahead!" The word ran among the passengers.

"Where?" Tony asked.

"Over the hills."

Tony strained his eyes; and against the aurora and the stars he saw a series of summits. He could even see the metal road that wound over the hills, gleaming faintly. But there was no light.

Not a sound emerged from the fifty human beings packed in the caravan behind.

The wind blew—a raw wind. Then there was a soft, sighing ululation.

Tony gripped Von Beitz' arm. "What was that?"

"God knows."

They strained their eyes.

Tony saw it, then: a shape—a lightless and incomprehensible shape, moving slowly on the gleaming surface of the road—toward them.

"See!" His voice shook.



The sentinels stood watching the sky. The encampment could not risk an air-attack by night.

Von Beitz jumped from his seat behind the wheel. He stood beside Tony.

"Don't see anything."

Tony pointed ahead. "Something. Dipped into a valley. There!"

Again the soft moaning sound. Again the meaningless shape topped a rise and slithered along the road toward them. Its course was crooked, and suggested the motion of an animal that was sniffing its way along.

"*Mein Gott!*" Von Beitz had seen it.

"It looks"—Duquesne had come up behind them—"like a snuffing dog."

"A dog—as big as that?"

Duquesne shrugged, and murmured to Tony: "It comes this way on the road. We must meet it. Perhaps it is an infernal machine. An enemy scout."

Tony reached into the front compartment of the truck and brought out two rifles. Then he stuffed three grenades into his pocket. He turned to the trailer.

"Vanderbilt!" he whispered.

"Yes, Tony!"

"Something's coming toward us on the road. We're going up to meet it. You're in charge here. If I fire—one, two, one—that means try to rush through on full power—without stopping for us."

"Right. *Bing—bing—bing—bing*—and we lunge."

Tony, Duquesne and Von Beitz began to hurry along the road.

They went to a point about three hundred yards from the trailers. There they waited. The ululation was louder now.

"Sounds like an animal," Von Beitz whispered nervously.

"I hope to God it is!" Duquesne murmured reverently.

Then it topped a nearer hill. It was a bulk in the dark. It wavered along the road at the pace of a man running.

"Machinery!" Tony said softly.

"An engine!" Duquesne murmured simultaneously.

"Ready!" Tony said. "I'll challenge it when it gets near. If it goes on, we'll bomb it."

They waited.

SLOWLY, along the road toward them, the thing came. They knew presently that it was a vehicle—a vehicle slowly and crazily driven. It loomed out of the night, and Tony stood up at the roadside.

"Stop or we'll blow you up!"

He yelled the words.

At the same time he took the pin of a bomb between his teeth.

The bulk slewed, swerved, slowed. There was a click, and the curious engine-sound ceased.

"*I'll give up!*" It was a woman's voice.

Tony shot a flashlight-beam at the object. It was one of the large vans the Bronson Betans had used in their cities. Its strange sound was explained by its condenser-battery-run motor.

From it stepped a girl.

Duquesne switched on another light. There was no one else in the van.

"*Sacré nom!*" he said.

The girl was in breeches and a leather coat. She began to speak.

"You can't blame me for trying—anyway."

"Trying what?" Tony asked, in an odd and mystified tone.

"Are you Rodonover?" she asked.

TONY'S skin prickled. He stepped up to the girl. "Who are you, and where did you come from?"

"You're not Rodonover! You're—*oh, God!* You're the Other People!" she said. Tony noticed now that her accent was British. And he was suddenly sure that she did not belong to Hendron's camp, or to Ransdell's. She had not been in Michigan. She had not come to Bronson Beta with them. But her use of the phrase *Other People* startled him.

"We come from earth," he said. "We're Americans."

She swayed dazedly, and Williamson took her arm.

"Better duck the lights," Tony said.

They were in the dark again.

The girl sniffed and shook herself in a little shuddering way, and suddenly poured out a babble of words to which they listened with astonishment.

"I've been a prisoner—or something like it—since—the destruction of earth. Today I escaped in this van. I'd been running it. That was my job. I knew you were somewhere out here, and I wanted to tell you about us."

"We'll walk back," Tony said. "Can we pass that thing?"

Von Beitz looked. "*Ja,*" he said. He had never spoken German to them before, but now in his intense excitement, he was using his mother tongue.

Tony took the girl's arm. "We're Americans. You seem to know about us. Please try to explain yourself."

"I will." She paused, and thought. They walked toward the silent, waiting train. "You know that other space-ships left earth besides yours?"

Tony said grimly: "We do."

"You've been attacked. Of course. One ship left from Eastern Asia. Its crew were mixed nationalities."

"We know that."

"They're living in a city—a city that belonged to the original inhabitants of this place—north of here."

"And we know that too."

"Good. A ship also left the Alps. An English ship."

"So—"

"I was on that ship. The Eastern Asiatic expedition came through safely. We came down in fog. We fell into a lake. Half of us, nearly, were drowned. The Russians and Japs—and the others—found us the next day. They fought us. Since then—they've made us work for them. Whoever wouldn't—they killed."

"Good God! How many—"

"There were three hundred and sixty-seven of us left," she said. "Now—there are about three hundred and ten."

The truck loomed up ahead. Tony spoke rapidly. "We are moving from our camp at night. We intend to occupy a city before morning. You'll come with us. My name, by the way, is Tony Drake."

He felt her hand grasp his own.

"Mineis—orwas—Lady Cynthia Cruikshank."

"Peter!"

Vanderbilt sprang from the trailer and ran up the road. "You safe, Tony?"

"Safe. This is Lady Cynthia Cruikshank. She'll tell you her story. I think we'd better move."

"Right."

Von Beitz was already in his seat. Tony vaulted aboard. The train started.

LADY CYNTHIA began a detailed account of the landing of the English ship. Tony moved over beside Eve.

"How's your father?"

"You can't tell. Oh—Tony—I was terrified!"

He took her hand.

"We could see it—up there in the dark, wabbling toward where we knew you were waiting."

He nodded. "It was pretty sour. Listen to her, though—she's got a story."

They listened. When she had finished, long and dark miles had been put behind. The uncomfortable passengers had stood spellbound, chilly, swaying, listening to her narrative. Now they questioned her.

"Why did the Midianites seize you?" one asked.

"Midianites?"

"That's what we call the 'Asiatic Expedition.'"

The Englishwoman laughed softly. "Oh. Oh, I see. Joshua! Not inapt. Why—because they want to run everything and rule everything on this planet. And because their men greatly outnumber their women." She spoke bitterly. "We'd chosen the pride of England. And pretty faces—"

"WHY," some one else asked, "did you wabble so horribly?"

"Wabble?"

"Weave, then. In that Bronson Beta van you drove?"

"Bronson Beta? Oh—you used the astronomical name for this planet. Why—I wobbled because I had to turn my lights out when I saw you coming, and I could only stay on the road by driving very slowly and letting the front wheels run off the edge. When they did, I yanked the car back onto the pavement."

Several people laughed. The van tumbled on toward the promised land. Some one else asked: "What did you call this planet?"

Lady Cynthia replied: "We in our ship—thought—just Britannia. But the people who captured us called it Asiatica. You must realize that when I say captured, I don't mean that in the sense that we were jailed. We lived among them—were part of them. Only—we weren't allowed arms—and we were forced to live by their laws."

"What laws?"

"German was to be their universal language. We had to learn it. Every woman was to be married. We had been given three months to choose mates. We were to bear children. There was no property. No God. No amusements or sports. No art—except for education—propaganda, you might call it. No love, no sentiment. We were being told to consider ourselves as ants, part of a colony. The colony was all-important, the individual ants—nothing."

"Swell," said one of the younger men from the dark.

Lady Cynthia nodded.

"How did you escape?"

"I'd elected to marry a leader. I was considering—seriously—jumping from a building in one of the cities. But I had a little more freedom than most. I was assigned to truck-driving. I went out every day to the gardens for vegetables. I befriended one of the guards there—I



"Father!" said Hendron in a mighty voice. "We thank Thee!" Then he pitched forward.

made rather deceitful promises to him; and he let me enjoy what I had told him was a craving of mine—going for a spin alone. I went—and I didn't come back."

Duquesne asked: "You knew where to find us?"

"Vaguely. In our city—the city was called Bergrad, by them—there had been discussions of you. Our captors called you American rabble. They are determined to subdue you."

"Sweet!" said Williamson.

"Of course—in the last days on earth—I'd read about you. I knew two or three of your party. I knew Eliot James. He'd stayed once at our castle. Is he—"

"Very much so," said Tony happily.

"That will be marvelous! And how many of you—"

Tony explained. "We have two camps."

"So I heard."

"A van has gone ahead of us. It will deposit its stores and passengers at the new city, and then start at once to the other camp. We did not dare radio."

"They listen for you all day," said Lady Cynthia. "And at night. But my other friends: Nesbit Darrington? Is he here?"

There was silence.

"I see," she said slowly. "And Hawley Tubbs?"

Again there was silence.

The Englishwoman sighed heavily. "So many people! Ah, God, so many! Why was I spared? Why do I stand here this night with you on this foreign world? . . . I'm sorry!"

Tony jumped. Von Beitz was rapping on the window of his driver's compartment. Tony peered through the window. Von Beitz was pointing ahead.

Tony's eyes followed the German's arm. Far away on the horizon the night sky was pinkly radiant. At first he thought that it was the aurora. Then he knew. He turned to the others.

"There are the lights of our new home!"

A murmur rose, a prayer, a hushed thanksgiving. . . .

The tractor-truck and its two huge trailers rumbled toward the distant illumination.

Tony bent over Eve. "We'll be safe soon, dear."

"Yes, Tony."

They descended into a long and shadowed cut. At the end was a slow curve.

Then they came out on a valley floor.

IN the valley's center was the bubble of the new city. It was not as large as the first one they had seen. But its transparent cover was identical; and like the first, it was radiant with light. Did the lights go on all over Bronson Beta every night? Had Ransdell turned them on? They did not know. They only saw out on the valley floor the resplendent glory of a Bronson Betan city at night, and because none there save Tony and Lady Cynthia had seen the sight before, their emotions were ineffable.

There, under its dome, stood the city, its multi-colored metal minarets and terraces, its spiral set-backs and its network of bridges and viaducts, shining, strong, incredibly beautiful.

"Surpassing a dream of heaven!" Duquesne murmured.

"Magnificent!" Williamson whispered. There were tears on almost every enraptured countenance.

Then a strange thing happened:

Cole Hendron stirred.

Eve dropped a tear on his face as she bent over him. She let go of Tony's hand to adjust the blankets over her father. But Hendron put her hand aside and slowly, majestically, sat up in his improvised cot.

"Father!" she said.

He was staring at the city.

"Cole!" Tony whispered.

The others in the trailer sensed what was happening. They looked at their old leader. And the caravan moved forward so that in the light of the city, faces became visible.

Cole Hendron stood now.

"Tony, my son!" His words rang like iron.

"Yes—"

The greatest scientist earth had ever produced stretched out his two hands toward the city. "The promised land!" Now his voice was thunder.

Eve sobbed. Tony felt a lump swelling in his throat.

Hendron looked up to the cold stars—to Arcturus and Sirius and Vega.

"Father!" he said in a mighty voice. "We thank Thee!"

Then he pitched forward.

Tony caught him, or he would have fallen to the earth. He lifted him back on his pallet and opened his coat. Dodson pushed through the herded people.

The head of the physician bent over the old man's chest. He looked up.

"His brain imagined this," said Dodson. "He brought us here in his two hands, and with his courage as our spiritual flame we shall remain!"

It was an epitaph.

Eve wept silently. Tony stood behind her with his hands on her shoulders—mute consolation and strength.

"Hendron's dead," was whispered through the throng.

The city was now looming in front of them, the buildings inside visible in detail and rising high over the heads of the travelers.

Von Beitz was driving rapidly. This was the most dangerous part of the trip, this dash across the lighted exterior of the city, without protection of any kind.

They could see presently that the great gate was open. Figures stood beside it, motionlessly watching their approach.

Light poured over them. They were inside the city. They slowed to a stop as the mighty portals boomed shut behind them.

RANSDELL had been one of those waiting. Tony leaped out, and Ransdell smiled.

"Welcome!"

"Hendron's dead."

"Oh!"

The people began to alight—but they were quiet and made no attempt to celebrate their security.

Others came up.

"We'll take his body into one of these buildings," said Tony. "In the morning we'll bury him—out there, under the sun and the stars—in the bare earth of Bronson Beta."

Behind the voyagers through the night was a wide avenue, and at its center in the city stood a magnificent building. Some one of those who came in the first caravan had brought a large American flag and fixed it on an improvised pole. It was hanging there when they entered the gates. Tony noticed it presently as it was being drawn down to half-mast.

No other symbol of the death of their leader was made that night. There were too many important things to do, things upon which their existence depended.

Dodson, Duquesne and Eve sat in a room with Hendron's body—a room of weird and gorgeous decoration, a room of august dimensions, a room indirectly illuminated. If they had but known, they would have been glad that Cole Hendron lay in the hall of the edifice that had been home of the greatest scientists of Bronson Beta some incalculable age before them.

TONY left the watchers reluctantly and sought Ransdell. The former South African was in a smaller chamber in the building where the Stars and Stripes hung at half-mast.

"He died," said Tony to Ransdell and the other people with him, "standing in the trailer, thanking God, and staring at the city."

"Like Moses," said Ransdell. "A single glimpse of the Promised Land."

"Like Moses." Tony looked with astonishment at the man. He had not imagined Ransdell as a reader of the Scriptures.

"We must go on. He'd want it," said Williamson.

Tony nodded. "The first van has left for your camp?"

"Yes."

"And the second?"

"Fifteen minutes ago."

"It is about four miles from the road to your camp. But I think those tractors can pull all the way in. They'll bring nothing but people—and they'll be able to accommodate everyone." He looked at his watch and pondered. "They should be here before daybreak. Now—I don't know about the power and light in these cities. Von Beitz, suppose you take another man and start an investigation of its source. We'll want to know that. The other city I investigated had enormous subterranean granaries and storehouses. Williamson—you search for them. Jack—you take care of housing."

"We've been working on that," said

Ransdell. "There's ample room already available—for your people and mine."

"Good. Water?"

"We've located the main conduits. They're full. The water's apparently fresh. We've turned it on in this building. We're running a set of fountains in the rear court and filling a swimming-pool to be sure it is fresh."

"Right. —Shirley, find Kyto and arrange for a meal at daybreak. Prepare for five hundred—we're almost that many."

Shirley left.

HASTILY Tony dispatched others from his improvised headquarters. Soon he was alone with Ransdell.

"I got your signal," he said. "You wanted everyone cleared out but me. Why?"

Ransdell glanced at the door. "For a good reason, Tony. I've got something important to tell you."

"What?"

"There's somebody else in this city."

Tony smiled. "I know that feeling. James and I had it. You get used to it."

Ransdell shrugged. "I'm not queasy—you know. I don't get those feelings. Here's my evidence: I drove the first caravan. When I reached the gates, I saw something whisk around a distant building. It might have been a man—it might have been the end of one of these little automobiles. . . . Then, after I'd started things going, I took a walk. I found this."

He handed Tony a half of a sandwich. A bite had been taken out of it—a big bite. The other half and the filling were missing. But the bread was fresh.

Tony stared at it. "Good Lord!"

"That bread would be stale in twelve hours, lying as it was on the street."

"Anything else?"

"This building was open. The others were shut. We used your instructions for getting into them. But in here, things were—disturbed. Chairs, tables. There was a ball of paper on the floor of this room. Nothing on it." Ransdell produced a crumpled sheet of paper.

"The Other People had paper," Tony said.

"Not paper watermarked in English."

Tony walked around the room, pondering this. "Well?"

"There can't be many people. Since we arrived, ever since I found the sand-

wich, I've been conducting a search. So have five other small posses. Nothing was discovered, however."

"I see." Tony sat down. "The Midianites have foreseen our scheme, then, and put watchers here."

"I think so."

"Do you believe that we can find them tonight?"

"You know better than I."

"I doubt it," Tony answered. "It would take months to cover every room, every subterranean chamber."

"Of course," said Ransdell, "it might be some one else. The Midianites might have explored here—and left. The Other People had bread—like ours more or less; and this isn't familiar—exactly. It looks like whole wheat—"

Tony grinned. "You aren't seriously suggesting that the Other People may be alive here?"

"Why not?"

"Well—why not? Anyway—some one is. Spies—ghosts—some one."

It was growing light when the trucks came back from the other camp. They were crowded with cheering people, who grew silent when they heard of Hendron's death. Tony and Ransdell went to greet them. Breakfast was ready; Kyto, Shirley Cotton and Lady Cynthia served it from caldrons borrowed from the Other People's kitchens.

TONY was busy with hot soup when Peter Vanderbilt approached him. "Where's Von Beitz?"

"I don't know."

"Didn't he see you?"

"No."

Vanderbilt scowled. "Funny! Quarter of an hour ago I saw him a few streets from the square here. He was on his way to tell you something about the power. He turned a corner. I thought I heard the first faint part of a yell—choked off. I hustled around the same corner, but he was out of sight. It seemed odd—he'd have had to run pretty fast to make the next corner. So I jammed along looking for him. No sign of him. Thought he was reporting to you. But I went back. Nothing to see at the spot where he'd left me. I—"

Tony was calling. "Taylor—Williamson—Smith—Alexander—look for Von Beitz. Arm yourselves."

But two hours later Von Beitz had not been found.

Mystery and peril surround these pioneers in a new and puzzling world. Be sure to read the exciting installment in the next—the March—issue.



That noted insurance association Lloyd's will insure anything, it's said. But when a group of crooks tries to put a fast one over on them—well, here the result is a fine story by the author of the Free Lances in Diplomacy.



The Innocent Bystander

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

THE directors sprawled in comfortable armchairs around a long and beautifully polished mahogany table in the big private office—obviously a board room. Down the middle of the table was a neat overlapping row of trade magazines and illustrated gazettes in four languages. Against the mahogany-paneled walls were racks of financial, mining and manufacturing papers. Three stock-tickers were clicking off quotations from the New York and London exchanges and the Paris Bourse. In the outer office there were a manager, book-keepers and typists. Upon the double-doors of the hall-entrance were the words in gold lettering:

ANTWERFER SYNDICATE

DEVELOPMENT & OPERATION

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| London | Hamburg |
| Johannesburg | New York |

From general appearance, it was one of those far-reaching concerns which do a business of millions without even a rumble from their operations.

Presently a cashier tapped upon the door and came in with a large sheaf of crisp twenty-pound notes which he silently distributed in little piles at the elbow of each director.

When the cashier had retired and closed the door, Jorner crossed his legs the other way, stuck a long Russian cigarette into an eight-inch jade holder and took up future business.

"Of course," he observed without further preliminaries, "what we've all in mind today is the Rhodesian proposition. Any of you figured out what it'll prob'ly take to swing it?"

"A quarter-million, sterling. We can go in for less—an' make a good bit less—but if we control the proposition from the start we'll make from fifty to a hundred per cent."

"In how long? How soon must we have the stake?"

"Five or six months at the earliest—take another eight or ten months to clean up."

"H-m-m—well—let's see what we can run to. In six months, I can liquidate forty or fifty thousand. How about you, Braunfels?"

"Seventy or eighty. Wurtzburg, here, can furnish mebbe a leetle less."

"How much margin would that leave you two for carrying on for a year?"

"Mebbe twelf-fifteen t'ousand."

Jorner nodded.

"Hmph! . . . Just about what I fancied! It means stripping ourselves below our reserve. Well—I fancy I'll say no to that end of it! There are a number of ways of getting a quarter-million without doing that—if we have six months' leeway."

"Y-e-e-s? You might mention a few of your 'ways' of copping it, Jorner?"

"Oh—it'll not be so difficult a matter as the majority would fancy. Why, for example—insure some fairly well-known man for the quarter-million—in our favor."

"Eh? What's that?" Tooley asked. "Insure some prom— What prominent man?"

"Anybody. That's quite immaterial as long as he's known to be one of large affairs, handling big enterprises. Here!"

He ran his finger down the overlapping row of periodicals on the table. Several

of the covers bore a portrait of some individual whose activities in certain industries had made him fairly well-known. Presently, the finger stopped at a cover which bore the picture of a typical business-man who recently had been attracting attention by reason of his activities as a successful promoter.

"This chap is just about the type—he'd do as well as anyone. Not yet a financial colossus, but evidently known to have widespread interests. Looks like any one of a hundred well-groomed men you'd meet in the City or in various board rooms. All we'd need to know about him would be a few leading facts, which we'll doubtless find in this magazine, and one or two bits of confidential information easily enough picked up from some of the London houses in his line."

The periodical was passed from hand to hand for inspection.

BLOCH, the Viennese, was the first to speak.

"Hmph! . . . The 'innocent bystander'—eh?"

"Why—aye. Might call him that, I suppose. Bit of bad luck for him, of course, that the magazine happened to publish his picture on the cover this week. If they'd given him a full-page plate inside, I fancy he'd have been quite safe. What?"

"How did you happen to pick him instead of one of these other chaps, Jorner?" asked Smith, the Australian.

"Says: 'South African Promoter,' under his name—which is a game we know a deal about—easy to make inquiries. And his face is not arresting—simply the average of a certain type—would attract very little attention in the news-sheets."

"Fancy he's big enough to be carryin' much insurance?"

"Possibly a deal more than you'd think—possibly very little. Depends upon whether he's any beneficiaries he's keen about favoring. Any of you know the chap?"

There was a general shaking of heads.

"Never heard anything more than a mention of his name as a promoter. Do you know him yourself?"

"Never laid eyes on him."

The red-mustached Tooley gave an incredulous snort.

"I say, Jorner! Are you pulling our legs? Do you really fancy that any life assurance comp'ny would write a quarter-million policy on this chap in our favor?"

"It would depend, naturally, upon how much they're carrying on the chap at present—of course no comp'ny will go beyond a certain amount. Under ord'n'ry conditions, however, Lloyd's would underwrite the chap for a quarter-million without turnin' a hair—if you're willing to pay their price—which would be stiffish, I fancy. Pay enough for the accommodation, an' they'll gamble with you on anything—insure your fingers or toes—mental condition or spinal column. It's all one to them."

"I say, you know—they must pay up on simply frightful losses every little while—doin' that kind of business!"

Jorner grinned shrewdly.

"Occasionally—but not so often as you'd think. They base their policies upon the law of averages, an' they have compilations of the figures for a couple of hundred years. For example—you take out a policy on your life, thinking you may die within three years. Their medico examines you, fancies you're good for twenty—an' they charge you a lower premium than you expected. Medico fancies you may die in six months—they say they'd rather not issue the policy, but if they do it'll cost you twenty per cent. Their tables show that twenty per cent is rather better than a fifty-fifty gamble for them over a space of one year in spite of their medico's report. You may die in two months—they bet you won't inside of a year—an' they win more frequently than they lose. Say you've been warned that somebody will empty an automatic into you with fatal results inside of a month. They'll gamble that half the shots will miss, that two will be negligible flesh-wounds, and that if you're shot at all it won't be for a year or more."

"Hmph! Sounds as if they may not be takin' as long chances as I fancied! But—I say! What possible excuse has the Antwerfer Syndicate for carryin' a quarter-million on this chap when none of us ever have even seen the man?"

"Simple enough. We're by way of bein' heavily int'rested in some of his comp'nies. If anything happens to him before they're on a firm foundation, they smash—an' we face rather staggerin' losses."

FOR the next hour or two, four of them were telephoning various confidential brokers while Jorner was getting inside information upon Cornelius Vandersteyn from the head of a well-known South African house who happened to be in London at the moment.

When they went out for luncheon at two o'clock, they had decided to see what could be done in the way of taking out a policy on Vandersteyn, and had chosen who was to do the job.

Jorner, Braunfels and Tooley proceeded to the Lloyd's block and up to the spacious office of Mr. Francis Yelverton on the second floor. When they were seated around his desk in a corner by one of the tall windows, cigars and glasses before them, the assistant manager (one of a large number in the association) smilingly asked:

"What has the Antwerfer Syndicate been going into now? Must be something rather sizable to fetch three of you here together—eh? By the way—how many are there on your board—anyhow?"

"Counting those in other cities, you mean?"

"I mean on the board itself. Of course you'll have quite a number of branch managers."

"There were twelve—until Marlin died, and Worpael resigned. We've not filled their places as yet. Er—Mr. Yelverton, if it's a fair question, are you people carrying much on Cornelius Vandersteyn of Capetown? Of course I'm not asking for definite amounts—just wish to know if you might consider another policy on him?"

YELVERTON pushed a button under the edge of his desk, scribbled two words on a pad—and handed the bit of paper to the clerk who came hurrying in.

"I can answer that question in just a few minutes, Mr. Jorner. Meanwhile—what's the story?"

"Well—you wouldn't have time to read up on mining notes down at the Cape—possibly have only a general idea as to who the chap is. Not the sort of man to attract attention—quiet, keeps his affairs to himself, but has a much wider lot of interests than is generally known, with a genius for organization. Sometimes a bit unscrupulous in his methods, I fancy—but generally successful. Recently he's been fighting a mining-claim suit in 'Jo'burg'—title has just been passed by the courts in his favor; the other parties have appealed. Won't do them any good because Vandersteyn's evidence is too strong to shake and covers a much larger claim than the one in dispute, which is but a corner of it. But those other claimants are sore enough to shoot him, now—and they'll be more

vindictive when they lose the appeal. If he lives, he'll develop the claims and merge them in a syndicate with much larger holdings, in which we are heavily interested.

"Now—if Vandersteyn dies, many of his enterprises, being still in a formative condition, will go to smash an' quite possibly drag down everything else he has. His estate will have no money to keep on defending these mining claims in litigation—chances are the other claimants may eventually get them. Point is, if Vandersteyn remains alive and keeps developing his enterprises, we stand to make a safe and handsome profit. If he dies—we'll lose over a quarter of a million before we can pull out."

"**H**OW well do you know Vandersteyn?" Yelverton asked.

"None of us have even met the man, as far as I know. We sunk a lot of money in those other mining-claims which are being merged on the reports of first-class engineers in whom we have the utmost confidence—and the four of them swear by Vandersteyn—say he's by way of being a wizard at organization. So we've backed their opinion of him still further until we're pretty heavily involved if anything should happen to the man. It occurred to us that we'd best look for a bit of cover, if such a thing were obtainable."

The clerk returned with a slip of paper which he handed to Yelverton.

"Hmph! . . . I fancied," observed the Lloyd's man, "when you first mentioned Vandersteyn, that we must have written a stiffish sum on him—he's not so well known, as yet, but we naturally have the available data. As a matter of fact, however, we haven't a penny on the chap. How much would you wish to carry on him?"

"H-m-m—we really should be covered as far as possible—somewhere around a quarter-million, I'd say."

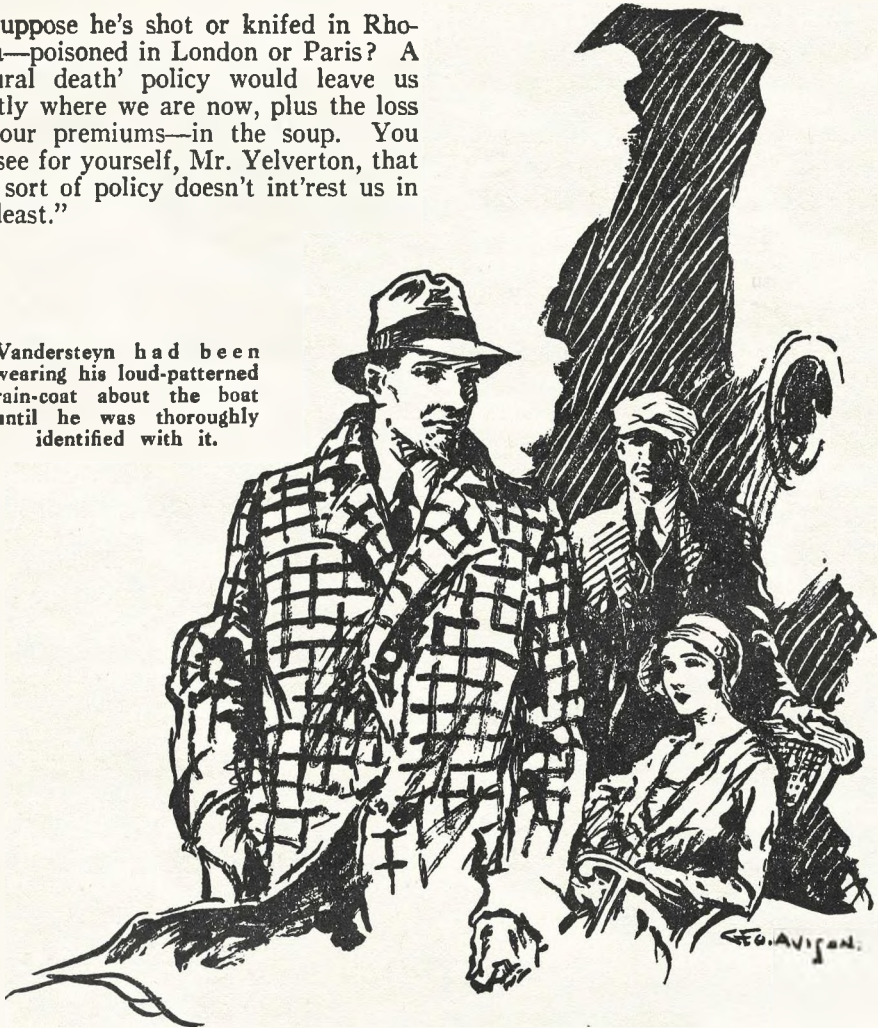
"For how long?"

"Well—I don't see how that claim-suit could drag along for more than a year—prob'ly settled in six or eight months. And the other enterprises in which we are int'rested ought to be on a more or less solid foundation in that time. Say—nine months."

"Natural death, of course—that's understood. We know he's a healthy risk, from the fact that a good American company has issued two five-year policies on him."

"Suppose he's shot or knifed in Rhodesia—poisoned in London or Paris? A 'natural death' policy would leave us exactly where we are now, plus the loss of your premiums—in the soup. You can see for yourself, Mr. Yelverton, that that sort of policy doesn't int'rest us in the least."

Vandersteyn had been wearing his loud-patterned rain-coat about the boat until he was thoroughly identified with it.



"Well—in your peculiar circumst'nces, no—it wouldn't. Of course, the whole question is merely one of price for the accommodation. 'Natural death' would cost you but a very reasonable amount per thousand. If you must have a 'Death from any cause' policy, it will cost you sixty thousand pounds for nine months on a quarter-million. Or—I'll make you another proposition which may seem a better gamble: A three-months' policy for twenty-five thousand—and we'll renew it twice at the same rate."

Jorner and Braunfels considered this a moment. Tooley was shaky inside but didn't show it. He really hadn't dreamed it would be as easy as this—couldn't believe it yet. Braunfels spoke up:

"Yess—t'e t'ree mont's wass a better proposition. Mebbe t'ings wass secure enough in t'ree or six mont's so we don't haf to renew—so we save fifty or twenty-five t'ousand. When couldt we haf der

policy, Mr. Yelverton? Der check for twenty-five t'ousand, we couldt gif you now, on t'e Bank of Enklandt."

"Why—if we happen to have the proper blank form in this department, at the moment, I fancy I can have it ready for you in half an hour, Mr. Braunfels. The assistant treasurer will be in the building till five."

Upon the evening after they obtained the Vandersteyn policy, Jorner and Smith were locked in the private study of Braunfels' luxurious apartment, discussing the proposition with him.

"When do you figure that policy should be collectable, Jorner?"

"Well—I fancy this will surprise you a bit: In about four months from now."

"But—dammit all—that'll cost us another twenty-five thousand!"

"Much more comfortable paying it than having our necks stretched, I fancy. Trouble with you chaps is that you don't

stop to study the psychology of a proposition. Suppose Vandersteyn is done in within a month or two. Who benefits most by his death? The Antwerfer Syndicate—more than all others put together! It's recalled at once that we wouldn't consider a 'natural death' policy. We certainly wouldn't be paid until our actions for two months have been sifted down to hard-pan—limelight full on us—newspapers clamoring for our conviction on circumstantial evidence. So much for *that!* Suppose he's killed a few days before the policy runs out? We're in even a worse light. It would be said that we struck in time to save that next payment. On the other hand—suppose we make that payment in good faith? That acts just as strongly the other way—in our favor. Twenty-five thousand pounds is no piffing sum to pay out for insurance on a man we don't know. If our object was killing the man to get the insurance, why should we pay an' waste that extra twenty-five thousand? If we're actually payin' it to cover our investments in case of accident to him, it's exactly what we *would* do! That extra premium is really the best alibi we possibly could have!"

"My word! That's good reasoning, Jorner! We'll pay it. And—er—afterward? Eh? Who were you figuring upon to make the policy collectable?"

"M-well—looks rather like a call for volunteers—not? My 'hawk-face' is much too striking for any successful disguise, and I've done all the work that's been done up to now. Tooley looks too much like a horse anywhere you put him, and his nerve goes to pieces in anything really dangerous. You couldn't disguise Braunfels, here, so that he wouldn't be spotted—unless he dieted for a few years. Of course we can hire the job done—but that seems to me too big a risk: we'd hang just the same if our tools turned King's evidence."

"Hmph! Fancy Bloch an' I had best take the job on. It shouldn't be either diffic'lt or risky if handled properly—with careful attention to details. Aye—we'll look after that end of it."

ON the day before the first policy expired an appointment was made with Yelverton, at Lloyd's—with the understanding that a new policy would be made out, ready for any of the syndicate who called that afternoon. And then it was that Sir Edward Coffin came upon the scene. A remarkable man, Sir Ed-

ward! A distinguished and exciting career as an officer in the merchant marine was behind him; he'd acquired considerable wealth and had retired—and had been so bored by inaction that he'd taken on a sort of free-lance job as special investigator for Lloyd's. Now at two in the afternoon Sir Edward came swinging along the street and started up the steps of Lloyd's just as a man with a news-camera in one hand came out.

"WHY, hullo, Billy!" exclaimed Sir Edward. "Who the dickens have you been shooting this time? I thought Lloyd's were immune from journalistic persecution?"

"They very nearly are, Sir Edward. But they have birds of rare shape and plumage coming in to see them every little while. I've been having a word or two with one of the latest South African promoters, this Vandersteyn chap. He doesn't talk much, but what he does say is worth remembering. Hullo! . . . Who are these four coming up in that big car? Hmph! Some of the Antwerfer Syndicate! Now I wonder what the devil they are insuring with Lloyd's? Chap getting out is Jorner—an' Braunfels after him. Evidently Smith an' Bloch are going to wait in the car."

"Who did you say those fellows are in the car?"

"Brandon Smith an' Simon Bloch—both on the board of the Antwerfer Syndicate."

"Here, Billy—come along in with me! Before those other two get into the lift—hurry! I'd like to know who the devil they're going to see in this building. Idle curiosity, of course—and yet, if they're on the same board as those other two in the car—well, I'm interested."

"Why?"

"Tell you later—come along into that lift with 'em!"

The Baronet waved his hand to the lift-starter to hold the car until they got aboard.

They all got out upon the second floor—Jorner and Braunfels sauntering along to Yelverton's door, which they opened and entered. Sir Edward Coffin and Saunderson of the *Daily News* went on to a window-recess at the end of the corridor, whence they could see the other two when they came out.

"Now, Billy—just sketch for me what is generally known and what you personally know of this Antwerfer Syndicate—its activities and its personnel."

Saunderson did so—briefly, but conveying more condensed information than the Baronet could have obtained elsewhere.

"I still don't quite catch your interest in this lot, Sir Edward—though I'll admit they swim pretty deep."

"WELL—you said those men in the car were Smith and Bloch—been known by those names as directors of this syndicate in London for several years. Now, I have the little peculiarity of never forgetting the face of any person whom I've had occasion to glance at closely or talk with. Sometimes, it takes me a while to place them exactly or remember their names. But sooner or later I recall everything I ever knew about them—and in the course of many years on passenger-craft at sea, I've met a pretty sizable slew of folks. You say those men have been known here in London by the names you gave for ten or twelve years*at least. I say that not over seven years ago they were on my boat in the Indian Ocean bound from the Cape to Singapore under the names Bradford and Strumer—Smith wearing a Van Dyck, Bloch with a heavy mustache, instead of being clean-shaved. Now—what's the answer? Do these other directors know anything about that? Is there something fishy about the whole outfit—or only those two? The activities of that syndicate appear to need more explaining—to me."

"Quite sure about those two men, are you?"

"Absolutely. Talked with both—a number of times. You understand, of course, that I'm not making any affidavit on the stand."

"Oh, you know you're safe in anything you say to me, Sir Edward. Your interest in those chaps is a bit puzzling—that's all. Their bein' under assumed names has a somewhat fishy look—an' yet there's nothing criminal in it. Lots of men do that sort of thing for perfectly good reasons of their own. Say this syndicate wishes quietly to buy up certain properties in the Orient without being traced in the matter. If they try to do it through agents, there's always risk of a leak. If two of their board go out to do it, there's too much chance of their being recognized. But with diff'rent names an' appearance, they transact the business without being spotted and keep all information of the details among themselves. How do they or their syndicate concern you?"

"Billy—you newspaper men are too damn' inquisitive! I can't really say at present whether this Antwerfer Syndicate touches in any way upon affairs in which I'm int'rested—but from what I know of those two men—well—it might. You happen to be flush at the moment? Journalism pay you well enough to be snooty about money?"

"Not impossibly so, I fancy. I do nothing but special stuff for the *Daily News*—usually clean up eight or nine hundred a year—sometimes more. How much do you need, old chap?"

"Oh, I'm not borrowing—thanks. I was just wondering if you'd care to undertake a little commission for me without much trouble in it for you? A hundred pounds now—another hundred if you get what I want."

"Well—I'm insulted, naturally; but I can overlook that sort of insult at least once every day. What do you want done?"

"I want to know exactly how many directors there are on the syndicate board—names, residences, all you can dig up concerning them. Addresses of the syndicate branches in other cities and how much of a staff they maintain in each. Snapshots of each director—as good ones as you can possibly get. Snapshots of their offices—don't care how or when you get them. Are you on?"

"Rather! I'll put in the rest of the afternoon on it. Where can I report to you?"

"I've just taken an apartment in Kensington—here are both the telephone- and street-numbers. And my butler usually knows when I'll be at home."

AFTER Saunderson left him, Sir Edward stepped to the door of Yelverton's offices. His secretary picked up her desk-phone and then, with a smile, nodded for him to go on into the private office.

"Hello, Frank!"

"Glad to see you, Ned! I fancied you'd possibly come in on the *Berengaria* if you finished up in New York before she sailed. Lookin' pretty fit, too. Well—I suppose you'll be down in Devon a while, now?"

"That was the intention—but every time I get back in this town, it seems as though some fresh complication was laying for me. By the way—have you written a policy for the Antwerfer Syndicate recently?"

"Why—aye. That's to say—we just

renewed one for 'em this afternoon. Friends of yours?"

"Never even heard of the concern until today; but I know two of their board. What sort of policy are they carrying? Mining development?"

"No. One of the 'freak policies.'"

"Meaning?"

"Insuring a chap you don't know, to cover your investm'ts in his comp'nies—in case anything happens to him."

"**H**IMPH! How much does their investment run to?" Coffin asked.

"Quarter of a million, in this case."

"Holy cats! Say—wait a minute, Frank! Let me get this straight. If this man, whom they don't even know, dies from natural causes, depreciating his various enterprises, you're going to pay that syndicate a quarter of a million, sterling? Eh?"

"Er—quite so—if he dies from any cause whatsoever. Policy runs three months—we get twenty-five thousand—an' the same amount each time we renew it."

"But—dammit all—that makes the chap cost 'em twenty-five thousand for every three months he stays alive—but pays 'em quarter of a million as soon as he's dead! Are you people crazy? Why—you're making 'em a straight out-and-out offer of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds to murder the man!"

"Aye, it runs to that—if they can get away with it. Of course, you'll understand that we don't pay a penny in the case of murder until the murderer is caught, tried an' convicted—or at least until it is definitely proved that the beneficiaries were in no possible way implicated."

"Hmph! Yes—that protects you somewhat. But suppose the man dies by some accident which might have been murder but which can't be proved?"

"There's a special clause in the policy covering just that point. In such a case, we have eighteen months to conduct our own investigations before paying."

"And if he turns up missing—definitely?"

"Then we don't pay until the courts declare the man legally dead—anywhere from two to five years."

"I suppose that sort of policy isn't issued very often?"

"Oh, bless my soul! They're written every week or two, by a number of assurance associations—an' a lot of other queer ones besides. Why, only yesterday

I wrote off twenty thousand pounds on the feet of a famous dancer in Paris, of which she'd never see a penny in case anything happened to 'em—policy taken out by her manager. Fortunately for the girl, she's carrying ten thousand pounds on 'em herself in one of the French mutuals—got the policy at a very low rate, too, as a matter of patriotism.

"But in regard to this Antwerfer policy: it appears to be absolutely straight. They've just renewed it and paid a second twenty-five thousand pounds—which you'll admit is not a trifling sum to throw away unecess'r'ly. If they had any idea of murdering the chap, they'd never have wasted this second paym't—they'd have done him in a month ago. Prob'ly we'd have obtained evidence against 'em an' canceled the policy on the ground of attempt to defraud—outside of the murder-charge altogether."

"Who's the man they insured?"

"Cornelius Vandersteyn—of Capetown."

"Vandersteyn—Vandersteyn? Where the deuce have I heard that name recently? H-m-m—oh, yes, Saunderson, of course! Why—Cornelius Vandersteyn must be in the building at this moment! At least, he was a few minutes ago. Billy Saunderson had just been interviewing him."

"Quite likely. I saw by the papers that he was expected in London about this time. Good chance for your syndicate friends to do him in if they contemplate anything of the sort."

"There I don't agree with you, Frank. Too many chances of being seen and caught, here—too much certainty of one's movements being traced for weeks before. If I were in Vandersteyn's position, knowing what we do, I'd sleep soundly in London without much worry over being killed. Well—of course my only interest in the matter is as far as it might concern Lloyd's, and you seem to consider that policy no more risky than most of your others based upon the law of averages. I may be in town for a while before running down to Devon—so I'll probably drop in occasionally."

COFFIN, after leaving, went to the big library and reference-room in another part of the building. Here he spent an hour searching through foreign directories and making notes of the results. When he left the building, he sent messages in code to friends in Hamburg, Capetown and Johannesburg. After

reaching his apartment, he put through a telephone-call to the junior partner in a well-known New York banking and brokerage house—catching this gentleman just after his return from lunch. When the New York Exchange closed, an hour later, the banker put through a return-call to Sir Edward, who was just finishing dinner in his apartment at eight o'clock. And when this conversation was over, Saunderson was on the wire to know if he could come around at once. When the two were comfortably smoking in the living-room, Sir Edward said:

"Suppose I tell you a few things about the Antwerfer Syndicate first, Billy—and then you can give me your story? Eh?"

SAUNDERSON nodded—somewhat in surprise.

"First—their office doors say that they have branches in Hamburg, New York and Jo'burg—with some implication of others elsewhere. Well—unless those other branches happen to be independent concerns under other names, merely acting occasionally as their agents, which I consider very unlikely—there are no such branches in existence. Their syndicate or its operations appears to be entirely unknown in each of those three cities. No operations of theirs are known at the Cape or in Rhodesia."

Saunderson nodded.

"Good work, old chap! You've beaten me on two of those points—but my man at the Cape wasn't in position to give me a quick answer, and you didn't suggest any New York telephoning. Along some other lines, I got one or two bits which you didn't—had another talk with Vandersteyn, for one—asked him about that mine-litigation story you phoned me as having come from the Antwerfer crowd. He said the suit was decided in his favor six months ago, that no appeal was made, and that he finally sold out to the men who had been suing him. There was never any idea of a merger with other claims, and he's definitely out of the whole business. I also persuaded him, in confidence, to mention all the larger shareholders in his various enterprises—and the Antwerfer Syndicate wasn't among 'em."

"Hmph! My hunch when I saw your friends Smith and Bloch in that car wasn't so far out of the way after all, Billy. We've practically got right down to the cold fact that the syndicate haven't a shilling's interest in any of Vander-

steyn's enterprises—that the only six directors of whom anybody knows are presumable crooks—that the respectable standing and vast operations of the syndicate are pure moonshine, and that whatever activities they are engaged in are presumably on the shady side. Well—what's the answer?"

Saunderson moved uneasily in his chair—shivering a little, as he lighted a fresh cigar.

"A quarter of a million, sterling, reward for cold-blooded, premeditated murder! That's pretty rotten—what? Thing we'd best do at once is warn Vandersteyn to hire a bodyguard without wasting much time!"

"Wouldn't do a particle of good! A bodyguard won't stop a bullet from a rifle or pistol with a silencer on its muzzle—or a knife-thrust on a crowded sidewalk in the evening. If somebody's out to kill you, a suit of plate armor is a lot more to the point than a bodyguard. One thing that would protect the man would be the instant cancellation of that policy—but Lloyd's are not in position to do that; they legally can't!"

"With all this evidence an' proof we've raked up?"

"Circumstantial evidence—not proof. The syndicate has paid fifty thousand pounds in cash for a quarter-million if Vandersteyn dies from any cause whatsoever. Lloyd's have accepted the money and written the policy. Vandersteyn isn't dead—they certainly can't cancel the policy until he is and fraud is proved. We've absolutely no proof that the syndicate intends to commit murder—if we had, we couldn't do anything until they do commit it. They can say that their real reason for taking out that policy was a private one which business reasons prevented their giving—and offered a fictitious explanation instead. How can you prove that a lie? Looks to me as if I have some moral obligation to see if I can't protect Vandersteyn until we do get proof enough to cancel that policy—and, by thunder, I'm going to do what I can, Billy! I was figuring upon taking a month or two off in Devon, but I guess I don't get it for a while! I suppose he wouldn't have said anything to you about when he expects to leave for the Cape?"

"WHY—yes, he did—upon the distinct understanding it must not get into print. As a matter of fact, we rather took a fancy to each other when we first met in Lloyd's this afternoon.

He's supposed to be in the United Kingdom for another month at least—actually, he's sailing on the *Arundel Castle* next week."

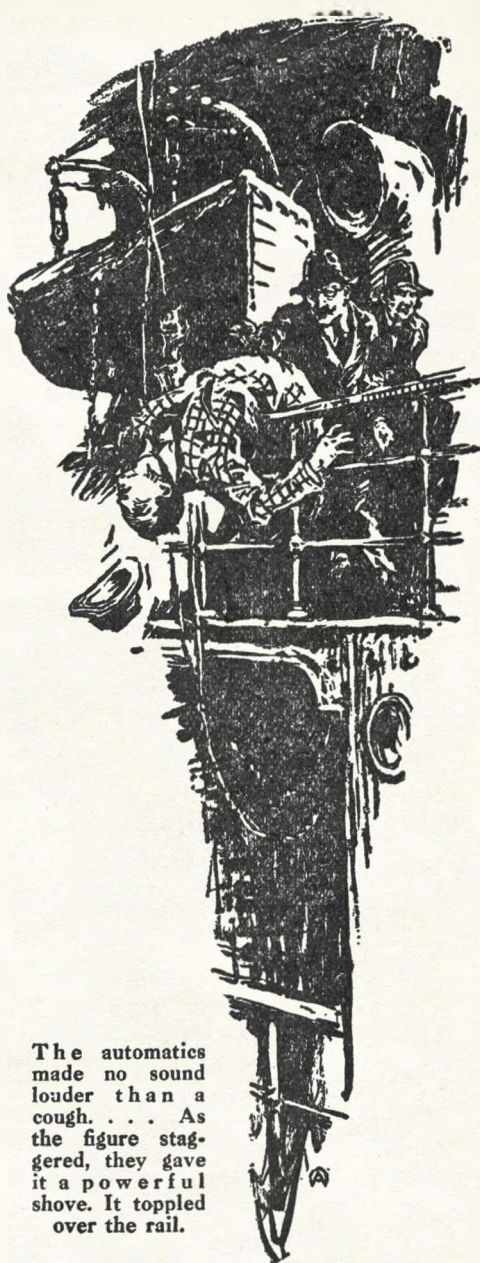
"And those cursed murderers are sure to get that information in some way or other! It's precisely the chance they've been waiting for! All right—I'll book on that boat myself!"

"I say! Look here, Sir Edward! If any crime is actually pulled off, it strikes me that Lloyd's should have all the eyewitness proof they can possibly get. What? An' if that syndicate can be implicated, it's a whale of a scoop for the *Daily News*! My arrangement with the sheet is diff'rent from that of the ord'n'ry newspaper man. I go an' come as I please—around the world, if it seems promising in the news line—an' I'm paid by what I cable in—paid very well in most cases. Nothing to prevent my bein' on that boat myself. An' I might come in handy; you never can tell. What?"

"That'll be topping, Billy! I'll take a communicating suite for us—two rooms with a bath between—and keep our names off the passenger-list."

AS Coffin's name didn't appear upon the saloon-list, the Baronet was considerably surprised to find himself seated at the captain's right—until that bluff shipmaster came below for dinner. He had been mate under Coffin in his last boat, and had subsequently gone over from the Brock Line to the Union Castle. On his left was a very agreeable gentleman whom he introduced as Mr. Cornelius Vandersteyn—who proved to be much the same type as the other two—a man who had seen a good deal of rough life before, during and after the World War, a man who more than once had been scared until his teeth chattered but carried on just the same.

Saunderson had been placed farther down the table—but a hint to the chief steward moved him up next to them, as he was an acquaintance of Vandersteyn's and there happened to be no tin celebrities to be placated. "Sparks," as they found out later, was another old shipmate of the Baronet's—so they were made free of the wireless-house which was a Union-Castle service not controlled by the Marconi Company. Not knowing what they might be up against before reaching Capetown, Coffin gave Fessenden enough of Vandersteyn's situation to impress the chief operator with



The automatics made no sound louder than a cough. . . . As the figure staggered, they gave it a powerful shove. It toppled over the rail.

the man's danger. Then he turned to Saunderson, who had accompanied them up to the wireless-house and asked if he had spotted any of the Antwerfer directors on board. The journalist was amazed at the question.

"My word! No! Did you fancy any of that lot could possibly be with us, Sir Edward?"

"Your friends Smith and Bloch are in the saloon, Billy. I told you they'd wangle the information about his departure in some way—and they did. Now we'll have our work cut out for us!

I've given Cap'n Merrifield enough of the story to show him what Vandersteyn's up against. Every steward and officer on the boat has orders to keep an eye on the man and on those two rotters as well—"

"But—which of the saloon lot are they, old chap? I've seen nobody resembling them!"

"YOU wouldn't—for they're just the average type in which any slight change produces a marked individuality of another sort altogether. Smith is now *Budminster*—an Anglican clergyman two stone heavier, apparently, with a fuller face and mutton-chop whiskers. Bloch is now *Von Blitz*—Prussian ex-officer, hair *en brosse*, thick-lensed spectacles slightly tinted, mustache with upturned ends. Have they been using the radio, Fessenden?"

"Aye—but only with the sort of messages you'd expect 'em to send. Budminster, to his wife in a Surrey rectory—mostly about his cough and underwear. Von Blitz, to officers in a Hamburg service club about commissions on selling motorcars at the Cape."

"Exactly. Code, of course. I'm betting you could heave a cat from that 'Surrey rectory' into Smith's house below Sydenham. His butler will be phoning his messages to the other one in Jorner's West End flat. When do we make Funchal?"

"Tomorrow afternoon—prob'ly late."

"Well—those rotters won't try anything tonight because they haven't had time to get the lay of the boat and figure out what they can do easiest. When they do start something you can gamble they'll have every move laid out to meet any contingency—and they'll prove damned quick workers. The only advantage we have is the apparent impossibility of their suspecting what we know in any way. There has been nothing to direct their attention toward me or Saunderson—particularly, when they're confident we couldn't penetrate their disguise if we did know anything about 'em."

"I say, Sir Edward! Knowing they're disguised—knowing what you do about 'em—why isn't there enough to justify the Cap'n in heaving 'em into the brig until we reach the Cape?"

"There is—plenty! But how does that get us any proof that they mean to kill Vandersteyn? We haven't anything to hold 'em on, at Capetown. A man has

a right to disguise himself if he feels like it—nothing really criminal in that alone. They go ashore—Van goes ashore—and he's in more danger than ever. But once we catch 'em in any criminal act on board this boat, we've got 'em where they can't wriggle out—and we've got that damned syndicate too. My impression is they'll pick a night or two before we reach Las Palmas."

As it happened, Vandersteyn had the three-room suite just across the little side passage opposite Coffin's room—and before turning in that night, had come across to offer the Baronet some prime whisky. In a few moments—when the outer doors had been locked and Coffin had taken three little bundles from his steamer-trunk—the three of them, including Billy Saunderson, were in the bathroom between, and Sir Edward was telling the Cape man what he was up against.

"It would be pretty hot wearing one of these things in the daytime, Vandersteyn—but I want you to put the thing on as soon as it gets dark and wear it all night—and every night—until those scoundrels start something. You won't believe it until you've seen the thing done—but I fired a forty-four bullet point-blank at each hone of these vests and it didn't go even half through. Saunderson and I will wear the other two. Then we'll be protected against knife or bullet unless we're hit in the head. I think I've got the glimmerings of a workable scheme in my head, but haven't figured it out yet. Oh! . . . By the way! We're likely to have some rainy nights before we make Las Palmas, this time of year—and I suppose you'll have fetched along a mackintosh—eh?"

"Bought two good ones in London the day before we left."

"Does either of 'em happen to have a rather loud or striking pattern?"

The Cape man laughed.

"Rather! That's the one my valet was sore about—but it tickled my fancy and I bought it. Somewhat the fancy-dress-ball effect, but everybody is wearing 'sport clothes' in these days."

"Hmph! . . . That's bully. Really a bit of topping luck—I'm beginning to see my way clearer. I want you to wear that rain-coat whenever there's the least excuse for it—parade around in it until everybody on board knows who it belongs to! Will you do that?"

"Why—of course—if there's any object in it. You've been mighty decent

about telling me what I'm up against, Sir Edward—naturally, I'll do anything you say!"

When Vandersteyn had left them, Saunderson asked:

"What's your idea as to what those rotters will prob'ly do?"

"Study his habits until they know exactly the times of day and night when he's likely to be on any of the decks alone—particularly, the boat-deck—at night. Then lay for him—plug him a few times, with silencers on their guns—heave him over the rail while he's helpless from the shots. That's the one proposition in which they'll be least likely to be caught or even seen."

"But suppose he makes a point of never going about the decks alone—especially at night? He'd be a bally ass to do it!"

"But he's going to, all the same—I'll see that he does, and we'll be near enough to protect him. You haven't caught the idea yet, Billy! That's the one scheme I want them to try—rather than some other I can only guess at."

"H-m-m—fancy I'm beginning to get it. My word!"

HAD Smith and Bloch any suspicion whatever that they were known as directors of the Antwerfer Syndicate in spite of their disguises, they wouldn't have made a move against the promotor that voyage—there would not have been a scrap of evidence against them—and it is entirely possible that they would have managed to kill him within another month. The two were full of devilish resources and utterly unscrupulous. But they never dreamed of being suspected and matters began to look ridiculously favorable for their plans. Coffin's trap was an exceedingly clever one, though with considerable risk to himself. They walked squarely into it. . . .

Two nights before the *Arundel Castle* was due at Las Palmas, it came on to rain—a fine drizzle which was scarcely more than heavy fog. Vandersteyn had been wearing his loud-patterned rain-coat about the boat until he was thoroughly identified with it. Some time after dinner, he and Coffin went up to chat with Fessenden in the wireless-house on the boat-deck. Saunderson—who had been watching the two masqueraders in the smoke-room—saw them quietly go out, and below to their staterooms. He was close enough behind to hear one of them pull a steamer-trunk—

out from under the berth and take something from it. That being all he wanted to know, he hurried up to Captain Merrifield's cabin abaft the wheel-house where he found the mate, who came down on the boat-deck with him—one concealing himself behind a boat on the starboard side and the other on the port. In a moment, they dimly made out the figures of Smith and Bloch, who leaned over the rail where nobody would have noticed them.

Presently, the door of the wireless-house opened, widely. Vandersteyn's conspicuous rain-coat appeared in the glow from inside—then the door closed and the figure could be dimly seen making its way forward to the companion-way. Suddenly—Bloch and Smith ran out, blazing into it with automatics which made no sound louder than a cough. As the figure staggered toward the opening between the two boats on the port side, they gave it a powerful shove which sent it through—but not before the finger-nails of one hand caught Smith's cheek and tore bloody furrows across it. Then the figure toppled over the rail and disappeared. They didn't go to the rail to look—but went quietly down to the "A"-Deck where they heard a powerful voice shouting: "*Man overboard! Man overboard!*"

In the rain and darkness, the figure of the presumably dying man caught at the rope from one of the boat-falls as he went over the side—slid down it to the deck below—swung inboard until he landed in the gangway—tore off the mackintosh and cap, which he flung overboard—and then ran forward, shouting: "*Man overboard!*"

As the two would-be murderers went down the companion, the mate ran up on the bridge—threw over the engine-room telegraph to "Stop"—"Back down." A boat was lowered. After half an hour's search, Vandersteyn's rain-coat was found and fetched aboard—but no police official or news-reporter ever got a glimpse of it—the thing was perforated with six bullet-holes.

IN Sir Edward's stateroom, shortly after midnight, when a muffled passenger had been admitted, he got out a theatrical make-up box and proceeded to alter Vandersteyn's map until he didn't know himself in the mirror—and it wasn't a matter of grease-paint either. An Oriental drug was injected under the skin until certain muscles began to swell—

his hair was close-cropped—his Van Dyck shaved off. Saunderson had obtained his measure from his London tailor and had fetched along three suits of different cloth and color from anything he had worn. His valet was sent ashore with his luggage at Las Palmas and the metamorphosed "Mr. Boemer" came aboard as a new passenger with other luggage for the voyage to the Cape. Smith and Bloch were thrown off-guard by the fact that Vandersteyn's loss at sea had been sent out by the radio at once—the London, Cape and Las Palmas papers were full of it. So they never thought of suspecting the supposed "Mr. Boemer."

In the seclusion of the Captain's cabin that night, Vandersteyn expressed his intention of staying "dead" a month at least.

"My agents will have their secret advices, of course, so it'll do no harm to any of my enterprises. And I'm thinking of taking up that Rhodesian proposition which interested the Antwerfer Syndicate so greatly that they were going to sacrifice an 'innocent bystander' without a qualm. I've an impression I can so manipulate that as to bleed those scoundrels of every penny they've got. Seems rather the proper thing to do—not?"

No suggestion was made as to arresting Smith and Bloch when they left at Capetown—apparently, nobody had any suspicion of what they had done. And after three months—needing their quarter-million very badly—Jorner and Braunfels called upon Yelverton in regard to their policy on Vandersteyn.

"Fancy I don't quite get it, gentlemen! That policy you mention expired two weeks ago, an' you said nothing whatever about renewing it."

"There was no reason for renewing it, Mr. Yelverton—we've come here to collect on it. Vandersteyn was lost at sea from the *Arundel Castle* nearly three months ago. There has been no question whatever as to the fact—but we've given you these months to check up in every possible way—"

"An' you mean to tell me that you gentlemen were taken in by that pressmen's cock-an'-bull yarn? My word! Nothing to it—not a thing! Pure moonshine! Vandersteyn's not dead! Why, demmit all, he was here in this room an hour ago—lunched with me—healthiest appetite I ever saw for a ghost! Nons'nse, man—nons'nse!"

Bad News

A stirring and startling drama of the prize-ring of today by the noted author of "In Self Defense."

NOW don't get crossed up at the very beginning about this Bad News Mason. He knew the angles, understand, and he was honest—which is saying plenty for the manager of any box-fighter in these times. And he had a real affection for his young heavyweight contender, Danny Lawlor.

Of course, Bad News was a pessimist.

He said right from the start that there was something phony about Kayo Cronin offering to take Danny on for fifteen rounds, after sidestepping the match for two years. But this particular morning, Bad News was almost cheerful.

He sat there alone beside the open-air training-ring, watching young Lawlor go through a secret workout against a flashy sparring partner. And the brawny lad looked good—mighty good. His body, sun-bronzed from weeks of outdoor training, didn't carry an ounce of excess weight. His footwork, always something to marvel at, had the flowing grace of natural perfection.

And now, as if to banish any lingering doubt that might remain in Bad News' mind, Danny Lawlor flicked over that tantalizing left of his. His opponent knew the trick and countered cautiously—but not quite cautiously enough. Pivoting, Danny streaked in a short right, which he would have followed up like a tiger in more serious combat.

But now that was not necessary. There sounded the sharp smack of leather meeting flesh. Danny's man went down, sprawling in the resin. And he lay there groggy and rubber-limbed, until Danny scooped him up and helped him to a corner.

"I'm sorry," Lawlor apologized. He had gone four fast rounds prior to this bout, but his breathing was still slow and regular. "I thought you knew all about that one, Hafey."

"I did—and I do," the other panted, with a sheepish grin. "But I didn't see it comin'!"

Travels Fast

By JOHN
MERSEREAU

Illustrated by George Avison

He was interrupted here by Mason. Bad News had climbed through the ropes. He threw an arm across Lawlor's brawny shoulders. And for once, Bad News Mason actually was smiling. For he knew that his battler had reached the peak of condition and performance at exactly the right time—three days before the match with Cronin.

"You'll take him, Danny!" he enthused. "It'll be a walkaway. Not that I ever thought otherwise," he added hastily. "But—well, I have sort of wondered now and then."

Danny Lawlor eyed him serenely.

"You mean," he suggested, "you've wondered why the heavyweight champion of the world is willing to take me on when the fans will still pay to see him push over stumblebums. And so have I," he added. "But I'm not worrying."

A handler threw a robe over Danny's glistening back and removed the soft sparring pillows from his hands. But the big contender remained standing there, frowning thoughtfully, instead of heading forthwith for the shower and rubdown rooms.

"Shake a leg," Bad News ordered curtly. "And tell the Swede to lay off the finger-waves; you're in the pink right now."

"Okay." Danny turned, then paused decisively. "You come along, Bad News," he said. "There's something on my mind."

Bad News Mason fell into step complacently. Together they started down the shaded path: the little sharp-faced, gray-haired manager and the rangy, good-looking youngster he had developed from obscurity into a polished fighting machine favored to cop Fistiana's most cherished crown.

Of course, Bad News admitted to himself, Danny Lawlor had had the build to start with, and a fighting heart—along with a quick, clean mind. He hadn't run wild like Cronin.

"You mean," Bad News cried, "you want Danny to—take a dive?"



"I suppose you'll blow up when I tell you," began Danny, "but I'm hoping you'll see my side of it when you cool off. It's about our—contract. It expires a few weeks after the big fight, you know."

"Yeah?" Bad News' voice suddenly was dry and tense.

"Well," said Lawlor, "I—I've been thinking about it a lot lately; and I've decided not to sign up with you again."

Mason halted. His eyes blinked once or twice, but he took it standing up—without pleading, without reproach.

"Okay by me, Danny." He shrugged, a little too elaborately. "You've paid me for everything I've done for you. Go get your shower, boy. I understand."

HE turned away; Lawlor clamped a big hand on his shoulder roughly, and spun him around.

"Listen—you mug!" Danny said unsteadily. "You *don't* understand! I'm figuring on retiring; that's what I mean. I'll have a quarter of a million salted down after this Cronin go. You'll have at least half as much. And it's clean money, every cent of it. No one can even hint we ever framed a fight. And that means as much to me as—as retiring with the championship."

"And to me," said Bad News Mason sincerely. "But Danny, you can't quit before you've picked up some of that easy jack! A couple hundred grand is chicken-feed to a champ."

"It's a fortune," Danny contradicted quietly. "I was raised in an orphanage, remember; and I'm still sap enough to think I can go places and do things on income of a thousand a month or so. I can educate myself, and travel—"

"Shakespeare and a walking trip through England, eh?" Bad News jeered. But there was no real malice in his voice. "And the high hat for your old pals, who knew you when."

"Be yourself!" grinned Danny. "I've booked passage on the *Prince Rupert*—a cargo-boat—for the morning after the big fight. And the reservation is for J. D. Mason, retired, and companion. Is that high hat?"

Bad News Mason stood there for a long moment, his face a mask. But his thoughts milled about in turbulent conflict, like a pair of ham pugs clouting each other around the ring. He was tired; he was getting old. It *would* be rather nice to lay back on the oars for the first time in his life. But on the other hand—

"We only live once," urged Danny Lawlor. "And you pay for the big money every time with a load of grief—lawsuits, frameups, touts. And even if you beat them all, the lawyers pick you clean. I'm not going to be that way!"

Bad News looked up abruptly. He held out his hand.

"Keep it quiet," he warned, "until Cronin takes the count. Right now, it might hurt the gate. But—thanks!"

"You won't go, then?"

"I *will* go, Danny! The wise guys will sneer at you—like I did just now in fun. But they'll envy you. And me! We'll go down in the book as the only championship team that was smart enough to quit—on the right side of the right time!"

A lump caught in Bad News' throat. He turned hurriedly away. Only he knew what it cost in nervous energy and constant vigilance to make a champion. And now as he hastened toward the front entrance of the comfortable farmhouse that was camp headquarters, a great load lifted from his overburdened mind.

Just three days more! Then peace and relaxation—and an honorable retirement that would become a legend of the ring. He and Danny would become personages overnight—unique. A smile illuminated the old manager's pinched, nervous face.

BUT Bad News couldn't see around the corner yet, where, contrary to orders, the gate had been opened in the high mesh fence. He couldn't hear the expensive limousine coming to a purring stop below the farmhouse door. And he couldn't see "Spot" Pirelli, big-

bellied and utterly assured, mount heavily to the porch and take a chair—as if he owned the place.

As Bad News turned the corner, he all but collided with the gatekeeper, who had been instructed to admit no one—regardless of credentials—at this hour. The attendant started to explain, but Mason brushed by him as if he were not there. For Danny's manager had spotted the waiting limousine and its erstwhile occupant, and he made a bee-line for the porch.

"Listen!" he addressed the stranger lolling there. "Couldn't you read that sign hanging on the gate?"

"Yeah, I read it," the other admitted comfortably. "But here I am, aint I?"

"I'm not sure, but I'm coming to find out!" Bad News advanced menacingly.

But the stranger did not retreat. Nor did he rise. He merely turned a trifle in his chair; and as if that were a signal, the rear door of the waiting limousine clicked open. A face peered out of the dark interior, blinking its eyes like some creature of the night exposed unwillingly to the sun.

INSTINCTIVELY Mason glanced that way, and despite himself he shuddered at what he saw. A pasty reptilian face, dead of expression, yet utterly venomous. That—and the muzzle of some queer sort of gun.

"Didja call me, Chief?" the Face inquired tonelessly.

"No, Carlo," smiled the stranger. "Me and Mr. Mason are getting along just fine. —Aint we?" he inquired amiably.

He turned his head then, slowly; and for the first time Bad News glimpsed the scar, blue and ugly, branded by fire on his visitor's right cheek.

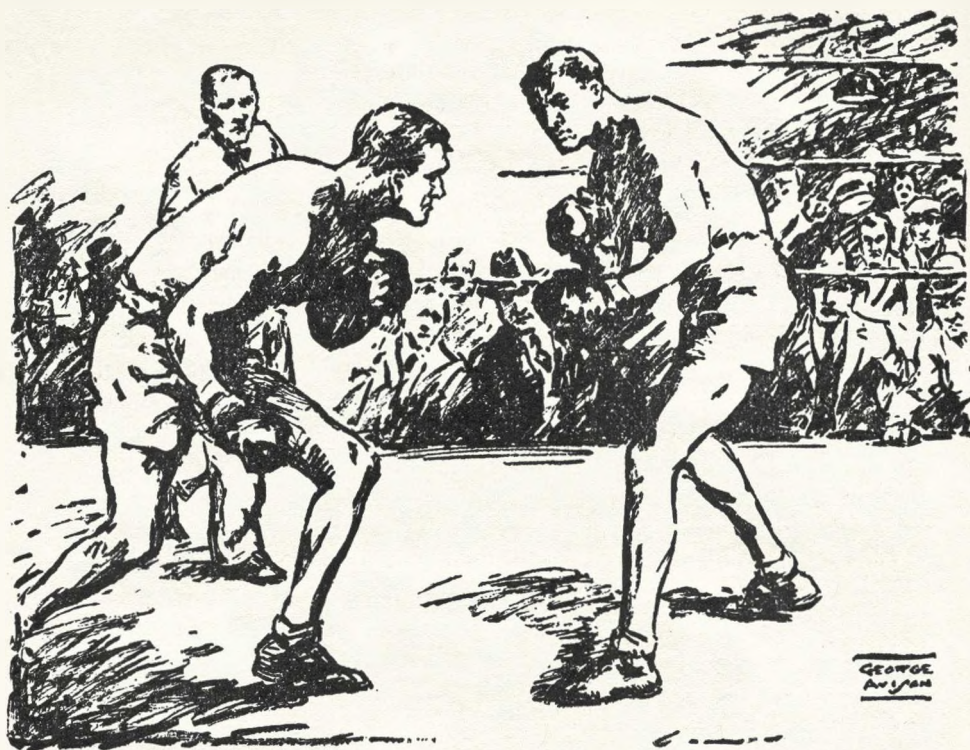
Bad News was far from yellow; yet he felt his knees go limp as he recognized that label of an infamous identity.

"You're—" he stammered, "you're—"

"Yes," said the newcomer, "I am."

He drew out a fresh cigar, and as he lighted it, the limousine door clicked shut. "And now that we're acquainted," Spot Pirelli grinned, "I know you'll feel different about me visiting this dump."

Bad News dropped into the nearest chair. He sat there rigid, like one hypnotized. He'd laughed at countless wise-cracks based on the doubly appropriate nickname of this gangster overlord who flouted every law. But it was something else again when the ruthless murderer himself confronted you!



Lawlor lunged forward behind a covering left. But there was agony in his eyes.

"How," Pirelli inquired, "is Lawlor coming along?"

"Fine. Just fine!" Bad News blurted out. It seemed a privilege, somehow, just to have the chance to speak. He forgot his usual studied reticence. "He just kayoed Speed Hafey in one round. And Hafey's nobody's slouch."

"Hafey's clever," agreed Pirelli. "I've seen him battle once or twice. But he can't take 'em any more."

"Neither can the champ," Bad News pointed out. "Danny will plant one so deep in his pantry that Cronin'll need a loud-speaker and a ear-trumpet to hear the count!"

Pirelli puffed at his cigar. He smiled. "No," he contradicted gently, "I don't think it'll be quite that bad. Between me and you, in fact, I happen to own a slice of Cronin; and I've set my heart on seeing him upset the dope. I mean he's got to win." His feline eyes settled on Mason significantly. "Get me? I've built up a million-dollar bet on Cronin to keep the title—and I aint a gambling man!"

Wide-eyed, Bad News sprang from his chair.

"You mean," he cried, "you want Danny to—take a dive?"

Spot Pirelli raised a pudgy hand—a hand that retained all its grossness despite the best efforts of a manicurist.

"Between me and you," he purred, "you guessed it! I didn't like to put it up to you too soon. The odds wouldn't of been so sweet if Lawlor had eased off on his flashy public workouts here. But I knew you'd both listen to reason—from me, Mason; and there's still time for you to sit in and clean up big."

"But we don't want to sit in!" Bad News cried. "Besides, everybody knows Danny is a cinch to take the champ. If he laid down, it would kill the boxing game!"

"Game!" Pirelli sneered. "It's just another racket when I back it with important dough. Like alky-running and gambling-joints and—things like that. And who can prove it's crooked, if a lucky punch tags Lawlor on the chin?" The gangster arose lazily and tossed his cigar away. "You're in," he stated, "and there aint any out. You tell Lawlor he can hippodrome until Cronin passes him the office in a clinch. And when he gets it, it's up to him to do a quick fade-out."

"But he won't—you don't know him!"

"Oh, yes, he will," Pirelli contradicted with utter confidence. "There's some

guys it's safer to play ball with than to buck. And it's a long ways from the arena to the pier where the *Prince Rupert* docks! Just tell Lawlor I mentioned that, and he'll come around. I mean I really think he will. . . . So long!"

Spot Pirelli sauntered down the steps and entered his waiting car. The expensive limousine rolled down the drive. The gate opened and clanged shut. And spurning all speed-laws, the chauffeur gave the sixteen-cylinder motor the gun.

BUT Bad News remained there on the porch, his face pocketed in his outspread hands. His eyes were closed, but he saw with tragic clarity that Danny had doped it out exactly right: The wolves did trail big money, always, looking for an easy kill. And there wasn't any escape when a big shot like Pirelli and his ruthless pack took after you. Bad News groaned aloud. . . .

"What's the trouble?" Danny's laughing voice sounded at his side as the big lad, clad now in tweeds, strolled up to the porch. "There's no need to practice up on bein' seasick, Bad News. You'll just naturally do the right thing when it takes hold of you!"

Bad News looked up forlornly.

"Sit down, Danny!" He waited a moment. Then he blurted out: "Danny, Pirelli was just here. *Spot* Pirelli! He's Cronin's real manager, behind the scenes. And he's plunged on Kayo to lay you cold!"

"Why should that give you a headache?" Lawlor grinned.

"Because he's framed us—"

"Be yourself!" scoffed Danny. "We've got an honest referee, and I'm going in there to win!"

"Pirelli's plunged on Cronin. He says you've got to dive!"

"*He* says!"

"Yes; and Pirelli don't bluff, Danny. He backs his play. He even knows you've booked passage on the *Prince Rupert*; and—and he told me to tell you it's a long ways to the pier!"

"We'll ask for a police escort, then."

"Pirelli knows how to get around that. He's had men rubbed out by the dozen, Danny, but has he ever been hauled up on the carpet yet?"

Danny Lawlor's expression was serious now, and grim. He saw that a desperate situation confronted them.

"Then we'll call off the fight," he said, trying without avail to conceal the bitter disappointment in his voice. "Cronin

can take our twenty-five thousand forfeit money. I won't lay down to him!"

"And let Ted Sampson, the promoter, hold the sack? It's set him back a hundred grand already, Danny, to build the arena and advertise this match. And he's been a real friend to us. Besides," Mason pointed out, "Pirelli wouldn't stand for it. We're in, he says; and if we quit, we're as good as on the spot! You were dead right, Danny—only it came sooner than even you foresaw. The racketeers were bound to catch up with us. If it hadn't been Pirelli, it would of been Hymie Grost—"

"Hymie Grost?"

"'Little Hymie,' the new boss of the West Side," Bad News explained. "He's chiseled in just lately; and so far, Pirelli aint been able to blast him loose. But when Spot makes this betting clean-up, he'll have the money to blot out Hymie's mob."

Danny Lawlor sprang to his feet.

"Where," he demanded, "does this Little Hymie live?"

"In the Hotel Lenox. Rents a whole floor, openly, right on the main stem. But," asked Mason, "what's that to us?"

"I'm going to the Hotel Lenox," Danny said. "Right now—and I'm going to have a little talk with Hymie Grost!"

MASON sat up in consternation. "Don't be a complete damned fool!" he cried. "You're thinking, aint you, that you can spill the beans to Hymie and get him to protect us in exchange for the killing he can make by covering Spot Pirelli's bets?"

"There's no one else," Danny nodded grimly. "And if I have to go to a dirty gangster for protection, I'll do it—before I'll cheat the fans by flopping in a crooked fight!"

"Listen!" Mason begged; and he clutched his big contender desperately by one arm. "Hymie Grost would double-cross his own mother for a dime. And what good will you be to him after he cashes in? He'll let Pirelli stand you up, and it'll be just a laugh to him. That's the rule of the racket, Danny. When you're no more use to them, there's no pay-off!"

"There's going to be a pay-off this time, Bad News," Danny rasped, "but you and I won't feel the crash."

"I'm going with you, then, if you—"

"No, you're not! You're staying right here to cover up for me. And don't worry if I don't get back till late."

Lawlor pulled free and hustled down the path. In a moment his modest roadster pounded down the drive. The gate opened, clanged shut after him.

But again Bad News Mason neither saw nor heard. His face was pocketed in his outspread hands. He'd stick with Danny to the finish because—well, because he loved the big dumb kid. But Danny would knock out Cronin surely, Bad News told himself. It was a cinch. And they'd not reach the *Prince Rupert's* gangplank alive. A burst of lead would tear into them from some dark alley entrance as they passed. And they'd check out. While Little Hymie Grost—ignoring his oily promises of protection—would collect his smart money and pay them a last sneering tribute of a belly-laugh!

ROW on row, in restless, eager waves, the fans packed the great arena where Danny Lawlor was about to box fifteen rounds—or less—with Kayo Cronin, heavyweight champion of the world. All lights had been extinguished except the great cone of illumination beating down upon the ring. And in this hot glare stood the two contestants, flanked by their managers, listening to the final instructions of the referee.

"You break clean, understand, when I sing out," the referee intoned. "No rabbit-punches. Go to a neutral—"

Bad News Mason heard the droning words, but they did not register on his mind. His face was pale; his mouth was dry. The big moment he had dreamed about for years had finally arrived. But what did it mean now? A minute's glory. Then a futile flight from Spot Pirelli's mob!

Danny Lawlor hadn't confided to him any of the details of that meeting with Hymie Grost. He had merely said, on his return to camp, that everything was set. He had said this with a tight-lipped smile, and he had kept his own counsel ever since.

But Mason knew that Danny wasn't half as confident as he pretended. The big fellow had hardly slept these past three nights. Moreover, he'd dropped a pound or two since he'd knocked off training, when ordinarily he would have picked up a little weight. And right now he wore a taut look that was all wrong just before a grueling fight.

Like an automaton, almost, Bad News flipped the robe from his boy's shoulders as they returned to their corner of

the ring. And he forced a smile as he bent to slide between the padded ropes.

"Good luck, Danny!" he choked out. "And I'm with you to a finish, remember—either way."

Lawlor flashed him a brief, answering smile.

"I know it, old-timer," he murmured gratefully. "And I hope—I know, I mean—it's going to turn out okay."

He shuffled his feet in the resin and faced toward his swarthy, squat opponent. He scowled at Cronin, and the champion responded with a thick-lipped leer. The hum of voices in the stands swelled to an expectant, eager roar. And then, sharp and brazen—the bell!

Danny slid out from his corner, leading with a deceptively shortened left. Cronin came in more deliberately until he got into swinging range. Then, with a snarl, he charged, his big fists sledging and slashing in long vicious sweeps.

Lawlor darted in a stinging left. A haymaker slid past his protected jaw. They clinched. The champion hooked over a jolting rabbit-punch. Bad News' protesting voice rose above the booing of the crowd. The referee pushed apart the straining bodies. He warned Cronin, too—perfunctorily. They were illegal, those chops to the brain base; but you couldn't disqualify a champion for a minor foul like that.

Again Cronin rushed. Again Danny reached through with a straight left. His right followed, like a striking snake. It landed high, but it brought the claret to Cronin's lip. The champion clinched, and chopped twice at the back of Lawlor's neck before the bell clanged to end the round.

IMMEDIATELY Bad News was up in the ring. A second swung a cooling fan while Mason swabbed Danny's face and neck.

"You're getting to him already, boy," he enthused hollowly. "Just like we figured, Kayo's all washed up."

"Don't kid yourself," Lawlor said. "He's plenty good."

Bad News protested, but he knew that this was so. For the first time in two years or more, Cronin was in tiptop shape. Doubtless, Spot Pirelli had demanded this. Not as preparation for a fair test of skill and stamina, but to lend the match an honest touch. And now, in fighting trim, Kayo Cronin still seemed to have the stuff that had made him champion.

The bell again! The big boys were warmed up now. They drove into each other hard and fast. Cronin connected with a stiff right. Danny's counter-punch opened the champion's cut lip again. Both of them slammed in hard body shots. Yet neither would give back an inch. Directly beneath the ring lights they rallied—and let go with everything they had.

Bad News cried out to Danny, but his voice was lost in the wild tumult of the fans. From head to body, and from body back to head, Lawlor and Kayo Cronin shifted their fierce attack. They ducked and sidestepped and lunged in. Faster than the eye could follow sometimes, they struck and pivoted and blocked.

It was a killing pace. The champion, confident that the bout was fixed, had timed himself for a sprint. And Danny Lawlor, who was being heeled and butted mercilessly in this wild exchange, seemed to have forgotten that slugging was Cronin's dish.

YET presently he did give back a step. Cronin, over-eager, followed in—and Lawlor rocked him with a terrific right to the head!

The champion wavered; he grimaced in surprise and pain. But he did not halt. He was tough—and he had reason to feel confident that Lawlor would not dare repeat such a grandstand play. He bored back in, taking a hard left above the heart as he pressed close. Then his soggy gloves smacked into Danny's midriff, driving the contender to the ropes.

Rebounding, Lawlor lunged forward behind a covering left. But he was hurt; there was a telltale look of agony in his eyes. And his right, unaccountably, was down. Cronin understood—or thought he did. Taking instant advantage, he lifted one flush to the unguarded angle of Danny's jaw!

Bad News Mason cried out as he saw Danny drop heavily to his knees. A minute before, he would have welcomed honorable defeat. But now sheer instinct took command. His man was down!

"Danny!" he screamed. "Take nine, Danny, and cover up!"

But Lawlor rose gamely at the count of eight—just as the timekeeper's gong ended the hectic round. He grinned and hiked up his trunks deliberately, to show that he wasn't hurt. But he didn't fool the crowd that cheered his game-

ness. They saw him go stiff-legged to his corner and drop heavily onto his stool.

A gash over his right eye was bleeding freely, and Bad News worked frantically to stop the flow.

"Box him, Danny!" he kept repeating. "Box him for a couple rounds, I say, or he'll land one on your lug!"

"Box him!" Lawlor muttered. "He'll catch on just that much sooner if I do. I'm done for, Bad News, if I can't win in this next round. My right—I broke it when I connected that time with Cronin's head!"

The whistle shrilled. Ten seconds until the bell. Bad News had to leave the ring. His mind was in a ferment as he slumped down in his seat. But he felt the sharp dig of a thumb against his shoulder; and he turned furiously as a nasal voice assailed his ears.

A man in evening dress, a little man with a huge beaked nose, was bending forward in his first-row chair.

"Say," the little man asked mildly, "is this a run-around—or what? I've got an interest—a big interest—in this brawl. I'm Hymie Grost!"

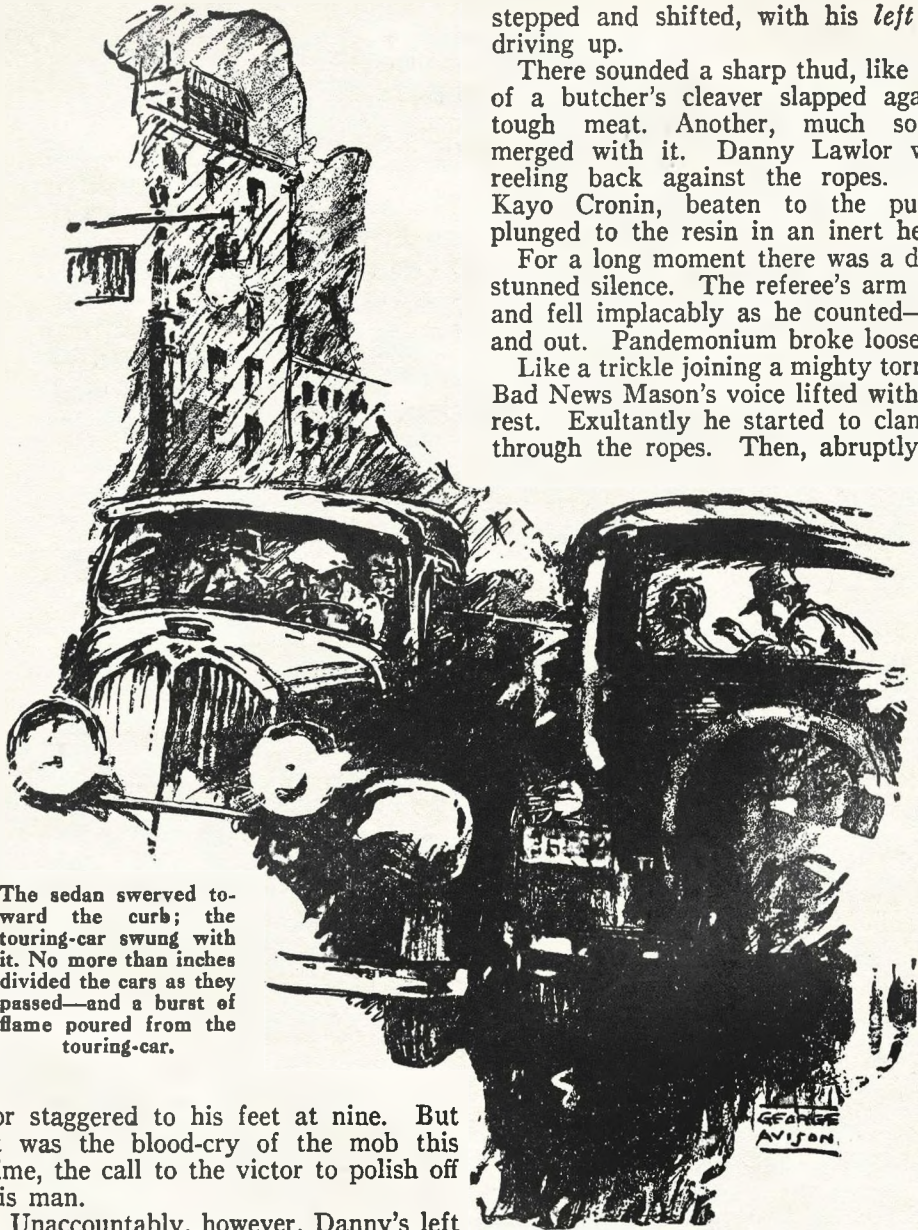
The bell!

Something like a sigh rose from the darkened tiers of packed humanity, straining forward, all of them, as if they too were down there in the ring. They had no inkling that another and more vital drama was rushing to its climax. But they were getting the thrill they hungered for, because Danny Lawlor—on his last legs, plainly—was a tough one to bring down.

BAD NEWS, watching with hopeless, stricken eyes, saw Cronin land two solid smashes that bent Danny's knees. He saw the boy lift a wild right that was inches wide. It was just a stall, he knew; the pitiful threat of a limp, broken hand that couldn't produce a slumber-maker if it connected a dozen times!

Cronin, dodging smoothly, came plowing in again. Once more Danny missed with a wicked-looking right. The champion drove in a counter punch. It landed solidly. And Danny Lawlor dropped to the canvas with glassy eyes.

The great arena was a bedlam for an instant. Then, like a smothering hand, silence gripped the stands. For Danny was struggling to his knees at the count of five. At seven, one uncertain foot gripped the canvas. And another roar welled up, like breaking surf, as Law-



The sedan swerved toward the curb; the touring-car swung with it. No more than inches divided the cars as they passed—and a burst of flame poured from the touring-car.

lor staggered to his feet at nine. But it was the blood-cry of the mob this time, the call to the victor to polish off his man.

Unaccountably, however, Danny's left stopped Cronin's eager rush. He sewed up the champion in a desperate clinch. Huddled in his seat, Bad News saw the champion's lips moving close to Danny's ear. But nothing could be heard, of course, in that terrific din. Even the referee's voice was lost as he shouted repeatedly for Lawlor to let go.

Roughly Danny's arms were torn from their clinging hold. The referee hopped back to get clear of Cronin's last attack. Reeling weakly, Danny flailed out with that prayerful right. The champion, with his own right cocked, slid under the wild blow. Pivoting, he brought up his soggy glove—as Danny Lawlor side-

stepped and shifted, with his *left* fist driving up.

There sounded a sharp thud, like that of a butcher's cleaver slapped against tough meat. Another, much softer, merged with it. Danny Lawlor went reeling back against the ropes. But Kayo Cronin, beaten to the punch, plunged to the resin in an inert heap!

For a long moment there was a dead, stunned silence. The referee's arm rose and fell implacably as he counted—ten and out. Pandemonium broke loose.

Like a trickle joining a mighty torrent, Bad News Mason's voice lifted with the rest. Exultantly he started to clamber through the ropes. Then, abruptly, he

remembered. He looked back and his lips compressed into a bitter line. Followed by his bodyguard, Little Hymie was beating it!

Bad News climbed up into the ring. He tried to grin as he congratulated his weary champion; but he made a sorry job of it. And he merely trailed along with Danny when, finally, a wedge of burly policemen cleared a way for them to their dressing-room. But with the door locked behind them, Mason spoke.

"You got to have that hand fixed," he said, "right away."

"We'll send for a doctor when we reach the boat," Danny told him quietly; "it doesn't sail until dawn, you know." His fingers closed on Mason's arm for emphasis. "And you sit tight, whatever happens," he directed, "when we pull out of here. Little Hymie has the whole thing fixed."

Bad News slumped down on a folding chair while Lawlor, aided by his handlers, got ready for the street. He just didn't have the heart to tell Danny that he'd never see Hymie Grost again.

HE waited with a fatalistic despair until Danny came for him. The boy was dressed now in the rough, comfortable tweeds he liked to wear. He looked patched and weary, but grimly optimistic, too. . . . It hurt Mason.

"It aint right, Danny!" he cried resentfully. "*It aint right.* I'm getting old. But everything's ahead of *you*—"

"Come on," Danny cut in urgently. "We're on our way!"

But he did not turn toward the door leading into the corridor packed with impatient sports-writers, rabid fans—and with others, perhaps, whose presence had a more sinister intent. Some one, indeed, was knocking peremptorily for admittance now.

But Danny turned away, unheeding. He unbolted another door, newly cut into the rough pine wall at the back of the room. It opened into a narrow unlighted passageway.

"Come on," he repeated. "Ted Sampson, the promoter, had this special exit put in for us today!"

He led. Bad News followed obediently. Danny opened a second door set into the arena's outer wall. They stepped out onto a back sidewalk. It was only thinly sprinkled with pedestrians. Heavy motor traffic still streamed along, however, between thinning lines of cars parked at both curbs.

"This way," Danny directed. "Right here—" And then he halted. A startled look leaped into his eyes. A dark-skinned youth, materializing from the shadows, had sidled up to him. Something hard pressed against his ribs.

"*This way!*" the intruder muttered a command. "See!" He jerked his head to one side to indicate the direction. But he did not jerk it quite far enough or with sufficient speed. Danny Lawlor's left fist lifted a few short inches. The youth went sprawling to the walk, and his head hit the cement.

But Danny did not wait to make sure that he had scored another knockout. He seized Bad News' arm and shoved him forward. The door of a dark sedan yawned open. The little manager stumbled into the tonneau. Danny followed. The door slammed shut. And with the motor already running, a grinning, rat-faced driver shot the machine out recklessly into a thin traffic hole!

A second man, equally unprepossessing, sat in the front seat beside the driver. He turned now, apologetically, as the car cut down a side-street and picked up speed.

"You're erl there, brother," he told Danny admiringly. "We didn't spot that gorilla of Pirelli's no more'n he did us. But you lay off from now on, see. Hymie'd raise hell wit' us if you got hurt."

The car roared on, doubling and twisting down dark avenues that Danny Lawlor had never seen before. Beside him sat Bad News Mason, peering through the sedan's rear window fearfully. But presently Mason slumped down in the seat.

"They're following us," he groaned. "Those same headlights have been tailing us from the arena—and now they're closing in!"

The sedan swerved into a long, straight street lined with warehouses and ship-chandler's shops. It was dark here, too, but Danny recognized the thoroughfare.

"Bay Street," he said. "We're almost to the docks—"

"That's them!" the driver's tense voice cut in. "Some one must of phoned a description of this hack on ahead!"

Both Danny and Bad News glanced at the driver uncertainly. Strangely, he had not looked back toward the pursuing machine. He was still staring straight ahead. . . .

Then they saw the brilliant headlights of a curtained touring-car bearing down upon them from the direction of the water-front. The sedan, without slackening speed, swerved over toward the curb. The touring-car swung with it. No more than inches divided the two cars as they passed.

BUT in that instant Danny Lawlor saw the snarling face of Spot Pirelli, a huge cigar clamped between his teeth. He saw that, just before Bad News threw himself before the window as a shield—and a burst of flame poured from the touring-car.

The windows on that side of the sedan went opaque, frosted by a hail of lead. But it went on, fast and straight.

"Bullet-proof, see!" observed the driver. "Pirelli, damn him, wasn't cute enough to figger that—"

Danny didn't listen further. With affectionate roughness, he pulled Bad News back onto the seat.

"Don't you manhandle me!" Mason stormed. "A feller's got a right to try to duck and protect himself, aint he?" But this unblushing lie was never finished. For behind them, sudden and arresting, sounded a terrific crash.

THEY turned in time to see men stumbling from the wreckage of two interlocked cars that had escaped overturning by a miracle. Danny saw that Pirelli's chauffeur, trying to make a fast turn, had misjudged the speed of the machine that had followed the sedan from the arena. They had met head-on.

Bad News, too, could dope out that much of it. But he couldn't understand the meaning of the savage exchange of shots pouring back and forth across the wreckage of those two cars. He didn't see why the sedan was slowing down now with screaming brakes. He didn't see why Danny should turn, suddenly alert.

"Gawd!" the driver cried. "That's Little Hymie himself tailing us. We gotta get back there quick!"

Danny's left fist flashed out. The man beside the driver slumped like a meal-bag in his seat.

"And you get the same," Danny promised the driver, "if you stop this side of the pier! —Bad News, you frisk these birds!"

The sedan wavered, then straightened back into its proper course. Presently Bad News handed Danny two automatics, and Lawlor relaxed his menacing fist.

"You're a fool for luck, Danny!" Mason sighed. "But we aint out of the woods by a long shot yet."

"Why not?" asked Danny. "If Pirelli and Little Hymie don't rub each other out back there at the wreck,—and good riddance to the country it would be,—they'll be behind bars in Atlanta before we get back. I got that tip straight from the Government auditor who checked over *my* special income-tax report the other day and O.K.'d this European trip."

"Go on," urged Bad News; "spill me the rest of it. Or do I have to get down on my knees and beg you?"

"Why, there was nothing to it," Danny shrugged. "I explained Pirelli's game to Hymie. Naturally he sat in when I offered to put everything I had in escrow at the bank—to go to him if I didn't win from Cronin. He couldn't lose."

"But that didn't guarantee *you* protection."

"That's just what Hymie said," Danny chuckled. "In fact, he insisted on drawing up a little contract agreeing to take care of that—in exchange for a one-third cut in all my ring earnings from now on. So, of course, he wasn't going to let me get hurt!"

"But Danny! You said you were retiring from the ring."

"I am," grinned Lawlor. "But when Hymie put the squeeze to me, he didn't inquire into that!"

Bad News Mason shuddered.

"And if you hadn't licked Kayo, you'd have been cleaned out, and *we'd* have gone for a ride with Little Hymie!" He paused. "Say, what was it Cronin whispered to you in that final clinch?"

"He said," confided Danny, "that his legs were giving out. He said: 'Bring over another wild right, you mug, and let me get inside. I want that to be the finish, see!'"

Danny's eyes grew stern and cold as he recalled that moment and the incredible insolence of Spot Pirelli and Little Hymie Grost.

"So I brought over another wild right," he finished simply. "And I let him get inside. Not because he told me to, but because that was where I'd been trying to draw him all the time. And it was the finish—the same finish Cronin could have handed *me*, if he'd been a real champion and on the square."

DANNY dropped the automatic to cover now as the thoroughly subdued chauffeur piloted the sedan out onto the great enclosed pier where a press of stevedores and baby tractors were completing the loading of the *Prince Rupert*.

But the champion's eyes turned quickly from the rust-streaked vessel to his manager, who had leaned back, choking and spluttering, with an empurpled face.

"What's the matter, Bad News?" he demanded solicitously. "Are you sick?"

Bad News felt his stomach tenderly.

"I don't know for sure," he gasped, as another paroxysm shook his frame. "But you better get that doctor quick. It's appendicitis sure, Danny—if it aint a belly-laugh!"

Romany Nose



*An American
cow-puncher pur-
sues trouble to
the cattle country
of Hungary.*

THE Orient Express zooms out of Paris, and, before one can say "Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-lits des Wagons-restaurants et des Grands Expresses Européens," it is crossing the Hungarian plains. Coming from me, this statement may perhaps be taken *cum grano salis*, since I stammer slightly, but it is none the less approximately correct.

The very name "Orient Express" is synonymous with dashing derring-do, with the dark deeds of devious diplomacy, with the subtle sophistry of sinister spies—but I was finding it rather dull. True, the other occupants of my compartment might well have been spies, if they were anything. From the dawn's earliest light, when their speech had seemed to me to be as the purling ripple

of the babbling brook over smooth stones in the springtime, until now, when it seemed as the screaming of a rip-saw through an endless plank,—a plank liberally supplied with tough knots, withal,—their conversation had never ceased. And, since I speak no Bukovinian and they spoke nothing else, my interest was only flitting, at best. Except that the night was falling with a rapidity painfully reminiscent of stocks in a bear market, there was naught to vary the monotony of our clicking progress over the *alfoeld*.

Then came suddenly the piping of whistles, the clanging of bells, the mad rush of uniformed men up and down corridors; in short, all of that drama with orchestration without which no conceivable European train could bring itself to a stop, scheduled or otherwise. This stop was otherwise.

Craning my neck out of the window,

By CHARLES LAYNG

Illustrated by Henry Thiede



She usta sit for hours, admirin',
an' by the time we'd finished
playin' England, there was an
understandin' between us.

I could discern no signs of a town—only the vast, unbroken expanse of the plain, with a group of excited railroad employees gathered about our locomotive.

"What is it that it is?" I inquired of a passing dining-car steward.

"The machine, it marches not," he told me.

"And when," I demanded, "may we expect that it re-commences to march itself?"

He shrugged his shoulders. If one is acquainted with the technique of a Frenchman *haussering* his *épaules*, one knows that, if the collar-bones reach as high as the ear-lobe in their upward flight, the matter is indeed one of grave import. These reached at least to his middle ear, so I descended from the train, sure of at least an hour's wait.

Except for a group of *csikós*, those doughty herdsmen of the Hungarian plain, huddled in their sheepskins around a campfire a few yards from the track, the long stretches of the *alföld* were empty. Eagerly I gazed upon the *csikós*; a real find, these, after the deadly sameness of the people of the cosmopolitan centers I'd been frequenting. London—bah! Berlin—ditto; Paris—*psui!* Here at last was color; here was life that was typically European. Here was a bizarre type, with the cold moon casting long shadows behind them to accentuate their strangeness, their utter foreignness. Music began, an air vaguely familiar and haunting,—probably some composer had included its native strains in an opera,—and one of the *csikós* lifted up his voice to carry the tune.

"Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie!" he sang.

Hastily, I ran over the day's consumption of wine . . . let's see now, a glass of Moselle with luncheon, a half-bottle of Tokay with dinner—no, that couldn't be it. What then was it that it was? For shake my head as I might to clear my ears, the longhorn litany still continued its mournful plaint, and the words came to me with unmistakable clarity. Convinced at last of the reality of what I was hearing, I wandered closer.

"You're an American, aren't you?" I asked of the singer, when he had finished his song.

"Sho, podner, sho!" the singer replied. "Bill Clark's my name, from I Pass, Wyoming—the champeen roper of the world."

He rose to greet me. Sheepskin coat, flat round hat and all, he was unmistakably a lanky, big-boned, big-nosed cowhand.

"But what are you doing here?"

Under the grateful influence of one of my carefully smuggled American cigarettes, the story came out. There was, it appeared, a woman in the case—and misogynist though I am not, may I say that there *would* be.

"Montana Maizie, her name was," Bill Clark told me, "daughter of Big-nose Jack McGrath. I always kinda figgered that she got her likin' for outsize noses from her admiration of her old man."

"An Œdipus complex," I suggested.

NEVER knew him [Bill replied], although I did know a feller named Eddie Parsons once; but it couldn't be the same, 'cause he died long ago.

Anyway, I'm tellin' you that I loved Maizie, the cutest little trick-rider that ever swung a pretty ankle over a pinto. Her hair was the color of new rope, Mister, and she had curves like a lariat in full swing. I'd known her old man, but I never met her until she joined our rodeo in Noo Yawk jest before we sailed, an' on the boat comin' over, she cottoned to me right away, me havin', as you see, a beak that it's easy to sneeze from. She usta sit for hours, jest lookin' at my nose, an' admirin' it, an' by the time we'd finished playin' England, there was what you might call an understandin' between us. I was plenty tickled, I can tell you, Mister, and ridin' the world high, wide and handsome by the time we reached Paris. But there the trouble began. The Frenchies liked my stuff,

an' I was busy tryin' out a new stunt, so I didn't see much of Maizie for a few days—but I had her in my heart, Mister, I had her in my heart.

"Have you seed the new interpreter the boss's hired?" Pete Cline the bulldogger says to me one evenin', jest before the show.

"Nope," I tells him, wonderin' why he asked. I didn't have to wonder long.

"Well, Maizie sho has," Pete opines, "an' if I was you, I'd be havin' me a look-see around my fences, to see that no skunk had cut my wires."

I'M tellin' you, Mister, if Pete hadn't been such a good friend of mine, I'd have busted him one for gabbin' like that about my Maizie. But damned if he wasn't right—my wires had been cut. Come to find out, Maizie and that there interpreter had jumped the reservation about an hour before I went gunnin' for 'em, and there I was—my girl done gone with a sheepherder of an interpreter I'd never seen, and me on a strange ranch where I didn't savvy the lingo.

I looked up Pete Cline again; I was pretty desperate by this time.

"What did this interpreter feller look like?" I asks him.

"Well, he was a husky guy, a gypsy who plays the accordion. His name's Rocko, an' he's got a big nose."

"Bigger'n mine?"

"Yep," says Pete.

Right there, Mister, my heart sank, knowin' Maizie like I did. I knew then that she'd gone off with this feller of her own free will, and there wasn't no chance of gittin' her back. But I wasn't lettin' no gypsy get away with my girl, less'n I did somethin' about it.

"Tell the boss I'm quittin'," I says to Pete.

"What you aimin' to do?"

"Find 'em!"

"You gone loco?" Pete asks me. "Why, Bill, you can't go all over Europe lookin' for a big-nosed gypsy which plays the accordion! Man, that'd be like lookin' for a maverick in Chihuahua."

But I didn't pay Pete no mind—an' look for 'em I did. Hell, Mister, I usta think that the whole of Europe could be dumped down into the northwest corner of the Cross-I Ranch, an' there'd still be room enough for a sizable pack o' coyotes to range in; but come to find out, I was wrong. This country must be nigh onto as big as the whole State o' Wyoming, an' in a coupla months, I'd



been over most of it, lookin' for Maizie and this gypsy feller.

Finally, down in Rumania, I nearly met up with 'em; but before I could lay holt of 'em, they was gone again, an' I hearn tell they was bound for Constantinople. I went down there.

BILL paused to light a cigarette and puff reflectively for a few moments. Then he smiled reminiscently.

Them days, I didn't know gypsies like I do now [he continued], an' all Turks looked like gypsies to me. You'd be surprised, Mister, how many Turks have big noses and play accordions! I was surprised—an' I expect they was too—when I upped and popped them on the beezers. You see, I wasn't takin' any chances on the right one gettin' away, so I made a right smart o' mistakes.

The police got kinda fussy too, but that didn't bother me none until one night, when they got to chasin' me, an' after I'd roped and hog-tied four of 'em

"Is your name Rocko?" I asks him. "Exactly," he says. So I socked him exactly on the snout, an' he socked back. Mister, that was a fight, I'm tellin' you!

to the lamp-post outside the hotel for safekeepin', my landlord got kinda worried. So I left, not wishin' to get him into any trouble. Untied those police too, I did, before I went—but you can't expect any gratitude from Turks, specially Turk policemen. That's one thing I've sure learned over here, Mister!

I didn't like to leave Constantinople, but I expect I done a purty good job while I was there, 'cause there hadn't been anybody playin' any accordions around that town for two days before I left. Course, the fellers with the little noses wasn't in no danger from me, even if they did play accordions, but mebbe they didn't know that.

The next place I got any track o' this here Rocko was in Gravinia, an' I might've caught up with him there, but

after the third day they called out the Gravinian army on me, an' I had to high-tail it for the hills. Treated me like a damned rustler, they did, but they won't do that no more to the next cow-hand which comes along. No sir, they won't, I don't believe—not after what I showed 'em! When I got tired runnin' away from the army, I turned back and grabbed me a machine-gun from the advance guard. They ran, an' so did the General, with his army followin' him. I didn't do nuthin' but shoot my initials through the windshield of the General's car to give him somethin' to remember Bill Clark by. Leastways, I tried to, but I aint used to shootin' from anywheres but the hip, an' while that there *C* was a pretty fair job o' shootin', I'm kinda ashamed o' the *B*. It looked more like a *S*, the last I seed of it. I was a little outa practice.

WELL, Mister, I followed that pair up and down, around an' about, from hell to breakfast, but Rocko was a Mexican jumpin'-bean with wings, an' I never could meet up with 'em. I thought I had, every day or two, but I always come to find out I was wrong. Then I run outa money—an' havin' passed through this place here on my way back and forth, an' staked it as a purty good cow country, I came back here and got me a job. Did fine, too—learned the cook how to make flapjacks, told the *csikós* somethin' about ropin', an' made me a purty good stake. Got so interested, I most forgot about Rocko and Maizie. Funny how things works out, though. Here I'd been chasin' a gypsy and my girl all over Europe an' not catchin' them; then, soon's I stop for breath, damned if Rocko didn't walk right in on me, after me runnin' after him for nearly a year! Wasn't so surprisin', neither, 'cause this is a great gypsy country through here, an' all of 'em come by here one time an' another.

I was goin' down the road to town one day, when I seen a big gypsy comin' toward me, and damned if he wasn't playin' a accordion. I was sure it was him—but I'd been sure before about other fellers, an' found out later I was wrong, so I braced him first, figgerin' if he was the right one, he could speak English.

"Is your name Rocko?" I asks him.
"Exactly," he says.

So I socked him exactly on the snout, an' he socked back. Mister, that was

a fight, I'm tellin' you! We fussed and swung and cussed there for about an hour, until we was both so tired we had to sit down and rest ourselves. Yes, sir, that was a fight!

AND Bill sent his cigarette-end spinning in a graceful parabola, then leaned back and yawned, like a man who considers that he has explained everything, thoroughly and completely.

I waited patiently for him to go on; but he didn't.

"Mister, I expect your train's about ready to leave. Thanks for the cigarettes," he said at last.

"But—"

The low, plaintive notes of an accordion, superbly played, interrupted me. I turned in the direction of the music.

The accordion-player, I observed with not a little interest, was of unmistakable Romany origin, and he had, as one could hardly keep from observing, a craggy nose of veritably monolithic proportions—such a nose as might, in another, more glamorous day, have served as a bowsprit of a galleon, Indies-bound.

Bill Clark observed my amazed regard.

"Yeah, Mister," he drawled, "that's him; that's Rocko—an' me'n' him is podners now. Got a right tidy little ranch here too, an' we're makin' a go of it."

"But how—what—why—"

"Well, you see," Bill explained, "that day after we fought until we couldn't fight no more, Rocko told me about Maizie."

Bill gazed aloft at the stars, and hummed softly to himself.

"I still don't understand—" I began.

"Alas, my dear friend," Rocko of the Romany nose interrupted, in perfect English, "I made the mistake of taking Maizie with me to Armenia, and Armenians, as I should have remembered, are famous for the size of their noses. Starvation has not reduced them one bit." . . .

Just then whistles piped and shrilled, and only by a desperate dash did I make the Orient Express before it pulled out, its machine now marching itself grandly again.

But as we left I heard, soaring above the roar of the train, a clear baritone:

"Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie!" it sang.

An accordion played a splendid accompaniment, *arpeggios* and all.

ARTHUR K. AKERS

The author of "Jug Band Blues," "Breeches Burned Behind" and of many another joyous Darktown comedy is at his best in this lively tale of the Human Bloodhound's weirdest triumph.

Illustrated by
Everett Lowry



The Piano that Had Pups

"**S**OLVIN' who stole Bedelia Bates' piano ought to be easy for you—on account of it bein' you dat helped de crooks haul it!" Columbus Collins, gangling head of the dusky detective-agency of that name, dropped a bomb as well as a case into the overalled lap of his five-foot assistant, Bugwine Breck.

Mr. Breck doubled like a jackknife seized with stomach-ache. "I helped de crooks?" he demanded. Then, as the light of realization penetrated: "Why, I thunk dey was runnin' a truck, and had come to move it!"

"Yeah, you *thunk!* Only you aint got nothin' to think *wid.* Aint no businessman. Five of dem hi-jackers comes drivin' up and hauls off Samson G. Bates' wife's piano, and what does you do? Grunts louder and sweats wetter'n any of 'em, helpin' 'em git away wid it!"

"Aint hi-jackers! Dem boys say dey been gwine about playin' for dances, before dey took up truckin' to eat."

Columbus thought of something else. "Trouble wid you," he quarreled, "you all time puttin' your foot in it. Here us is tryin' to git on de good side of Samson so as to git our agency de contract for protectin' his loan-shark business; and den—out of all de pianos in Demopolis—you is got to go help steal his!"

Lugubriously Mr. Breck eyed the hoof-holes in the crown of his all-seasons straw hat, and envied rabbits: they had holes to dive into when their business got in a jam.

"I aint never see none of dem truckin' boys before; dey strangers to me," was the best Bugwine could produce from his hat.

"Yeah! Dey was strangers, and dey took *you* in!" Columbus' disgust deepened. "And now Samson G. Bates done give us dis same piano-case to solve. For a try-out, to see how good us detects. Make good on it, he say, and us gits his *regular* detectin' contract next, wid ten bucks' retainer in advance. But flop—and he looks further."

The sounds of Mr. Breck's suffering began to resemble those of a hog under a gate.

"Only,"—Mr. Collins blasted him further,—"*de agency* aint gwine flop."

BUGWINE didn't like his emphasis. "How-come *agency* aint gwine flop?" he repeated suspiciously.

"Look at dem mottoes on de wall," Mr. Collins waved an eloquent hand.

Bugwine couldn't read, but his memory was good: none of these slogans could be any comfort to him. "Which *one?*" he stalled gloomily.

"De mainmost one, what say 'Is You Cain't Cotch de Crook Create One.'"

The smaller sleuth blanched to a light stove-color: he knew Columbus!

"Yeah; fall down on dis case, and you is ruint," his chief elaborated his own fears for him. "Only thing gwine save you now is *Git your men*. Or recover back dat piano—satisfy Bedelia and Samson. Else I busts dat motto down around your ears, an' tells Samson I done cotched de main crook—you!"

"Me?"

"Yeah, you! Wid four witnesses what heard you wabblin' about underneath dat piano, hollerin' like a stuck hog for more help to load it."

"Rallies myself wid de motorcycle and de bloodhound, to run down de crooks," decided Mr. Breck hollowly before such an alternative. Then: "Coney Island, lay off dem fleas! Sniff yourself a mess of clues! Us fixin' to circulate. Always gits my piano!"

"All you gits is in a jam," prophesied Columbus pessimistically. "Aint no business to you. Brighter when you's stunned dan you is when you's conscious!"

Shortly, Baptist Hill reverberated to the chase. Gum-shoeing was never more foreign to Bugwine's nature than when he was baying on the trail of a crime. And the less clue, the more noise. As now, with the agency's one-forty-fourth bloodhound Coney Island yapping shrilly in the side-car of their ancient bathtub-type motorcycle.

"Here he comes! . . . *Yander* he goes!" ran the awed doorway-comment now that Bugwine ever loved to inspire as, up Decatur Street and down Ash, he crescendo-ed and diminuendo-ed in a cloud of dust, yelping, and smell of burned oil.

BUT as the day darkened, so did Bugwine's outlook. As a crook-catcher, he was merely the filling-stations' best friend. Mileage was all he had to show for a loud day's work.

"Old credit still workin' maybe at Bees'-Knees Thompson's place, Coney," he estimated at its close. "Laps us up a mess of eatin'-vittles, is Bees'-Knees feelin' right."

Bees'-Knees was. More, "You looks all debilitated down, Mist' Breck," he added civilly.

"Aint sca'cely built at all," countered Bugwine nervously. "So nervous I done gnawed my nails down to my elbows, worryin'. How about a bowl of dat

Brunswick, big boy? And lean heavy on de ladle."

"You acts pestered right when times is fixin' to get better," protested the *restaurateur* as he served him.

"Better for who?" Bugwine kept thinking of five crooks he couldn't catch.

"Aint you hear about de big celebration?" Bees'-Knees astonishment was evident.

"Hears nothin', copious."

"Gooford Brown is comin' back from de jail-house—"

MR. BRECK barely rescued in time a half-swallowed spoon belonging to the house. "Says *huh?*" he gurgled.

"Yas suh! Bedelia Bates' brother Gooford is comin' back from de Big House tomorrer. And Bedelia's fixin' to pull a hot one: put it over social on all de other women on de Hill, win herself a war."

"But dat boy been de biggest bootlegger round here," objected Mr. Breck. "White-folks slapped him in de penitentiary for *from now on*; and he aint been gone but two years. Flow-come *he* git out?"

"Dey parolin'-out de biggest-eatin' bootleg boys now, since de election," enlightened Mr. Thompson superiorly, "so as to make more room for de kidnapers comin' on. Country gittin' full of kidnapers. So Bedelia and Samson pullin' a big home-comin' party for Gooford."

"Place to have no home-comin' party for *him*," argued Bugwine, "is *at* de penitentiary: he dar more'n he is here."

"Different now, I tells you, on 'count de kidnapers," corrected Bees'-Knees patiently. "Bedelia givin' him his comin'-out party here—comin' out de jail. 'Dee-but' she call it, to make dem other women madder. Wid a brass band to meet him at de depot—"

"*Band?* Hot dawg!" Bugwine slowed slightly in his spoon-work. "Drum-majored a band once myself, when I was in de refawm school—"

"Is, eh? Well, you sho gits to see some drum-majorin' tomorrer, den: old Six-ace Reed gwine to set dat band of his'n on fire leadin' de parade wid it on Gooford's home-stretch from de big stretch."

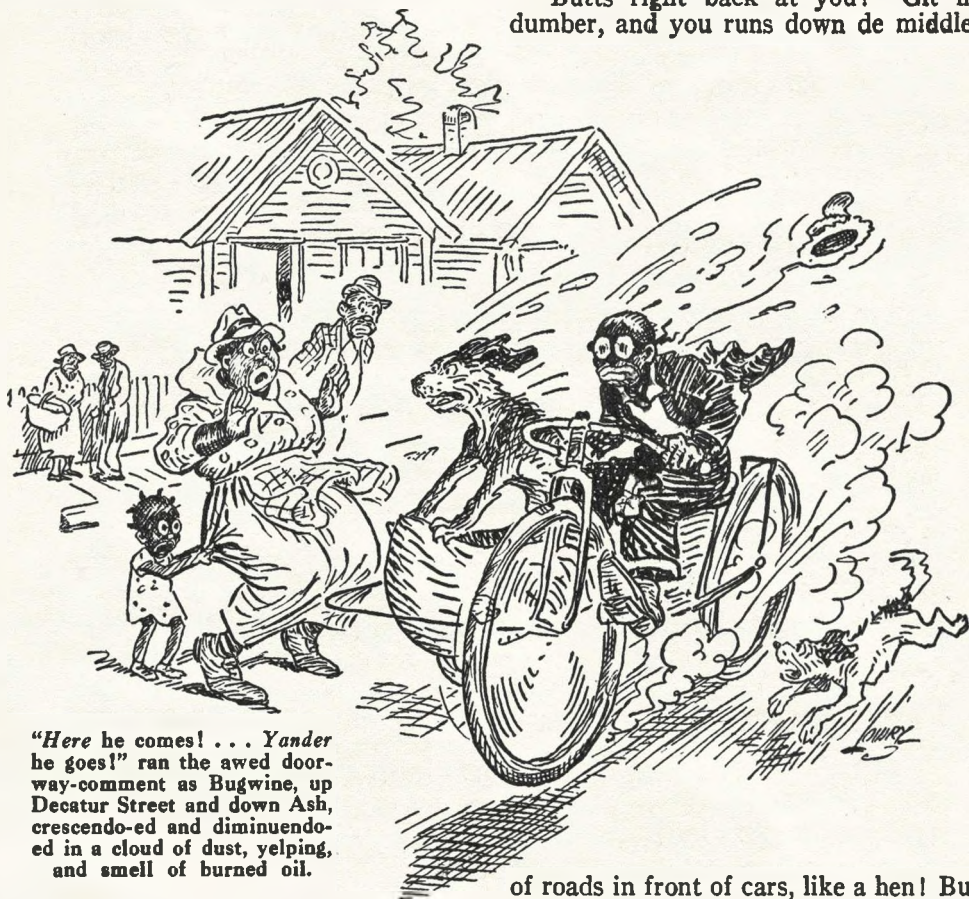
Imperfections in his own immediate future faded; Bugwine's eyes shone like a skunk's in the dark, just from contemplating Gooford's glories to come. He could see Six-ace now (so named from a personal peculiarity at cards) leading that parade!

But nostalgia for his alma mater, the reform school, seat of his own drum-majoring triumphs in the past, drew Mr. Breck and brought him low. He became easy prey to further association of ideas: music reminded him of pianos; and

"Somebody been readin' newspapers to you again!" snapped Columbus. "Lay off alibis! Is you clue dem crooks, or is you aint?"

"Knows 'em is I ever see 'em again, but—"

"Butts right back at you! Git no dumber, and you runs down de middles



"Here he comes! . . . Yander he goes!" ran the awed doorway-comment as Bugwine, up Decatur Street and down Ash, crescendo-ed and diminuendo-ed in a cloud of dust, yelping, and smell of burned oil.

pianos reminded him of Bedelia Bates' missing instrument, of his own fruitless quest for the five that had helped him steal it.

Laboriously Bugwine penciled the "X" upon his dining-check that constituted signing it, and went out beneath his weight of woe.

"Us got to git on round to de detectin'-agency now and cotch h— er—report, Coney," he explained to the still-following dog as they roared away toward the littered length of Hogan's Alley.

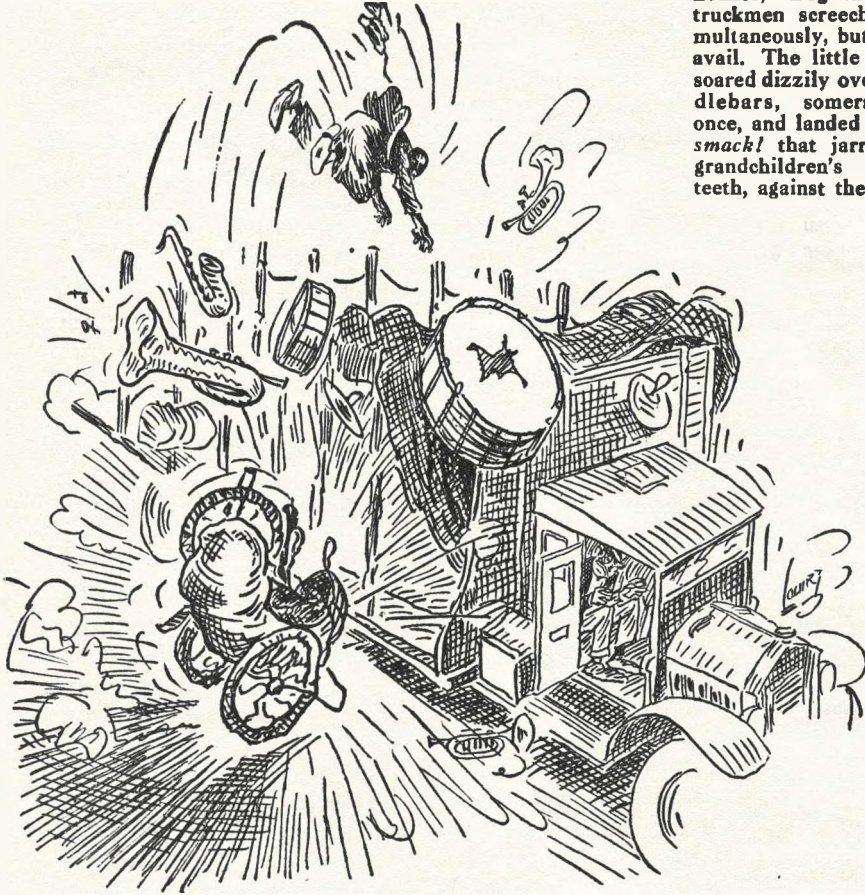
Columbus was waiting for him there for just that, it seemed. "Got to make up de daily-progress report to Samson on de piano-case. What you got to say now, boy?" he pilloried his aide upon entrance.

"'Spectin' impawtant developments widin forty-eight hours—"

of roads in front of cars, like a hen! But I aint mess wid you but so long now: Gives you till after Gooford's debut; den is you aint turn up dem crooks or git back de piano for Bedelia, I turns you up. Wid witnesses what seen you!"

With Columbus gone on an errand that could do his aide no good, and with his renewed threat still disturbingly in his ears, Bugwine felt empty about the belt. Reminding him that, with his credit weakening hourly anyhow, if it was cut off, it behooved him to have that event occur on a full stomach.

The barbecue-stand of Mr. Thompson, as Bugwine shortly came upon it, rang with unusual revelry. Cautious reconnoiterings and circumspect entry revealed the reason: the husky bandmen of Six-ace Reed were celebrating in advance the assured receipt from Samson and Bedelia Bates of their first five-dollar fee in weeks—for playing Gooford's



Brakes, Bugwine and truckmen screeched simultaneously, but to no avail. The little sleuth soared dizzily over handlebars, somersaulted once, and landed with a *smack!* that jarred his grandchildren's back teeth, against the truck.

welcome home. And when Mr. Reed's musicians made merry, the floors shook—due to the fact that in buying their uniforms the canny Six-ace had come across a bargain in larger sizes, so that he was forced, thereafter, to employ musicians big enough to fit the uniforms.

Now they clustered elephantinely about the cuisine of Bees'-Knees as Bugwine entered. And, "Us eats, den stimulates de gallopers about wid de change," he overheard the bass-drummer proposing. "Displays dem dominoes and lassos de luck! Old cunnin' cubes comin' to Papa! What *you* say, Bugwine?"

"Says money all gone," evaded Mr. Breck. "Whar-at y'all gwine shoot dem craps?"

"Back of de Sweet Papa barbershop. And says nothin', copious, about it too; white-folks gittin' fussy about us overworkin' Lady Luck."

"Has to shoot me to make me say *good mawnin'*, I's so close-mouthed about my business," reassured Bugwine, expanding slightly under fellowship and food.

Which latter was just as well when, later, after the bandsmen had departed loudly for their game, Bees'-Knees came officiously and officially to look in Bugwine's bowl. "You goes on a cash basis at ten o'clock, unless you slips me dem eighty-four cents on your back bill sooner," he ultimatumed.

Bugwine looked at the clock, which said 9:58; at his bowl, which said half-full—and got the idea. Also the air. Where, lacking support, future or recourse, he drifted aimlessly.

DOWN Strawberry Street came a cop. Ordinarily Bugwine had the same rating with the white forces of law and order as a fly in the soup. But tonight was different; for the white public was restless under the spell of an itinerant evangelist who was decrying drink and gambling, along a sawdust trail. Hence, "That you, *Sherlock Holmes?*" this white policemen hailed his dusky counterpart.

"Naw suh, dis here me, Bugwine Breck, Mist' Charley," answered the lit-

tle sleuth uneasily. "Jest sort of circulate myself about."

"I'll bet you are! They tell me crime on Baptist Hill's been cut in half since you and Columbus Collins commenced policing it."

Mr. Breck started refilling his overalls with himself.

"Yes sir, they tell me there just aint no gamblin' and such around the Hill any more," pursued the cop.

"Sho aint!" corroborated Bugwine. "Outside of a little courtin' Lady Luck back of de Sweet Papa now and den, old Hill done pure."

"And any time the boys *do* bust an ordinance playin' African golf there, I bet you know it too."

"Yas suh, sho is! Outside of tonight, dey aint been no game dar in a week," Mr. Breck further proved his powers.

"Yeah? Well, I got to be gettin' on. See you in the funny papers, Bugwine." And the officer sauntered on.

MORNING dawned. Bugwine awoke with his usual sense of something hanging heavily over him, but with no intimation that this time he was dreading the wrong things.

Dully he overalled his reluctant limbs, and shuffled forth to what the day might have in store. But *en route* to the agency, he met messengers sent by his chief to urge haste. And this, although not reassuring, at least prepared him in a measure for what broke over his head the moment he thrust it anxiously through their professional portals.

"Bedelia jest been in here tearin' up de patch!" His chief shuddered at the recollection, and he breathed hoarsely from what he had been through. "She been to de jail-house about it, too, and cain't do nothin'. Dat what invigorate her so."

The worst flashed sickeningly across Mr. Breck's mind: a big welcome widely advertised, then the Law failing to do its part! "You mean Gooford cain't git out de jug?" he demanded, horrified.

"Naw. I aint say nothin' about Gooford!" snapped Columbus. "He gits out all right. But de band—"

"De band?"

"—Gits in!"

"In whar?"

"In de jail!"

Bugwine's mouth moved over to make room for his eyes. "You—you says de *band's* in jail?" Startled incredulity rocked him.

"Widout bail! Jedge fixin' try 'em now. And Gooford's train due here from Montgomery in jest three hours more now."

"Ugh-oh! Sho is got to step about and hire herself another band den," reflected the disturbed Mr. Breck—and got mowed down afresh.

"Another band? Boy, dey *aint* no other band in town! Nearest one's in Montgomery now—and wouldn't come here for no five dollars nohow, even was dey time to git here in before Gooford do. Got to meet him at de train, like Bedelia rub it in on all dem other women she gwine do, or old deebut's a flop; and Bedelia, too, social! On top of you swipin' her piano and den not cotchin' yourself till I catches you for her!"

"I jest *helped* dem crooks steal it," defended Bugwine dully.

Columbus snorted.

"Aint listen no better to Bedelia! And to git Samson's big contract, us got to make good on dis piano-case first. Makin' you listen like de goat, is you cain't find dem other crooks quick."

But speaking of discovering things fixed a sudden fresh icy grip upon Mr. Breck's favorite liver: "How did dem boys git *in* de jail-house?" he voiced a growing worry.

"Somebody tip off de cops dey was all in a crap-game back of de Sweet Papa, dat's how. Raids 'em on a tip."

Bugwine watched the room go into a tail-spin. So that was it! He hadn't more than finished bragging to that bass-drummer about how close-mouthed he was, than he had let the cat and about six kittens out of the bag to that cop!

PAIN further racked Bugwine as he reflected: let those band-boys learn who had betrayed them to the Law, and he would need more start on them than even airplanes could afford him. Besides—and his circulation all but stopped—they might already know now!

"Looks like you is swallowed another dem coconuts widout cookin' it," Columbus commented on his symptoms.

"Always gits my man," croaked Mr. Breck in despairing absence of anything better to say.

"What you got to git dis time,"—his chief returned his feet ruthlessly to the fire,—"*is your men*. Or your piano. Bedelia throwin' fits about it so fast now cain't tell music-fits from social-fits. Say she done disgraced social, not havin' no band to greet Gooford home from jail. And here come Samson now, too!"

Bugwine blanched but stood his ground—because Columbus stood between him and the door. Mr. Bates was Baptist Hill's "big nigger," which south of Mason and Dixon's Line, is a description, distinction and title. Meaning that physically, financially and fraternally Mr. Bates was important. Now he was also angry, his black frock-tailed coat switching about his knees.

"I think you boys was *detectives!*" he rasped as he strode into the agency, dwarfing it and all its achievements.

"I smells 'em out whar others jest sniffs about," quoted Columbus nervously. "Always gits our man."

"Aint done it yit!" snorted Mr. Bates. "And I got trouble enough wid home-business—dat band gittin' locked up—widout havin' to wait around all week for service on dat piano-case. Is you-all cain't recover it back, dey's *detectives* what can!"

"Uh—'spectin' impawtant developments widin forty-eight hours now." Columbus stole the owl-eyed Bugwine's best thunder as an emergency measure. "Done got yo' man spotted now. Also surrounded. Jest waitin' to round up de eyewitnesses before I slaps de cuffs on him."

Mr. Breck shivered violently. And saw a ten-dollar retainer go glimmering!

"Well," thundered Samson, "what I craves most is dat piano back; but you fotch in de crook soon as Gooford's dee-but over—and I considers your proposition funder about doin' de detectin' for my loan business." Mr. Bates' concession sounded like an ultimatum, at that.

COLUMBUS whirled on his helper as their client departed. "Bugwine, pick you'self out one dem cells toward de back—dey's cooler," he counseled coldly. "You is done flopped as a detective, and now you's fixin' to tell a jedge how-come you helped flop as a crook—stealin' dat piano widout gittin' it."

Mr. Breck moved his face aside so he wouldn't step on it. "Circulates myself around Bees'-Knees again, see is I can git me one more meal before dey starts pushin' dem in through de bars to me in a pan," mumbled the sacrificial goat, from the altar Columbus had prepared for him.

Then another thought froze Bugwine in his tracks: after he got in the jail-house with them would be a still worse time for those big band-boys to find out who had got *them* in there! Being locked in with lions would be better in that case.

"You better git yourself throwed out of Bees'-Knees place in plenty time to meet dat train," Columbus cut short his mourning. "Show a interest in your client's business, help welcome his brother-in-law home from jail. If Bedelia cain't have a band, next best thing for you to do is git down to de depot and act like a one-man crowd in its place."

En route to Bees'-Knees' stand, Bugwine's road lay past the lock-up. Which was safe enough, he reflected, as long as a mess of good stout bars remained embedded in concrete between himself and those burly bandsmen.

Bugwine was busily roweling his brain for some way of appeasing their inevitable wrath when startlingly from a jail window above him rang out: "*Bugwine, come in here!*"

MR. BRECK did a fast if involuntary half-block, instead. Then he realized that flight implied guilt—and he was too guilty to run! So he turned back.

"Here me," he presented himself palpitantly before Six-ace's cell.

"About time, too! Got a little business I craves to discuss wid you, boy."

"Uh—how'd you-all boys git in here?" Mr. Breck checked up on his own business first, while bars still stood between. "Aint found out *yit.*"

Bugwine shrank fearfully: Mr. Reed's emphasis seemed to imply that he soon would—to be followed by fatalities.

Then a fresh surprise: "All us minds about bein' in here," Six-ace grumbled, "is gittin' knocked out of dat five-bucks cash-job playin' Gooford's greeting. Got us a swell game gwine in here now, but aint got no money to keep it gwine wid."

Bugwine gasped, gulped, and expanded a foot. Then he slumped spiritually again: the happiness of Six-ace and his bandsmen still depended on having five dollars. And Mr. Breck didn't have five cents. "Said you wanted to 'scuss business wid me?"—he changed a subject that again wasn't doing so well.

"Aw, yeah," recalled Six-ace. "I wants you to gather up de band's unifawms and inst'ments for me. Git 'em out de lodge-hall whar dey liable git stole, and move 'em to my house. Here's two-bits for hirin' de truck to haul 'em—"

"Lays off of trucks," interjected Mr. Breck hastily. "Gits me in jams eve'y time. But I can load de band's stuff in de side-car of my motorcycle; let Coney walk. And I got to hurry now, too: Gooford's train due in jest a little bit,

and us aimin' to git up a big crowd to meet him—keep Bedelia from missin' y'all boys so bad at de big deebut at de depot."

"See you tomorrer, den," farewellled Mr. Reed glumly.

"See you sooner'n—" Barely in time, Bugwine checked himself. No need to broadcast that he'd be in jail for piano-stealing in no time now, if he didn't find those five elusive crooks!

At the lodge-hall everything was easy. Its custodian was an old crony, who even helped stuff the horns, drums and uniforms into the burdened side-car.

"All you lacks of havin' a band now is de band!" commented his friend admiringly as Mr. Breck mounted.

To Bugwine, however, it looked more like another overture to stormy weather. Those band-boys and he could get along all right about his informing on them, provided he wasn't on the same side of the jail-bars with them. If not—

Bugwine bent low over his handlebars beneath so depressing a thought, and scorched gloomily ahead.

Which was why he failed to allow for what lay just around the corner. Mouth and muffler wide open, Mr. Breck shot around it, to glimpse too late the loaded truck in the intersection.

Brakes, Bugwine and the truckmen screeched simultaneously, but to no avail. And headlong into the side of the truck slithered and crashed the motorcycle. The little sleuth soared dizzily over its handlebars, somersaulted once, and landed with a *smack!* that jarred his grandchildren's back teeth, against the truck's load—something large, hard, many-cornered and tarpaulin-covered.

While on the pavement all about rained tuba, trumpet and horn, drum, cymbal and trombone—followed by a secondary shower of oversized uniforms. And all adding misery rather than music to the scene.

EXCITEDLY the truckmen gathered about the wreckage. A curious crowd fairly sprang up from the pavements.

"*Whuff!* Sho ruint somethin' wid my haid *dat* time!" the shattered Bugwine pried himself loose from his backstop, shook himself like a horse—and with a startled croak awoke to the stunned realization that for him luck still beat brains. In that the large and now partly uncovered object against which he had just crashed was a piano. And not only—as identification began to include the clus-



tering truckmen—a piano, but *Bedelia's piano!*

Often, in scorn, Columbus had said that Bugwine was brighter when stunned. Now he began to prove it—handicapped by the fact that one idea at a time was his motto and limit, but spurred on by the presence of a gallery. For the impact against the piano had done things to his face that permitted recognition of the truckmen without recognition by them.

So, magnificently, Mr. Breck pulled himself erect in the truck beside the instrument. Dramatically, while the truckmen gaped jaws ajar, he flung open his overalls jumper to display his pan-sized star. Then, "Bugwine Breck de human bloodhound," he clarioned to the puzzled five, and the delighted audience, "always gits his man! I seen y'all boys haul dis piano *off*—and I's fixin' to see you haul it *back*, before I takes you on to de jail-house in you' own truck! Now load dem unifawms and inst'ments in de truck, and le's go!"

Crook looked groggily at crook. Things had happened too fast. The crowd was thickening rapidly too. And Bugwine's voice grew stronger every minute telling the world how good he was. *This* was going to listen good in the bar-becue-stands tonight!

"Step on it now; git gwine!" at length ordered the little detective imperiously. "Jail, James!"

At which the sullen-faced prisoners unmistakably surrendered to superior force. "All right, shawt dawg!" snapped their



Dusky spectators grew delirious. Rival matrons to Bedelia gnawed their nails, and sank socially without a trace, as around the Square swept the parade that Demopolis can never forget.

unlovely leader surlily from the truck's wheel. "Us knows when us is licked. And hopes de meals is more regular dan ourn been while us was tourin' round playin' for dances in dis truck. But I bet us is been pardoned out of better jails dan yourn. Whar at it?"

Bugwine swelled until his overalls-seams tightened as the truck moved forward. This was the way to pull an arrest! Wholesale, and right out in front of everybody. Then head for jail the long way around, for the benefit of any cripples that couldn't come: let everybody see what happened when criminals started messing with Bugwine Breck! Dumb, no business-man, was he? Wait till Columbus got a load of *this!*

"Now, turn right yander, and head back to Bedelia's house, where us—uh—you got dis piano from. Den drive on to de jail," directed America's newest inflationist as they neared the Hill's limits.

But at the turning the driver did not turn. Instead, he stepped heavily upon the gas, and the truck leaped forward.

While, "Boy, us aint gwine to no jail—but *you* is gwine for a ride!" was being hissed into Bugwine's ear.

So *that* was why the truckmen had seemingly surrendered so easily! Mr. Breck shattered all Olympic records for speed in raising gooseflesh as it swept devastatingly over him that, instead of his capturing crooks, *they* were kidnaping him!

Memory joined in as his captors bore him to the floor: Bees'-Knees had spoken of paroling bootleggers like Gooford, to make room for kidnapers like these.

Around another turn, and the speeding truck was careening crazily toward the river bridge. Bugwine thought of the deep black water beneath it, and shivered like a nudist in November. Somebody else in this truck was bound to think too of what a swell place that bridge would be from which to drop a troublesome detective!

A thought to shatter and stun—and prove *again* Columbus' contention that Bugwine was brighter stunned. For as the first raw outlines of a saving strat-

egy flashed across the gray-gilled Mr. Breck's numbed intellect, he was all but blinded by his own brilliance. Provided it worked, that is! Yet, it further swept him, it *must* work, or he was fixing to be in a far tougher spot than jail.

Scanning his mental handiwork fearfully as the bridge loomed nearer and nearer, Bugwine saw his business, Columbus' business, Bedelia's business—everybody's business—suddenly attended to at last, *if* his scheme worked. If it didn't—Mr. Breck raised two more layers of gooseflesh, just thinking about that eventuality. There lay the rub—but also his chance, his *only* chance.

IN the interest of it, Bugwine flung all his eggs in one basket. And the imminence of deep water so lent him eloquence that a Demosthenes would have sounded like a mere tongue-tied half-wit with lockjaw by comparison! When Bugwine propositioned kidnapers, it seemed, they *stayed* propositioned! Hoarsely, earnestly, and with gestures, he outlined and endeavored to sell his idea. . . .

"*Dar he! Dat's old Gooford! Aint he look natural!*" rang comment, admiring and otherwise, along the darker and more densely crowded portion of the Demopolis passenger-station platform as the westbound local from Montgomery slid hissing to a halt.

Instantly the assembled population surged excitedly toward the vestibule where the grinning Gooford stood ready to alight. Fifty-fifty, relatives, customers and creditors pressed forward to greet him! Like words without music, Gooford was back without a band.

But glumly, apart from all the festive groups, stood Columbus Collins—in the scene but not of it. Columbus, who already knew, via grapevine telegraph, that he was ruined, fully and finally wrecked by the dumbness of Bugwine Breck. For, right when it was supremely important that the agency make a showing before the House of Bates, Bugwine had messed up their piano-recovery case all over again. Instead of capturing the crooks, he had been kidnaped by them. Including the piano! Again it was gone. So the agency had not only lost its case and Bedelia's instrument, but lost simultaneously all hope of selling Samson on giving them his fat future contract that had been at stake all along.

Not to speak of ugly rumors that an-

other bit of Mr. Breck's big-mouthed brainlessness was back of Bedelia's having no band at the depot now!

Rehearsing his case against Bugwine, Columbus was reaching wrathfully for a ten-penny nail to bite in two when suddenly he stiffened like a statue, his ears all but quivering. Perplexity broke out on him like a rash. It *couldn't* be—yet from the rear of the depot, incredibly yet unmistakably—

As he hesitated, above the confused noises of the crowd the beaming Gooford could be seen to catch it too, pause petrified before it. Then, visibly, even the distraught and crushed Bedelia heard it! Whirled, gasped, and uttered glad incredulous cries as hope scarce dawned before it was confirmed. For now, loud and wildly stirring, if slightly ragged in tone and tempo, swelling above the mad, mad boomings of a big bass drum, rang out the brazen-throated blarings of a military band!

And then—like opening the city gates to let in a roach—around the depot corner, in a uniform that glittered with braid but fitted his shrimp-sized form like a tent, strutted—Bugwine Breck!

Yet not merely Bugwine, it was further revealed, but *Drum Major Breck!* Casting his baton ecstatically aloft and ever catching it again, in his best reformatory manner. Keeping time for what still more incredibly came behind him—his five kidnapers, also caparisoned in the uniforms of far bigger men and musicians! Kidnapers no longer now, but blowing and booming and braying lustily away at tuba and trombone, horn and drum, in a band that deployed behind the waiting car of the House of Bates.

Then, still *oom-pa boom-pa-ing* gloriously, they swung into the street and "Stars and Stripes Forever!"

DUSKY spectators grew delirious. Rival matrons to Bedelia gnawed their nails, and sank socially without a trace. The great Gooford split his vest; and Columbus Collins' hue changed swiftly from chocolate to green.

Up Capitol and around the Square swept the parade that Demopolis can never forget, following the dizzied Bugwine, the dazzled Gooford, the saved-at-the-eleventh-hour Bedelia Bates—and leaving to trudge in dust and bitterness, flap-mouthed and flabbergasted, a forgotten man—an eclipsed Columbus who understood nothing that he saw, and even

less of what he knew—but was grimly determined to find out. . . .

In Bees'-Knees' noisy stand a hectic hour later, surrounded by admirers who fought now to pay his checks, Columbus came upon his aide at last, nourishing nobly at a table. Came upon him in time to overhear: "Git yourself kidnaped like I is, and you is *got* to dust off de brains and git bright! Gits so skeered you's smart. So I propositions dem crooks jest before dey comes to de bridge—"

"Propositions 'em what?" an over-eager hearer couldn't wait. "I thought you was a detective."

"Is—but a detective lives longer is he a *business-man* first," retorted a sleuth who obviously felt that he had but one skin to give to his country.

"So I propositions dem crooks to *buy* de piano, and—"

"Wid *what*?" Somebody still had the Dun and Bradstreet's on Bugwine.

"It turn out dey so tired of haulin' dat piano round tryin' to sell it dat dey jumped at de offer—"

"What offer?"

"Mine. Of five bucks for de piano, and turnin' 'em loose free, too, if dey'd fotch me *and* de piano back to Bedelia's house, and den play in a band wid Six-ace's instr'uments and suits I was haulin' when I wrecks. So Bedelia gits her piano back, Gooford gits welcome' by a band, crooks gits free, and gits five bucks I collects from Bedelia dat she *was* gwine give Six-ace if he hadn't got in jail. Tell you, when *I* starts after a piano—"

"Yeah, but what do Six-ace and *his* boys git out of it?" recalled an adenoidal skeptic in the rear.

"Room and free board whar dey craves to stay nohow, now dat dey got five dollars too, to shoot craps wid in dar, instead of de five dey *couldn't* get from Bedelia—"

"*Six-ace* got five dollars too? Boy, you still dizzy in de konk!"

"Brighter dat way, Columbus say. Listen, I done so good solvin' de big piano mystery dat Samson pay me for *it*—old kidnapers gits dat from me—and den gimme de contract us was after all de time, for protectin' his loan-shark business regular—wid ten bucks' retainer in advance for *dat*. So I splits *it* wid Six-ace, and everybody happy! Start *me* after no piano, and I brings back it—and a brass band too. Jest like dat old piano had done had pups while it was gone! Yassuh!"

The Fight

An impressive example of poetic justice distinguishes the climax of this vivid drama by the famous author of "Beau Geste" and "Valiant Dust."

AS I have said before, the great red powerful Highlander known to his friends as *le* McSnorrt, the pride and disgrace of the VIIIth Company of the First Battalion, was a man worth hearing, when he would talk at all.

Sober, he was dumb, the dourest of the dour; mellowed by wine, he was delightful, a good story-teller—in both senses of the word—and a man of most improving discourse: drunk (and happily it took a terrible lot to make him drunk), he was a terror, a public nuisance and a danger.

Definitely he was a Bad Man (though *bon légionnaire*); and like most bad men, he had a lot of good in him. I have known him do the kindest, most comradely things: show a burning indignation on behalf of others; share his last sou with a comrade; take punishment for another man's fault, without a murmur; be as gentle as a woman to a wounded friend—and commit every crime in the Decalogue, including murder. . . .

Every silver lining has a cloud, and it's a good wind that blows nobody any ill. . . . These stories were told me by the McSnorrt under conditions of the greatest discomfort, hardship, privation, danger and strain—he and I and a machine-gun, alone, high up on a mountain-side, for several days on end.

Excessive heat and glare, combined with deficiency of water, food and sleep, made the day something of a nightmare; while extreme cold, and every probability of sudden swift attack, made the night little better, or little worse, than the day.

But there was a good hour at sunrise and another at sunset, and good cognac in McSnorrt's *bidon*; so at sunrise he would thaw and talk; at sunset, cool down and talk.

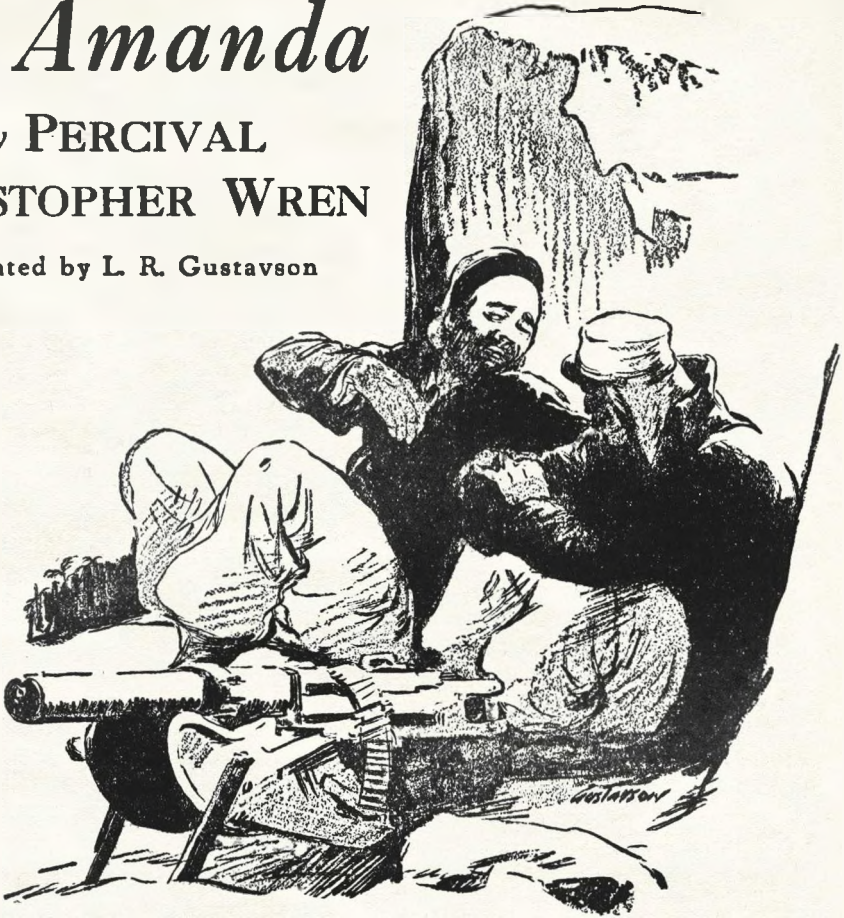
Nor was his brief loquacity attributable solely to brandy; for like all Scots, articulate or not, he had a genuine eye

for Amanda

By PERCIVAL

CHRISTOPHER WREN

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson



McSnorrt and I and a machine-gun were alone, high on a mountain-side, for days on end. . . . At sunset he would talk.

for beauty, and our sunrises and sunsets were of a loveliness that almost compensated for the conditions under which we beheld them.

"DID I ever tell ye about my friend Cap'n Bobby McTavish—him they called Whisky Bobby?" asked McSnorrt, wiping his bearded lips on the sleeve of his *boucheron*.

"Aye," I replied cautiously.

"Did I tell ye about him and that wop called Cæsar Molini?"

"Ye did not," I replied, as though the last thing I wished to hear was a tale of Captain McTavish and the wop Molini.

McSnorrt fell silent, staring down the valley to the plain beyond—or the vale of the years to the panorama of his amazing past.

Suddenly he laughed.

"Cap'n Bobby McTavish," he said, "—aye, yon was a man!" And again he fell silent.

"Ye ken, laddie," he said suddenly, "men who've swallowed the anchor (and that means them who've had the wisdom and the good luck to retire from the sea—an' aye, b' God, how I wish I were on it, the noo) they'll all tell ye that they hate the very sight of the blue water, and only want to forget it. . . The dommed leears!"

"Well, well, seafaring's a dog's life, and that's why dogs don't go. And yet, ye ken, their behavior in the way of forgetting is a curious and astounding thing. I knew a man, with the anchor in his belly, who always swore he wouldn't send his worst enemy or a murderin' convict to sea; and yet, in his front garden, o'erlooking the Clyde, he has a ship's figurehead, a model of a ship's wheel, and a flagstaff in the flower-bed. And when an old brother-captain's ship is reported, he goes out and flies a four-flag hoist from the International Code. . . He does that.

"Aye, and I know another fule that canna curse the sea enough, but his dining-room is covered with sea-subject pictures. Aye, and painted by a man who knows ships; and every mornn when he dresses himself, he 'bends' a gold cable on his waistcoat, with a gold anchor hanging from the bight, and looks as though he has got a windlass in one waistcoat-pocket and a chain-locker in the other.

"I tell ye, laddie, they give me a pain, these figurehead-on-the lawn, telescope-carrying, barometer-tapping old shell-backs; but 'tis good to remember some of 'em, and think about 'em.

"**E**H, but I'd love to go into the room behind the bar of a house I know, or the reading-room of the Society of Merchant Officers, and have a crack again with some of 'em. Good talk of the sea, from Kamchatka to the Rio Grande; collisions in the fog on the St. Lawrence; fever-struck ships on the Gold Coast; strandings in the Red Sea; Chinese pirates out of Bias Bay; and black fellows' canoe-attacks off Malaita.

"Aye, those are the places to hear the sort of talk I hanker for—longing and hankering at times till I've got to get drunk or go mad. . . .

"Old Ecky McConochie—I can hear him now, the way he'd talk:

"'What like man is he?' he'd say. 'I'm tellin' ye. One o' they dommed marine superintendents who *will* see for himself. One o' they ye-can't-deceive-me know-alls. Aye, last week he as near as be dommed saw-for-himself once too often. Put on a boiler-suit, the peeping prying fule, and sneaked down into the double-bottom to see what he could find fault with there—and meanwhile the third engineer put on the man-hole covers! He did so. And through using his electric torch all so clever, the gowk didna notice the shutting out of the light, and if his hat and coat had not been noticed in the saloon, he'd be under yon tank-tubes yet. . . Ah weel, 'tis not on my conscience that I let him loose. 'Twas the fule Third—wanting promotion, I'm thinking.'

"Or there'd be Sandy Grant:

"'Aye, give up my guid mate's job in a first-class liner to take command of a ten-thousand ton tramp,' he'd say. 'Aye, 'Captain' at last, and made for life—and the life lasted one short voyage. The swine who tempted me out of the company on to his cross-eyed slut of a barge

never told me she was up for sale. And never a job since.'

"Or Tammy McDougall, grousin' and grumblin' the day through:

"'Him, yon feckless fule!' he'd growl. 'Huh, he was second mate with me for one voyage, and that one too many. Only twice forgot to wind the chronometers. Mate, next trip, on a bigger ship. Outside Surrey Docks, suddenly remembered he'd clean forgot to fill the fresh-water tanks, and so they missed the tide! Aye, captain now, as ye say. And with a good mate to nurse him, goes right out of sight of land. He'll get the line's new ship. . . . I'm hearing that his aunt's widower married the managin' director's cook's cousin's young daughter.'

"Then, from auld Red Reid:

"'Aye, I can beat that. Our assistant superintendent is the owner's nephew, and that made him a fine seaman, ye ken. When he was out of his apprenticeship, he was sent to me as third mate. The river pilot was aboard; and having about half an hour to wait for the flood-tide, we'd put a rope ashore in the Edward Dock entrance. "Ring off the engines, Mister," I said to him, as I went down the ladder to the chart-room—and never got there. When I picked myself up from the deck and rushed back onto the bridge, I found that the splendid young officer had put the signal at "Full Ahead" and we'd carried away the dock gates.'

"Or poor Hit-or-miss Andy Anderson:

"'No, it doesna do to be too clever. I thought I could keep to the channel by following the big tramp, for where she could go, I could go. And only just in time, it dawned on me that the dommed tramp was stuck. I'm thinking my "*Harrd-a-starboard*" was heerd from Australia to the Horn! Aye, my pilot-fish tramp had been on a reef in yon channel for eight months.'

"**B**UT wasna I telling ye about Bobby McTavish? Well, why couldna ye say so, then? Aye, he'd be there, and the best of them all.

"Wasna I telling ye how he got Mrs. McTavish?"

"Aye, ye were," I replied untruthfully.

"D'ye ken the ancient city of Antwerp? Well, ye didna happen to visit a boarding-house called Gabriel's House, did ye? No, 'twas only known to sailormen. Run by Jean Gabriel, known to the ends of the earth as the Archangel Gabriel—or the Archdeacon Gabriel—and to some, as the Death Angel Gabriel.



"His right fist flashed . . . and the dago gentleman collapsed upon the floor."

"He'd been a ship's cook, and *mirabile dictu*, as the learned say, he could cook.

"That fact, and the help of Amanda, made Gabriel's House the best café and sailors' house in the Antwerp dock area; a haven of refuge for silly sailor-men who, having lifted a big pay-day, fear land-sharks and their own folly, the drunken fools.

"Aye, even sailor-men got a square deal at Gabriel's House, for Jean's wife was a better angel than Gabriel; and when Jean had the good luck to sign on Amanda, the place was made.

"Aye—Amanda, a wunnerful lass, wi' a personality, and an amazing gift of tongues.

"Everybody loved Amanda, and the cock and hen Angel Gabriels regarded her as their adopted daughter.

"Now there's women, and women, and lots more women too; and a good one is the best thing on earth, and the bad ones

are the worst, and the ordinary ones are by ordinar' ordinary. And this Amanda was one of the very best: an amazing woman. She had personality and power and a wonderful wholesome goodness that looked out from her eye and shamed any rogue or ruffian that met it. I'm tellin' ye, man, the sailors that came to Gabriel's House behaved themselves, out of sheer respect and admiration for Amanda. There was no rough-housin' in Gabriel's, for every shell-back that used the place was her man; and if ever a stranger came in and made trouble—the trouble was his in the brief space that he remained.

"I never saw another woman like her, just as I never saw another man the like of Bobby McTavish.

"At a straight look from Amanda's bonny brown eyes, any half-tipsy rioter would sober down and redden under his tan like a guilty schoolboy. I've seen the singer of a Rabelaisian chanty gagged with his own shirrt because he didna ease off and pipe down, when she came into the bar. Aye, when she hove in sight, rough sailormen behaved as they'd done, when laddies, before their own mothers.

"She'd never have a genuine stone-broke down-on-his-luck sent empty away. She'd give him food and coffee—and no drink; and seldom did Gabriel's House lose by it. But any rowdy rough-neck would go out 'schooner-rigged,' at a movement of her neat head and a look at the door.



"The knife skewered his right arm to his chest. . . . That was nothing to Bobby McTavish!"

"No, with Amanda on watch, the Arch-deacon didna need to worry about discipline and the good name of his house; and if the sailor-men learnt from her, she learnt from them, till she was a walking encyclopedia of sea-lore.

"All those never-ending arguments about ships, rigs, record passages and the interesting problems that the fo'c'sle loves to discuss threadbare, instead of leading to the usual wrangle, quarrel and scrap, were submitted to her; and what

she said, right or wrong, settled it and finished it.

"And among other things she knew better than the silly sailor-men, was how much money they had left. Pay-days were handed to her without counting and without thought of a receipt; and she whacked out each man's money in strict accordance with her idea of his fitness to handle it. . . . Whiles she'd say to a man:

"'You're half-drunk now, and you don't get a penny till you're sober.'

"Why, thanks to Amanda, many a sailor would go back to sea with money in his pocket—and that's something, I'm tellin' ye.

"I could talk all day about Amanda, and not tell ye the half. But she was lovely, she was kind, she was good—and strong, clever and wise. . . .

"Offers of marriage? Aye, ye're right. But nothing doing. No marrying for Amanda; no lovers. The friend of all the world, and o'er-friendly to none.

"Ah weel, my ship putting in to Antwerp, what must I do but take Bobby McTavish to Gabriel's House to see Amanda, though I knew he'd never get all he wanted there—to drink, I mean. For no man was allowed to drink himself drunk in that bar. And there again, Gabriel's House lost nothing by the rule.

"Now Bobby McTavish had had but one love in his life, and the name of his goddess was—Whisky. And he came along to Gabriel's House daffin' and laffin' at me and the 'café wench' he thought was my calf-love lassie—for I was but young and a fool, though not by half the fool I am now. . . .

"Pushing open the door of Gabriel's House, I marched Bobby McTavish—second mate, he was then—up to the bar, and introduced him to Amanda.

"They looked at each other, straight and long; and when Amanda's eyes fell (which I'd never seen them do before when summing up a man) Bobby McTavish fell too—fell in love. Aye, up to his Indian summer load-line.

"The offer of marriage Amanda got that week was from Bobby McTavish; and though she didna accept it, she did what she'd never done before, not even to skippers of big liners that proposed to her—she told him why.

"She told him why, and bade him hold his tongue; and Bobby didn't even tell me why Amanda wouldn't marry him.

"And I was puzzled, for within a week 'twas clear as day to a blind man in a

dark room, that Amanda had fallen in love at last, and that Bobby McTavish, second mate of a Johnson ship, was the man.

"And 'twas not the matter of his whisky-drinking, for Amanda knew nothing of that. He didna go to the Archangel's joint to drink whisky, but to see the face and hear the voice of Amanda. 'Twas a case of—

*"Drink to me only with thine eyes
And I'll not ask for—whisky.*

"And when she turned him down, gently, kindly, firmly and finally, and with the hint of a tear in her eye and a break in her voice, life went ill with Bobby McTavish.

"For a week and a day he was dead to the warrld; deaf, dumb, and blind; unconscious, insensible—*really* drunk. And then he arose and put it from him, went back to Gabriel's House and spent the hours, from the openin' o' its doors to the closin', denyin' his body an' feastin' his soul, in Amanda's presence.

"AN' one day there walked into Gabriel's House a huge big man, dark and handsome as the de'il himsel'.

"Turnin' round and catchin' sight of him, Amanda went white as marble. Aye, the color left her lips and seemed to leave her eyes themselves, as she put her hand to her heart and sat her down upon the chair.

"Aye, her face was ghostly as a crippled ship's white figurehead facin' a lee shore in a gale.

"An' at the same time the big man caught sight of her, stared incredulously, growled '*Per Bacco!*' and with the smile of a hopeful shark, lurched across the room.

"He was an Italian, and he was half-drunk.

"Reaching the bar, he leaned across, brought his leering swarthy face as near to Amanda's as he could, and said something in Italian that flushed her pale whiteness to a flaming red.

"Then breaking into English, of a sort, he said:

"So? . . . Da runaway hell-cat!"

"Bobby McTavish was leaning with his left elbow on the bar, and his right fist flashed so swiftly that 'twas barely perceptible.

"'Twas audible, though. A great resounding smack, and the dago gentleman reeled, staggered, and collapsed upon the floor.

"A big Swede jumped up and counted: "'Von! Doo! Dree! Vour—' And after the word '*Nine!*' there was a deafening shout of '*Out!*' from the whole room, and loud cheering.

"As I've said, Amanda was a woman, calm and cool and strong.

"Thank you, Bobby,' she said quietly, and rose to her feet as the crowd fell silent. 'He is my husband.'

"And I shallna forget Bobby McTavish's face as he stared at the big wop, Cæsar Molini, lying there on the floor.

"Your husband?' he whispered, looking as though he'd carried away a foot-ropo on the main skysail-yard and missed his hold on the jackstay.

"How long he and all of them stared I dinna ken, but Cæsar Molini himself broke the spell by moving his arms and legs, rolling over, and sitting up.

"Then Bobby came to himself and went to Cæsar Molini. Taking him by the throat, he dragged him to his feet, shook him till his head rolled on his shoulders, then steadied him, glared into his black eyes and said, low and plain and clear:

"Come you in here again, you dog, an' I'll kill ye wi' my own hands. *Out!*'

"And running him to the door, he flung him into the street.

"Then he came back to the bar and spoke to Amanda.

"Yes, he's Cæsar Molini, my husband,' she said. 'And he's something else—he's the worst man I've ever known. I left him in Genoa. . . . And he has found me here.'

"Well, he's goin' to lose you again, Amanda,' said Bobby softly.

"He's not that sort of man, my dear,' replied Amanda.

"I am, though,' said Bobby.

"Yes, it'd be nice for you to be hanged for Cæsar Molini!"

"And before he went that night, Amanda had made him promise that he would do nothing at all to Cæsar Molini—save of course, in self-defense.

"I DON'T know whether the succeeding days were worse for McTavish than those that followed her refusal of his offer of marriage. I think they were, now that he had seen the thing that was Amanda's husband, and had learned the sort of creature that he was, and how he had treated Amanda before she left him.

"There was a burning rage and a corroding jealousy now, added to the other

"Stick to it, man!" bawled Bobby, and he began to haul up hand over hand."

pain. Aye, Bobby McTavish suffered—suffered such mental anguish that I feared for him, and almost wished he would break his other promise to Amanda and turn to his other goddess once again—whisky! 'Twould have given him oblivion, peace—for a while.

"Aye, he suffered real torment of the mind. An' the night before we were to sail, he suffered physically for Amanda too.

"Turnin' into a dark entry on his way back to the ship, something flashed from the darkness ahead, and Bobby had no time to jump. Time he had to throw his arms across his chest, knowing, in the millionth of a second, what it was.

"The knife skewered his right arm to his chest. The angle of the blow and the turning of the blade made the wound in his forearm wide and deep, though that in his breast was but a half-inch stab. That was nothing to Bobby McTavish!

NEXT day, wi' his arm in a sling, he went as usual to Gabriel's House, and told Amanda the truth.

"Will ye gi'e me back ma promise, Amanda?"

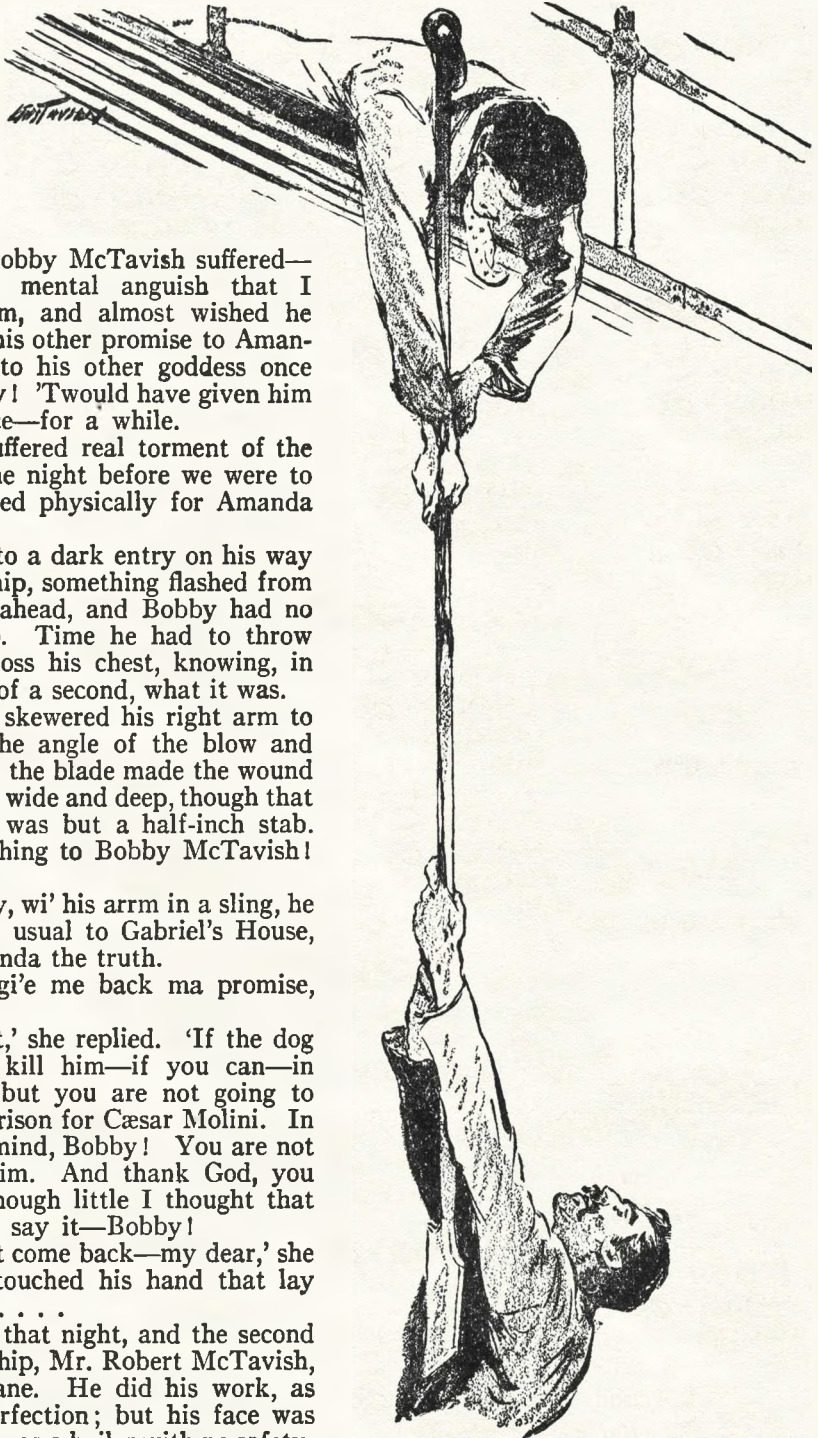
"I will not," she replied. 'If the dog attacks you, kill him—if you can—in self-defence; but you are not going to an Antwerp prison for Cæsar Molini. In self-defence, mind, Bobby! You are not to go after him. And thank God, you sail today—though little I thought that ever I should say it—Bobby!

"And don't come back—my dear,' she said, as she touched his hand that lay upon the bar. . . .

"We sailed that night, and the second mate of our ship, Mr. Robert McTavish, was barely sane. He did his work, as always, to perfection; but his face was of stone. He was a boiler with no safety-valve. Soon he would kill some one—or himself; or he would drink three bottles of whisky, neat, in the four hours of his watch below.

"I fair lo'ed Bobby McTavish, an' I felt in my bones that nothing could save him.

"An' what d'ye think did save him?"



"An explosion in that rattletrap's engine-room that well-nigh blew the ship to pieces.

"That brought Bobby McTavish to life—as it put many a guid man to death. The third mate showed his coolness in emairgency by promptly putting the tele-

graph at 'Stop,' after the engines had just dropped clean out of the ship, takin' the fourth engineer and greasers with them—and left nothing to turn the propeller.

"Bobby McTavish, second mate o' what had been the *Avon Bridge*, got his boat first into the water.

"I'm tellin' ye, when Bobby McTavish wants to hustle, there's nothing the starboard watch wants more than—to hustle.

"The boat lowered away. With his foot on the top rung of the Jacob's ladder, Bobby heard, above the crackling and hissing of steam-pipes, a dreadful scream from down below—a scream like that o' a burrnin' horse.

"Bobby McTavish went back. He would. Flashin' his torch through the top gratin' o' the stoke-hole, he saw the white upturned face o' a man who stood wi' the water lappin' round his waist.

"'Sava me, sava me!' he screamed. 'De ladder is blow away, an' I cannot uppa-get.'

"Yes, an Italian.

"And the Italian was Cæsar Molini.

"There he was, all aboard—Amanda's husband! And Bobby McTavish knew why he was there, why he had stowed away, as he must have done, just before the ship sailed.

"And Cæsar Molini knew that McTavish knew.

"But that did not deter him from screaming to his intended victim:

"'Sava me—sava me!'

"**LADDIE,**" said McSnorrt, turning suddenly with a look of severe admonition upon his rubicund but serious face, "I'm askin' ye. What would ye have done? What would ye have done had ye been thus, face to face, wi' a man who stood between you and the woman who was the love o' your life—the man who had treated her as no white man would treat a dog—the man, forbye, who had thrown a knife at your heart and had then come aboard your ship to murder ye when the chance arose? Ye'd have left him to die, so don't deny it. Why, man, alive, even I would have left him to die. I admit it. I tak' no shame to say it.

"An' Bobby McTavish—what did he do?

"He tried to save him.

"He shone his torch aroond. The door o' the engine-room was submerged, and

Another of these gripping tales of the adventurous McSnorrt will appear in an early issue.

by a queer freak o' the explosion, the perpendicular iron ladder that should have reached to the 'tween-decks was horizontal—aye, and twisted like a woman's hair-pin.

"Trapped, the man was.

"Trapped down there, like the rat he was. Wi' the ship sinkin' and like to tak' McTavish down with it, what did he do, I ask ye?

"He tried to save Molini!

"He hadna a coil of fine manila rope in the pocket o' his pants, but there was a fireman's 'slice' to his hand.

"So he lay flat and dangled the slice down to where the Italian could jump for it.

"Ma certie! But yon McTavish was a giant o' strength. In the madness o' his fright, Cæsar Molini leaped—leaped high enough to grip the long iron bar—and hung on.

"He was strong, too, and had that strength of madness, and up the long iron handle he climbed a couple of feet. Climbed and hung on, the sweat streaming fra his white face.

"'Stick to it, man,' bawled Bobby, and began to haul up hand over hand. He did so.

"And then the great strain on his arms caused the knife-wound that Cæsar had given him, to open. The blood trickled down over his hands, and then even the mighty strength o' McTavish's great fists could not keep a grip o' the blood-wet slippery iron.

"Think of it!

"The angry leaping phosphorescent seas; McTavish swearing and straining in that black darkness; Cæsar Molini swinging, swinging; sobbing, sobbing—and slipping—and the iron slowly slipping. . . . Molini slipping down and down to the risin' bubblin' ash-covered froth o' the water below.

"**W**EEL, weel! 'Oor acts oor angels are.'

"The iron slid from the hands of McTavish, and from the hands of Cæsar Molini, thanks to the blood from the wound that Cæsar Molini himself had made in McTavish's arm.

"And as he fell with a splash, the ship lurched, and I yelled to Bobby that 'twas no night for Channel-swimming.

"That's how Bobby McTavish won his wife Amanda—trying to save her husband, who'd tried to kill him. . . . Let it be a lesson to you, ma mannie."

The Tribe

A stirring novel of international conspiracy—of a criminal Chinese brotherhood, of the girl known as Miss Secret Service, and of many exciting events which amazed the country.

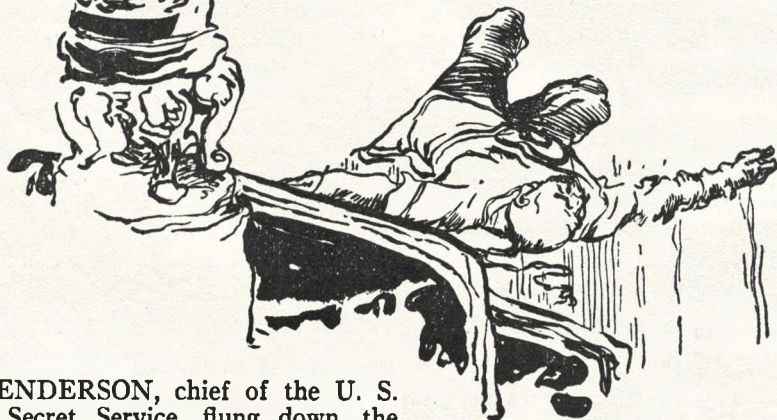
the United States to help hold China together."

"They need it," Henderson said tersely.

"And following the usual Chinese custom, they have hired a go-between to deal with us—none other than Professor Joseph Enslow, the world-famous Oriental scholar. Enslow is—"

"*To be murdered!*" cut in Henderson sharply. "Jim, you've got to prevent it!"

"It seems," Shannon went on, ignoring Henderson's interruption, "that there has been a leak. Interested parties have engaged the services of a Chinese secret



HENDERSON, chief of the U. S. Secret Service, flung down the decoded cable that had been sent over from the State Department. Usually calm, his voice betrayed agitation.

"There you are, Jim! The whole thing is fantastic, incredible! Of course, we had plots and counterplots during the war; but we're at peace now. And here, out of the Orient, comes this—"

"Let me get this straight," broke in Jim Shannon, star free-lance of the Service. He picked up the cablegram and leaned back in his chair, his rugged face grave. "The Chinese Government is sending a man from Shanghai to plead with the State Department. They want

society, known as the Tribe of the Tiger, to have Enslow followed and, as you say, murdered. *Hmm!*"

"But that's only the preliminary, Jim! The real plot, the fantastic part of this thing, then starts! Read on!"

Jim Shannon poked stubby fingers through his graying hair. He was frowning at the cablegram.

"After the killing of Professor Enslow," he went on thoughtfully, "a man who bears a striking physical resemblance to him is to assume Enslow's place—and come on to Washington.

of the Tiger

By LEMUEL
DE BRA

Who wrote "A Thundering
Thriller," "Coin of the Dead"
and "Tears of the Poppy."



Here, this unknown person, posing as Enslow, is to commit some atrocity that will startle the whole world—that will definitely sever friendly relations between this country and China, and—”

“And perhaps plunge us into a useless and ghastly war,” Henderson finished.

There was silence between the two men for a moment. Shannon laid the cablegram on the desk. He took out his watch, stared at it, and put it back.

“Of course, I’ve already attended to the routine stuff,” Henderson said. “Men will meet Enslow’s ship—it’s nearing San Francisco right now. They’ll guard him—or whoever is impersonating him; Enslow’s body may be in the Pacific already. That’s why orders have been given to do nothing until you get on the job. You, Jim, are to get at the bottom of this business—save Professor Enslow if it isn’t too late, and round up this bunch of crooks before they have a chance to pull off their game here in Washington—whatever it is.”

Shannon nodded thoughtfully. Henderson went on:

“Did you ever hear of that bird Yut Doy—believed to be the head, in America of that Chinese society?”

Shannon picked up the cablegram again. He skimmed through the concluding paragraph.

“Seems that Yut Doy is located in San Francisco,” Shannon remarked. “Believed to be connected with the smuggling of narcotics. If that’s right, then the Customs men out there may know of Yut Doy. It happens that my daughter Lola, and Operative Billy Briggs, are helping the Customs out there on a case that has baffled the regular agents for years. That just might be a break for us.”

“I hope so,” grunted Henderson. “What d’you suppose these crooks intend to pull off, Jim? Assassinate some one?”

“No use speculating on that now. If we were dealing with spies of some other foreign country, it would be more simple. But China’s worst enemies are right in China. And this Chinese secret society is an international organization outlawed everywhere.”

“Then you’ve heard of that Tiger outfit before?”

Shannon nodded. “*The Society of the Eight Tigers*,’ as its title would be more accurately translated, is like the ‘Brethren of the Green Viper’—they are even more powerful in China than *The Black Dragon Society*’ is in Japan. Few Americans know of the secret societies over there, nor suspect how they are feared where known. Usually their activities are confined to their own countries, but when they come out of the Orient—”

Shannon looked at his watch again.

Henderson jumped to his feet.

“It’s the biggest job you ever had, Jim! For God’s sake, don’t fall down on us now! It’s probably too late to save Enslow—but you’ve got to stop the plot there. Our foreign relations in certain quarters are none too good now. We don’t want war! And it’s up to you, Jim! What—what will you do first?”

Shannon answered slowly, while his big hands groped through his pockets:

“What’ll I do first? Well, if I can find my pipe, I’ll have a smoke—if I can find my tobacco.”

CHAPTER II

DR. HENRI JACOBI turned his chair and let his gaze wander out the windows of his combination study and office. Beyond the sweep of gray roofs that lay below, San Francisco bay stood out like a brilliant blue jewel against the green of the Berkeley hills. It was one of those sparkling mornings that make



the city by the Golden Gate unforgettable, and that always caused strange emotions in the heart of Dr. Jacobi.

"Life is like a beautiful melody," Dr. Jacobi mused aloud in his smooth, cultured voice, "—a melody that is too often interrupted by something discordant, something ugly and wholly unnecessary. Here, just as I think I see the successful culmination of my greatest scheme, I must guard against the treachery of Yut Doy, the man who—"

An odd sound interrupted—a soft musical chime that came from a part of the desk by Dr. Jacobi's left elbow. Turning his chair again, Jacobi opened the top left drawer a few inches, disclosing something resembling a built-in loud-speaker.

"Yes, Maryn," he said quietly as he got out a cigarette and lighted it.

"The man from China is ready." A woman's voice floated from the drawer.

A flash of excitement lit Jacobi's handsome dark eyes. "Good!" he exclaimed. "I'll be on my way!"

HE shoved the drawer shut and pressed an electric button concealed beneath the edge of the desk. Smoking thoughtfully, he waited, his gaze fixed on the wall directly opposite the desk.

Presently a panel in the wall slid back noiselessly, disclosing the lower steps of a heavily carpeted stairway. Then a yellow-faced man in white garments emerged silently from the stairway into the room. He was broad-featured, with a flat nose and small black eyes. His powerful hands were scarred and blackened by chemicals.

"You are getting slow, Leong," complained Dr. Jacobi. "And awkward! I heard you on the steps."

"I am very sorry, Doctor," said Leong. "I did not know you were in a hurry, of course. And when you rang, I was drawing a filament of molybdenum. To stop instantly would have meant—"

"Very well. You brought the tablets?"

"Certainly." Leong stepped to the

desk, took a small vial from his coat pocket and handed it to Jacobi.

Jacobi regarded the vial curiously a moment, then put it carefully in his vest pocket.

"Of course, there is no danger," he said, taking a hypodermic case from his desk; "but you're sure there are no more like these in the laboratory?"

Leong lifted his lip in a mirthless grin.

"There are no more like them in the world!" he said with a touch of pride. "And when you—have used them, there will be no evidence."

"Very good," concluded Jacobi. "That will be all, Leong."

Leong vanished up the stairway, the door of which closed silently behind him. Jacobi made hasty preparations to leave.

Again came the soft musical chime of the concealed telephone. Frowning, Dr. Jacobi opened the drawer and answered.

"You have a caller, Doctor," Maryn's voice floated from the drawer. "A lady. I told her you could see no one this morning; but she said it was a very important personal matter, and that she would keep you only a minute."

"Who is she?" Dr. Jacobi demanded.

"Ah!" There was a sneering edge to Maryn's voice. "It's your friend Miss Secret Service. She—"

"But I can't see her this morning! Tell her—"

"I knew you'd drop everything to see her," Maryn went on as if Jacobi had not spoken. "So I sent her to the music-room—as usual."

"Maryn, you are acting like a fool! You'll spoil everything for all of us—yourself included—if you don't stop this senseless jealousy! Now listen to me! I must get rid of Miss S. S. as soon as possible. I can do that easiest by being very busy here. Send her in. Understand?"

"Certainly, I understand—more than you think!" snapped Maryn.

Jacobi shut the drawer. Rising, he crossed quickly to the lavatory and scrutinized himself critically in the mirror. He whisked the comb through his glossy dark hair.

Some one rapped briskly on the glass panel of Jacobi's private door. He drew the curtains over the lavatory, went to the hall door and opened it.

A trimly dressed young woman stepped in. Her pretty face was flushed, her bright blue eyes glowing.

Dr. Jacobi closed the door carefully.

"Good morning, Lola!" he exclaimed

warmly. "I apologize for asking you to come to my office. I have been—"

"No apologies necessary, Doctor," Lola broke in with a charming smile. "I came to return your book of poems. They are beautiful."

"Please keep the book!" Jacobi urged as she started to open her handbag. "I meant you to keep it. Poetry, like music, is more beautiful when shared with—with a loved one who understands. But come and sit down! Your early morning visit is a most pleasant surprise."

"I can't stay, Doctor!" Lola protested as Jacobi took her hand to lead her toward the divan. "I'm leaving San Francisco—unexpectedly."

"No!" Dr. Jacobi's dismay was real. "Don't tell me you must go—so soon!"

"But I am going. And I can't tell you any more. You understand?"

His burning eyes on the girl's face, Dr. Jacobi nodded thoughtfully.

"Official business, of course! Lola, I never let myself hate anyone or anything, for hate robs life of its beauty; but almost you make me hate the Secret Service, for taking you away from me. Why don't you quit that work, dearest? You—you are not the type! You're too good, too lovable—"

Suddenly he caught her in his arms, pressed her to him, kissed her eyes, her cheeks, passionately. With difficulty she kept her lips from him.

"Don't, Henri," she whispered pleadingly. "Please—"

"But I love you, dearest! God only knows how I love you! And you love me!"

"I am not sure, Henri! Really, I—I can't understand myself! Henri, believe me, never before in my life have I—" She drew away from him suddenly. "I—I must go now."

"When shall I see you again?"

"I don't know."

"I shall be in Washington soon. Perhaps—"

"You mustn't ask that, Henri."

"Yes, yes! I forgot. Secret Service business. Well, you will let me write?"

"Y-e-s, if you wish. A letter addressed to me in care of the Service at Washington will always reach me—somewhere." Lola turned and stepped quickly to the door. She smiled at the man as he followed hastily. "Good-by—Henri," she called, and was gone.

Jacobi stood for an instant scowling at the door; then he strode to his desk and jerked out the concealed telephone.



"Maryn! I want Miss S. S. followed! Put Gleazon on the job. Tell him to phone in as soon as he learns anything."

"With the greatest of pleasure!" snapped Maryn.

A FEW minutes after Lola left, Dr. Jacobi was in his car, being driven rapidly downhill toward the business district. At the side entrance to a well-known hotel, the car stopped. The Chinese chauffeur opened the door and handed Dr. Jacobi his bag. Instructing the chauffeur to wait, Jacobi entered the hotel and stopped at the desk.

"I am Dr. Henri Jacobi," he told the clerk. "You sent for me?"

"Oh, yes, Doctor!" The clerk rang his desk bell. "Man in 577 seems to be in bad shape. —Boy, take Dr. Jacobi to 577!"

In answer to the bell-boy's rap on the door of room Number 577, a man's voice called out weakly for them to enter. They found the door unlocked, and went in.

At first Jacobi saw no one, for the shades were down at all the windows, and the room in semi-darkness. Then he espied a hunched figure in a rocking-chair beside the bed. As he stepped to the man's side and looked down at him, the bell-boy followed.

The man had wrapped a light blanket about his shoulders, hiding the lower part of his face. A cap was drawn low over his forehead. Dark glasses concealed his eyes.

"Good morning," Jacobi greeted him, setting down his bag. "I am the doctor you sent for. What seems to be the trouble?"

The man lifted a shaking hand to his chest.

"Heart!" he gasped huskily.

Dr. Jacobi got out his stethoscope. He made a quick examination.

"Good Lord, man," he exclaimed reprovingly, "you should have sent for me long ago! You'll have to go to the hos-



pital as soon as I can get you in shape to be moved. —Boy!" Jacobi handed over a tip the bell-boy would not forget. "Tell the clerk I'll have to be here for some time. I'll phone my office in a moment and have important calls relayed here."

The boy hastened out. Jacobi stepped to the door and carefully locked it.

THE man in the chair instantly flung the blanket aside, sprang up and ripped off the cap and glasses. He was a tall, slender man with slightly pale face, bright dark eyes, and a short black beard.

Smiling, Hubert Cragmont, international crook and counterfeiter, gripped Jacobi's hand.

"*Hoo la mai!*" he whispered the Chinese greeting. "Doc, you look just like you did two years ago in Shanghai!"

"And you're looking fine, Cragmont!" Jacobi whispered. "But you've changed—for the better! That beard—"

"I've played many parts, Doc! How was the opening scene?"

"Splendid! For a man who is going to be dead in a few minutes, you carried it off very convincingly! You weren't afraid to come back to the States?"

"Not exactly—after all these years. Besides, I wanted to get out of Shanghai. Trouble ahead there—of the sort I don't hanker for. Say, let's have a drink! As an invalid I managed to slip a bottle of real Scotch past the Customs."

"Never drink!" snapped Jacobi. "And you'd better go easy. Liquor and—high crime do not mix. How's everything next door?"

"All right," Cragmont answered, pouring a glass of the Scotch. "We've time for a bit of chat before I give Duk Kee a ring."

"Who's Duk Kee?"

"Duk Kee is Professor Joseph Enslow's trusted bodyguard and secretary," Cragmont answered with an emphasis Jacobi was quick to understand.

While Cragmont sipped his Scotch, Dr. Jacobi took a small black case from his pocket, opened it, and laid out a hypodermic syringe.

"Doc, you sure know how to manage!" Cragmont complimented warmly. "The way you arranged every detail—even to putting me right in the connecting room!"

Jacobi nodded. He uncorked the vial Leong had given him, and poured out, into a spoon, two small green tablets.

"You forget, Hubert, that this is America! Where you've been ever since the Secret Service took an interest in your affairs, everything in the way of business or intrigue is arranged happily over the teacup. Here we do things over the telephone!"

"Righto!" chuckled Cragmont, pouring another drink. "But speaking of the Secret Service,—which I hope you won't too often!—have you come in touch with any of that bunch lately?"

"Yes," smiled Jacobi. He was screwing the glistening needle onto the barrel of the hypodermic.

"What do you mean?" demanded Cragmont, noting Jacobi's queer smile.

Dr. Jacobi laid the glittering hypo on the table. He sat down.

"Apparently, Hubert, you do not share the feeling that I have toward the Secret Service. Even the sound of those two words seems to frighten you."

"It does, dammit! Maybe I know that bunch better than you do. But go on? What the devil are you hinting at?"

"Just this," smiled Dr. Jacobi: "while you flee as far as possible from the arms of the Secret Service, I, within the last few minutes, have had their star female operative—in my arms!"

Slowly Hubert Cragmont set down his glass. His black eyes were wide, staring in shocked incredulity.

"Jacobi! You crazy?"

"S-sh!" Dr. Jacobi gestured warningly toward the adjoining room. "The story is very brief, and there's nothing in it to alarm you. Through my medical connections I learned some time ago that a Secret Service operative—a rather stupid chap named Briggs—was in a private hospital being treated for a serious gunshot wound. Sure that I could gain something by cultivating his acquaintance, I easily arranged to meet him professionally. And there—I met the girl, Lola Shannon. We—"

"Jim Shannon's girl? Now I know you're crazy! Hell, Jacobi, don't—"

"Wait until I finish! I'd heard of Jim Shannon, of course. Meeting Lola, the famous Miss Secret Service, was too good a chance to overlook. In a way, I was pleasantly disappointed. From what I had heard of her, I expected to meet a young woman who was sharp and hard, dangerous. Huh! Miss Shannon is trusting, refined and altogether lovable."

"So that's the lay!" muttered Cragmont. "You think you're working her; the truth is, Jacobi, she's working you!"

"Don't be absurd, Cragmont!" protested Jacobi, frowning. "I admire Miss Shannon, of course. Anyone would. But she's like clay in my hands; you needn't worry. And besides—I've been having her watched. She's on some small job for one of the other departments. I don't know just what, but it's nothing important."

"If she's on it, it's important! You can be sure of that, Jacobi. Hell! Right at the start you give me the willies!" He poured another glass of liquor. "Where's that old hell-scorcher Jim Shannon?"

"In Washington."

Cragmont paused with the glass at his lips. "Sure of that?"

"I told you that I've been having them watched. Of course I'm sure!"

Cragmont downed his Scotch in a single gulp. "So Shannon's in Washington. Supposing I run into him?"

"Will you know him if you do?"

"No; and I'm not craving to meet him. It's his knowing me that makes me jumpy. My beard will fool everybody else; but old Jim Shannon might—"

"Forget Shannon," Jacobi cut in sharply. "If he butts into this game, it'll be his last. Let's go over the details of what we're to do now."

IN the room adjoining Hubert Cragmont's quarters two men sat opposite each other at a writing-table.

One was a white man, slender, apparently more than ordinary height, with rather pale face, bright dark eyes, and a close-clipped black beard. His appearance would lead one to think him a foreigner.

He was Professor Joseph Enslow, F. R. G. S., Oriental scholar, lecturer, and authority on Sino-Japanese politics.

Enslow's companion was a powerfully built Chinese whose features suggested old Tartar blood. He wore American clothes, spoke good English, and his dark bronze eyes betrayed high intelligence.



Duk Kee acted both as bodyguard and secretary.

On the table by Enslow were a glass of iced orange-juice, a morning newspaper, a radiogram and a small gold pencil with which he toyed nervously between sips of orange-juice.

Enslow was in the midst of dictating a letter, in English, which Duk Kee deftly put down in running Chinese script:

"—trip without event. As you advised, I remained in the seclusion of my stateroom, seeing no one but Duk Kee.

"Duk Kee made frequent excursions about the boat, but saw no one whom he had any reason to think had followed us or was in any way interested in the mission with which you intrusted me.

"Therefore I was more than surprised when I received your radiogram. I understood that all danger would be past after I reached America. I am sure that it is. Nevertheless I shall exercise every precaution. No one here knows or even suspects my mission. If, as you fear, I am in danger of my life, you may rest assured your secret will perish with me.

"We shall be on our way to Washington within an hour. I will radio you immediately on arrival. Meanwhile—"

The telephone on the stand by Enslow jangled sharply, and the Professor jumped, dropping his gold pencil, which rolled off the table to the floor.

"Duk Kee!" whispered Enslow. "That—that must be a mistake! No one—"

"It is certainly a mistake, sir," returned Duk Kee in his smooth, gliding voice. "Shall I tell them so?"

The instrument rang again.

"It is better that I let them know they have made a mistake," Duk Kee said, getting quickly to his feet.

Enslow opened his lips as if to object, but apparently changed his mind. He leaned back in his chair, frowning, his slender fingers stroking his dark beard.

"Hello," said Duk Kee. . . . "Who? . . . Mr. Henry Smith? . . . No. I'm

sorry. . . . You have called the wrong room."

Duk Kee replaced the receiver. He turned to Enslow, smiling.

"It *was* a mistake, sir! We were needlessly alarmed."

"Good!" exclaimed Enslow. "Finish my letter! We'll post it on the way to the train. And I'll feel safer when we are on our way again, Duk Kee."

Still standing by the table, Duk Kee took from his vest pocket what appeared to be a fountain pen. Looking down at the letter he had written, he unscrewed the cap of the pen.

Professor Enslow picked up the radiogram to read it again.

Suddenly Duk Kee shot out his arm. From the end of the supposed pen exploded a spray of greenish vapor—striking Enslow full in the face.

BLINDED instantly, gasping, Enslow struggled to rise, then collapsed in the chair, his hands pawing frantically at his face and eyes, choking gasps hissing between his lips.

Duk Kee was already in the bathroom. He unlocked the door of the connecting room and jerked it open. With no more than a meaning glance at the two men, Duk Kee glided silently back to Professor Enslow, and Hubert Cragmont followed him.

Enslow appeared almost unconscious. Swiftly, Duk Kee and Cragmont carried the man into Cragmont's room.

While Duk Kee then took everything from Enslow's pockets and passed it to Cragmont, Dr. Jacobi bared the helpless man's arm.

Suddenly Cragmont spoke up. "Doc! Some one is rapping on Enslow's door!"

Dr. Jacobi looked around, the glittering hypodermic poised in his hand.

"Probably only the maid," he said coolly.

"Maid, hell! That's a man. And he means business!"

Dr. Jacobi gave Duk Kee a sharp look. "You didn't expect any caller?"

"Absolutely none! It must be a mistake!"

"It damned sure is a mistake!" growled Cragmont. "Wonder why the cuss didn't call you on the phone?"

"No one has called except when you phoned a moment ago," Duk Kee said.

"What'll we do, Doc?" demanded Cragmont nervously.

With steady hand, Dr. Jacobi drove the glittering needle home. He drew out the

steel, stroked the spot with a circular motion with his fingertip, then looked around at the two men.

"What'll we do?" he echoed coldly. "Play the game, of course! Get in there, both of you! I'm surprised at you, Hubert!"

"I'm surprised at myself, Doc," muttered Cragmont sheepishly. "Don't even mention that cursed Secret Service again! And, until I see you—*ho toy!*"

Duk Kee followed Cragmont into the room lately occupied by Enslow. The rapping at the door had ceased—much to Cragmont's relief.

"Did you lock that bathroom door?" he asked. Duk Kee had locked it. Cragmont glanced around the room. "You were writing a letter? What about?"

"Nothing of any consequence, sir," answered Duk Kee.

"Tear it up! Destroy it! We'll write one that is of some consequence! I want twenty-five thousand dollars transferred from the general fund to my own—to Professor Joseph Enslow's account—at once. Understand?"

"Yes sir! It's a large sum to begin with, but—"

Duk Kee broke off, a startled look flashing into his eyes. Both men faced the door—the rapping had started again.

Into Cragmont's mind flashed the fear that some eavesdropper had heard what he had just said about the transfer of money. But that was hardly likely. And anyway, what if some one had overheard? He—Cragmont—was supposed to be Professor Enslow!

"See who it is, Duk Kee," ordered Cragmont.

He sat down at the table where Enslow had been dictating his letter. From his pocket he took a small automatic and dropped it into a drawer of the table.

Duk Kee opened the hall door. Cragmont, with some of his old iron nerve, did not look around at once, pretending interest in Enslow's newspaper.

"Good morning, gentlemen," came a voice from the doorway behind Cragmont—a mild, friendly voice with a slight quaver that suggested age.

CRAGMONT looked around as Duk Kee closed the door again. Meeting his gaze was a portly, middle-aged man with bland smiling face and rather vague eyes behind thick spectacles. In one hand he held a black felt hat; the other hand was fondling an old pipe.

Cragmont was thinking how quickly he'd get rid of this doddering old fool when the caller spoke apologetically:

"I beg your pardon, sir. I hope I haven't made a mistake. You—you are Professor Joseph Enslow?"

"I'm not!" snapped Cragmont. "But what if I were?"

"If you are," the caller smiled genially, taking an envelope from his pocket, "then this is for you."

With a tremendous effort, Hubert Cragmont masked his amazement. He took the envelope. There was no writing or printing on it. It was sealed. Tearing it open, Cragmont drew out a sheet of paper. He read swiftly:

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Professor Joseph Enslow:

Sir: The gentleman who hands you this will explain everything. You may place entire confidence in him. He is James W. Shannon, of the United States Secret Service.

*Respectfully,
Frank H. Henderson, Chief.*

LOLA SHANNON, spoken of in the world of her activities as "Miss Secret Service," walked hurriedly down the hall that led from Dr. Jacobi's office.

Lola was young, educated, traveled, modern-minded. Many men in many parts of the world had made love to her. It had pleased her, as it would any normal girl; but it had not made the slightest dent in her armor of good common sense. . . . That is, not until she met Dr. Henri Jacobi.

She could not understand Dr. Jacobi's influence over her. Away from him, she was her old self; in his presence, his magnetic personality almost dominated her reason. The realization of that fact made her furious with herself.

Resolutely Lola put the thought of Dr. Jacobi out of her mind as she walked rapidly from the foyer of the Jacobi Building to her waiting taxi. There was work to do, dangerous work that demanded steady nerves and a clear head.

In the taxi, waiting for her, was a husky, homely young man with a contagious grin, and strong, freckled hands. He was dressed a bit sportily, looked like the gray dawn of the morning after, and exuded a faint but unmistakable odor of gin. He was Secret Service Operative Billy Briggs.

"You're a fine specimen of a husband!" snapped Lola as she got in beside Billy and slammed the door shut behind her. "Before we were married, you'd get out



to meet me. You'd open the door, take my arm. You couldn't do enough for me. And now look at you!" Lola sniffed with well-assumed disgust. "You used to take me to the best movies in town. Now what do you do? You come home every night, in ten reels—and put on a talkie all by yourself. If you—"

"Say, wait a—minute!" interrupted Billy. "Scientists have dishcovered that twenty-nine—mebbe thirty—disheases enter the—shystem through the mouth. Keep yours shut awhile an' lemme—catch something!"

"You'll catch enough, all right!" Lola warned. "You had no business getting soused in the first place!"

"Wasn't the first place! It was the twenty-first—place!"

The driver, a hard-faced individual with little eyes, looked around, grinning.

"Where to now?"

"To Yut Doy's place—the Skylark!" Billy ordered. "An' make it snappy."

"You're not going there this morning!" Lola objected.

"I'm not sure I can get you in Yut Doy's place now," the driver said. "They don't encourage the night crowd drifting out there the next morning. See? Got a special morning bunch. Big guys, see?"

"Aint none of 'em bigger'n me," argued Billy as the car got going.

"Just the same, you'd better be careful," the driver said. "Suppose I managed to get you in there—if you get into trouble, I couldn't get you out. Yut Doy is playing to big business, cleanin' up, an' don't intend to be bothered. If he got the idea that you two were Federal agents—well, there's a lot o' room in those sand-dunes!"

For a few blocks no one spoke.

"Say, I got an idea!" Billy said suddenly. "We'll leave the Missus home! She cramps my style. Turn north at the next corner an' start back to town!"

Lola looked around in surprise, but said nothing. The driver swung into the cross-street, and at the next corner he



headed back toward the business section. Billy kept up a running fire of chatter, and before they had gone two blocks, he declared that since Lola hadn't started a fight when he said he was going to take her home, she must have "some secret sinister motive" back of it. So he ordered the driver to turn again into the highway and hurry on to Yut Doy's place—the Skylark.

The Skylark was an old private residence that, after prohibition, had been remodeled into a modern roadhouse. The location was admirable for the purpose. There was no other house within four blocks, and at the rear of the grounds the neglected ornamental shrubbery dwindled away to an empty waste of rolling sand.

The building, a large two-story frame structure, was completely hidden from the street by huge pepper trees. The entrance to the grounds swung in a curve across the corner, giving access and egress on either street.

As the taxi rolled into the graveled driveway, Lola caught a glimpse of several cars parked among the pepper trees. Although the sun shone brilliantly, a light still burned on the long veranda that fronted the house. Shades were drawn at all the windows. Over the old mansion hung an air of secretiveness.

The driver got out and went to the door while his fares remained in the taxi. He rang a bell. After a time a tiny peephole in the upper panel of the door opened. A cold gray eye gave him a look, glanced at the taxi, lingered for an instant on Lola and Billy, then vanished. The porch light went out; the door was drawn open. The driver slipped in.

"Mornin', Flora," he said as the door clicked shut again. "Got those two good scouts Billy Enders and his wife—"

"Yeah, that's what they call themselves!" snapped Flora. "But names don't mean anything in this joint." Flora was an attractive brunette with mercenary gray eyes. "I took them in on your say, but I don't know—"

"They're okay, Flora," the driver argued. "Hell, that bird keeps too well lit to know what it's all about. An' it means a lot to me to—"

"I'll put 'em in a private room," Flora interrupted. "But you know better'n to bring people here this time o' morning. I got special company right now."

The driver had already opened the door and signaled his fares. Flora greeted them with her professional smile.

"Billy, you're a wonder!" she exclaimed. "Lit already! How'd you get it?"

"Bought it with what I saved on toothpaste," Billy informed her solemnly.

Flora laughed loudly. They turned up a carpeted stairway.

"I'm giving you a swell private room for the present," Flora said. "Got special company downstairs. What can I bring you?" she added, unlocking a door and swinging it open.

They entered a large, richly furnished room. Billy gave his order. Flora left, closing the door. It slammed—and rebounded open an inch or so.

"Listen, Billy!" spoke up Lola quickly. "I'm getting tired of you being like this all the time. If you—"

"I aint like this all the time!" argued Billy hotly. "Sometimes I'm—worse."

"Well, anyway, I'm tired of it. Can't you quit?"

"Sure I can quit. I've quit hundreds o' times. Easiest thing—"

The door was shoved open. Flora's smiling face reappeared. It seemed that she had forgotten just what Billy had ordered. He repeated it; Flora disappeared again—and this time the door did not snap open.

WITH a hasty glance out of one of the windows, Billy turned to Lola. For a silent moment he looked down at her—the girl he loved more than life itself, and the girl whom, something told him, he had lost.

"Who'd you go to see in the Jacobi Building?" he demanded in a low whisper. "Dr. Jacobi?"

A hot retort flashed to Lola's lips, but she stifled it. She knew that Billy's feeling was no mere jealousy. Billy would gladly sacrifice his own happiness if that would insure hers. And he had been hurt too much already.

"I went to return a book to Dr. Jacobi—and to say good-by," she said gently.

"Then I don't understand it! When you came out, you were followed by a

bird named Gleazon. Agent West pointed him out to me the other night. He—"

"And who is Gleazon?" Lola asked quickly.

"He works for Yut Doy. He's a crook—a bad one."

"But why should anyone, working for Yut Doy, follow me from Dr. Jacobi's office? You must be mistaken, Billy!"

"I'm not! He probably followed us there. Anyway, I saw him trailing you when you came out. And when we were on our way, I spotted him behind us in a brown coupé."

"That's why you had the driver circle back toward town?"

"Yes. I wanted to be sure he was following us. And if he was, I wanted to ditch him. Well, I'm sure he was following; but I'm not so sure—"

BILLY checked himself and turned away from Lola as there came a brisk rap on the door; then it was shoved open. Flora came in with a bottle, glasses, cracked ice, and ginger-ale. Billy handed her a bill, got his change, and Flora left.

This time Billy locked the door. He showed Lola the change Flora had given him.

"When it comes to taking money, that woman has no brakes!" he whispered. "But she's got an automatic clutch—and syncro-mesh in both hands. If we don't show results pretty soon, we're going to be called on our expense accounts."

"If others have tried for two years to get Yut Doy, there should be no kick on our trying for two weeks," Lola pointed out.

"Maybe not. But I'm getting tired of playing the souse." He pointed to the bottle of gin Flora had brought. "You'd better pour most of those headaches—and heartaches—down the sewer. Flora is darned cute. The way she pulled that old trick of slamming the door so it wouldn't catch—while she listened in!"

"I tumbled to that at once," Lola reminded him. "Billy, now that Dad is on the job, Yut Doy's days are numbered. They've probably dug up some of Yut Doy's Eastern connections, and Dad is coming out here to clinch the case."

"I hope that's it. But what'n thunder did he mean by that reference to the 'Tribe of the Tiger?' Old Yut Doy has a look in his eye like a nice dyspeptic tiger himself. H'm! I never heard of that lodge. Did you ask Customs Agent West about it?"

"I did, of course. He has never heard of it. But you can depend on it, Dad knows," Lola added loyally.

"And what he doesn't know, we'll try to find out," Billy concluded. "Yut Doy is here this morning. Some deal is on. If Gleazon didn't follow us—"

Gleazon, at that moment, was downstairs in a private room talking with Yut Doy. Gleazon's face was too white, his eyes too brilliant; but back of those eyes was a brain that had been warped by drugs and sharpened by a life of crime.

"I tailed the dame from Jacobi's office, see?" Gleazon said in his nervous, jerky manner. "At first I didn't make the bozo waitin' in the taxi for her. After they shook me, I remembered seein' them here at night. They'd been headin' this way, so I took a chance they'd bust out here after losin' me, an' I come on out, see?"

"I didn't rap to Flora, but I got from her that Miss Shannon an' her buddy are upstairs. He's supposed to be soused. I don't believe it. That girl wouldn't team up with a gin-hound. An' the man would have to be some guy she knew she could trust. So he's a dick. Prob'ly a Secret Service hound. That means you got two Secret Service agents here, Doy; an' they damn' sure didn't come here for the rest-cure!"

"I couldn't get Jacobi on the wire to report to him. I knew you had a deal on. So I thinks I'd better give you the lay. An' there you are!"

YUT DOY nodded slowly, leaned back in his chair and took a slow puff on the cigarette in his long jade holder. Yut Doy never did anything hurriedly.

His hard, bright eyes glittering with envy and hatred, Gleazon watched the yellow man. Gleazon wanted to feel that he was better than this slant-eyed Oriental, but he knew he wasn't. Yut Doy had an uncannily clever criminal mind. He had money. He wielded a power that by its ruthlessness had caused him to be both hated and feared by his own people as well as by the Americans. So Gleazon took Yut Doy's money and gave him loyal service according to his code.

Smoke writhing from his broad, flaring nostrils, Yut Doy knocked the ash from his cigarette, and rested a hand on the table. Yut Doy's hands always gave Gleazon a creepy feeling. His face was smooth, his eyes alive, his bristly black hair showed no sign of gray; but his queer, withered hands were the hands of an old, old man. On the third finger of

Yut Doy's left hand was a jade ring. Gleazon had never observed it closely, but something about the jade setting suggested the eye of a great cat.

"Look at a bamboo hedge from afar off and it appears impregnable," said Yut Doy presently; "draw near, and the way through becomes plain. So we must look into this matter carefully, and at once. Go tell Flora to pay Miss Shannon's driver and dismiss him. Meet me back here in a few minutes."

Gleazon did as directed. . . . He did not have long to wait for Yut Doy.

"*Haie!*" breathed Yut Doy. "You were right! The white man is as sober as you are! The two are talking in whispers—and talking about *me!* Apparently they know about the transaction to come off here this morning. That is why they are here."

"The hell you say!" gasped Gleazon. "Then we—"

With an unhurried gesture of his wrinkled hand, Yut Doy silenced the white man.

"There are times," he said presently, smoke writhing from his nostrils, his voice unhurried, vibrant with sinister power, "when one must go far around and walk softly; there are other times—when one must *strike like a tiger!*"

Gleazon made no response. His white face was tense, his glittering eyes on Yut Doy.

"Dr. Jacobi has acted the fool. He has placed all of us in danger. The time has come when you must decide whether you go my way, or if you choose to follow him."

"You can count on me, Doy!" Gleazon shot out promptly. "But listen! That Shannon dame is dynamite. Her old man—"

"The girl is very pretty," Yut Doy went on as if Gleazon had not spoken. "But—if you strike a tiger—and do not kill him—you become his prey. Therefore—"

Yut Doy said no more. The wrinkled hand with the jade ring moved in a slow gesture that was more terribly significant than any words could be.

CHAPTER III

DURING the years Hubert Cragmont had been dodging the police in various parts of the world, he had squirmed out of many tight places; but never before had he needed his iron nerve as

much as when he saw the full import of that letter from the U. S. Secret Service. After he had conquered the panicky dismay that at first swept over him, his Yankee humor came to his help. Here certainly was a queer break! Until then, every detail of their carefully laid plan had been carried out without a hitch. Professor Enslow was out of the way. He, Hubert Cragmont, was ready to impersonate him and reap the profits. The only man he feared was Shannon.

And Jim Shannon was standing right there in the room—sent by the Secret Service *with a letter of introduction!*

THE fingers of his left hand toying thoughtfully with his short black beard, Cragmont looked up at the Secret Service man. Jim Shannon was taking a leisurely draw on his old pipe, and was looking around the room as if slightly awed by the elegance of the quarters Enslow had chosen. If Shannon intended to give that impression, he made a mistake. Cragmont was not deceived. He saw now that this "doddering old man" manner was just a clever pose. Shannon's eyes behind the thick glasses were sharp and intelligent. His mouth was shrewd, his jaw that of the born fighter; and the loose suit did not hide from Cragmont's searching gaze the dismaying fact that here was a man who had a terrific punch to back up anything he started.

Cragmont's mind flashed for a second to the automatic he had put in the table drawer; then he ventured to look up at Duk Kee. The Oriental's broad face was like a mask, save for his shifting bronze eyes that seemed to be looking everywhere at once. A better actor even than Cragmont, the Oriental's manner betrayed not the slightest emotion of any kind.

Cragmont pretended to read the letter again while he did some swift thinking. Dr. Jacobi, in the adjoining room, would take care of Enslow. Duk Kee was crafty and dependable. He, Hubert Cragmont, had been mistaken many times for Professor Enslow. What was to be feared—even from Jim Shannon?

Cragmont stood up. He smiled at Shannon—but for some reason he could not bring himself to shake hands with this man he instinctively feared.

"This is quite a surprise, Mr. Shannon," he said cordially. "A most pleasant surprise! Won't you be seated? I'm eager to know why you have been sent here."

"Naturally," Shannon agreed. He stepped to the table, emptied his pipe in the ash-tray, and sat down.

"Oh, by the way," said Cragmont, "this man is my secretary and body-guard—Duk Kee. Duk Kee, this is Mr. James Shannon, of the United States Secret Service. I suppose he has been sent here to protect us on our trip to Washington."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Duk Kee. "I am ver' glad to meet Mr. Shannon. And your coming is—ah—most opportune. Professor Enslow and I were just discussing this radiogram we received from Shanghai last night. It appears that he is in danger. Permit me to read it to you!"

Duk Kee picked up the radiogram. While he read it aloud, Cragmont listened closely. He felt a thrill of admiration for Duk Kee's clever move. He, Cragmont, had not read the message, and Duk Kee knew it.

The radiogram finished, Duk Kee laid it back on the table, bent over quickly and picked something off the floor. "Your pencil, sir," he said, handing Cragmont the gold pencil that had fallen from Enslow's hand. "And if you will be so good as to finish your orange-juice—"

Warned by something in Duk Kee's tone, Cragmont downed his squeamishness and drank the orange-juice that Enslow had left. Duk Kee took the empty glass and carried it to the bathroom. He started to close the door.

"Professor Enslow!" Shannon spoke up quickly. "Instruct your man to stay right here while we talk!"

"Certainly," Cragmont agreed. "I was about to ask your permission to do that. Duk Kee has been with me a long time, and he has my entire confidence. Whatever you have to say can be said before him. You hear, Duk Kee?"

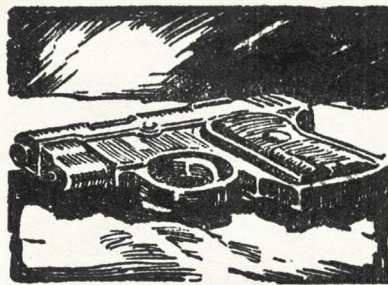
Duk Kee had heard. Smiling, he came back and sat down near the table.

SHANNON pointed to the radiogram. "That the last word you have had from your people in Shanghai?"

"It is," Cragmont answered.

"All right. Here's the situation: Affairs in China have been such that Washington has taken more than the usual interest in what has been going on. It appears that Washington knew that you were being sent to America on a secret mission. Correct?"

"It is!" Cragmont admitted, frowning. "But I'm surprised that you know it!"



"It's our business to know things, Professor. But as to your mission here, I know little except that it is of vital concern to China, and possibly to America. Anyway, the American Government realizes the necessity of giving you protection while here. Should anything happen to you—well, you understand what complications it might lead to."

"Certainly, Mr. Shannon. But—in what way am I in danger? Who is it that threatens me? And how long have I been having the benefit of your protection?"

"The answers to those questions will have to wait—awhile," Shannon told him, much to Cragmont's disappointment. "It was suggested that I meet you in Chicago and from there—"

"In Chicago? Then how'd you get here?"

Shannon shrugged. "When I have a job to do, I don't wait for it to come to me. So I grabbed a fast plane and got out here. I felt certain that if you were in danger, the most likely place to hunt for it was right here. Did you see anybody on the boat who appeared to be interested in you?"

"No, but—"

"See anybody acting suspiciously since you arrived?"

"No, but—"

Shannon got to his feet.

"Then I'm going to take a look over the guests. I'll begin with your next-door neighbors. Have you noticed who's in the adjoining rooms?"

With a terrific effort Cragmont covered his agitation. His voice was casual.

"I haven't paid any attention to the other guests, Mr. Shannon. I appreciate your zeal, but I'm sure there's no need for any such activity. Besides, if there is any danger, it is my nature to run away from it. We were to leave on the Pacific Limited at eleven o'clock. Let's go now, and—"

"And be followed," Shannon cut in. "No, this is my work, and I'll do it my



way. While you're getting ready to leave, I'll see who your neighbors are."

As if preparing for rough work, Shannon jerked off his glasses, put them into a case, and slipped the case into his pocket. Putting on his hat, he started for the hall door.

Silently Cragmont jerked the table drawer open. He was reaching for his automatic when Shannon stopped. He turned as if to say something—when suddenly the room resounded with a loud rapping on the hall door.

Shannon seemed as much startled as Cragmont or Duk Kee. He flashed a questioning look to first one, then the other. Then he opened the door. In walked Dr. Henri Jacobi!

"Well!" gasped Jacobi, reaching for Shannon's hand. "I—I didn't expect to see you here! And—*Enslow!* It really is you!" He shook hands with Cragmont. "When I got your radiogram, I could hardly believe I was seeing right. Man, it's good to see you again!"

Shannon greeted Dr. Jacobi cordially, making no effort to conceal his surprise. Cragmont stared in amazement an instant, then covered that admirably.

"Dr. Jacobi!" he exclaimed. "Of course! I didn't know you at first! You've changed a great deal since we met last in Shanghai. So you know Mr. Shannon?"

"I'm proud to say I do, Enslow! But,"—Jacobi smiled at Shannon,—"naturally I'm wondering why he is here. Are you under arrest for something?"

"Nothing like that, Doctor!" Cragmont laughed. "I'm here on a secret mission for certain Chinese government officials. Shannon has been assigned to—"

"Better not discuss that, Enslow," Shannon broke in quietly. "Just a matter of policy, of course. I know Dr. Jacobi and have confidence in him. Dr. Jacobi, I'm glad you are here. Apparently you have met Enslow. Take a good look at this man. Is he really Professor Joseph Enslow, the Oriental authority?"

Dr. Jacobi looked startled for an instant; then he laughed.

"Of course it is! Man, you had me worried for an instant! Why did you ever ask such a question?"

"Another matter of policy," muttered Shannon. "Many things could have happened to Professor Enslow between the time he left Shanghai—and now."

"From which I gather that his mission is of vital importance, and that powerful interests may try to interfere with it," Dr. Jacobi said thoughtfully. "I suspect, Mr. Shannon, that you are here to act as a bodyguard for Enslow. —Enslow, what are your immediate plans?"

Cragmont nodded toward Duk Kee, who had gone to pack.

"To get out of here as quickly as possible. We're leaving on the Pacific Limited at—" he began.

"You're doing nothing of the kind!" Jacobi broke in. "Man, don't you realize that I haven't seen you for over two years? You simply must give me some of your time. Why, I could talk for an hour with you just on your latest brochure—'*Ancient Chinese Methods of Acupuncture!*' Now, here's my suggestion: cancel your reservations and spend the day as my guest. I want to show you San Francisco at its best. We even can motor down the Santa Clara Valley. Blossom-time there beats cherry-time in Japan, as I told you when we were in Tokyo. We'll lunch at some quiet roadside inn, and you can catch the Overland Limited tonight. I know that will suit Mr. Shannon better than hurrying right out of the city. —By the way, Mr. Shannon, Miss Lola was in my office this morning."

"That so? Then that explains why I couldn't get her on the phone."

"She said something about leaving the city. Is she going with you and Enslow?"

"Maybe," Shannon grunted.

"But you can spend the day here with us?" Jacobi urged.

"Maybe. And maybe not. I want to use the telephone first."

Shannon went to the telephone, took down the receiver and asked for "outside." Apparently he was paying no attention to the men behind him.

Cragmont and Jacobi exchanged meaning looks.

"I'm mighty glad you dropped in," Cragmont said.

"It's mutual," Jacobi responded.

"I'll be glad to spend the day as you suggest if you think that wise. Shannon says, however, that I am in danger here. He was about to investigate the guests in the adjoining rooms."

"Indeed!" Jacobi arched his heavy brows. "I know Mr. Shannon is a very zealous officer. You'll be entirely safe with him."

"Yes, no doubt. Have you any other suggestions?"

"I've been thinking that both you and Mr. Shannon might find my laboratory interesting," Jacobi answered, looking steadily into Cragmont's anxious eyes. "You know, I have always dabbled more in science than in medicine. Lately I have been experimenting with gas—lethal gas. And I have finally produced a gas that I believe will soon be generally adopted for the execution of criminals."

A startled look flashed into Cragmont's eyes. He glanced over his shoulder. Shannon was busy at the telephone.

"It is odorless and colorless," Jacobi went on quietly, his dark eyes glittering like burnished metal. "It can be administered without the condemned person knowing it. And the results are—quite satisfactory."

Criminal though he was, Cragmont appeared shocked by the meaning in Jacobi's words. He stared into Jacobi's burning eyes, speechless.

Suddenly Shannon slammed up the receiver. He strode to Cragmont's side.

"Can't get my party!" he growled. "Guess I may as well fall in with your plans, Doctor. Heard you say something about going to your office. Let's go! I'd like to see your laboratory."

CHAPTER IV

"**L**OLA," whispered Billy, a worried frown on his big homely face, "I don't like the *feel* of things here at the Skylark. Even if we managed to ditch Gleazon—and I doubt if we did—something tells me that you and I are in for trouble. And trouble here with Yut Doy isn't going to be exactly pleasant."

Lola Shannon nodded. She liked the way Billy always told her the truth instead of trying to shield her from worry.

"I think I'll use that phone and call up the hotel," she said, glancing at her wrist-watch. "Dad is in town by now, and he'll want to know where I am. No doubt he has already called the hotel and left a message for me."

"You'd better stay away from that phone!" Billy said quickly. "The Chief won't worry. And somebody downstairs might listen in. I'm going to take another look outside."

He stepped to the window and looked down into the yard of the Skylark.

"All peaceful here, Blue-eyes," he whispered. "The California sun is shining; the breeze from the Pacific is kissing the leaves of the emerald pepper trees; and over yonder in the sad sand dunes, a herd of evaporated cows are getting fed up to give another batch of contented milk. Now if—"

"Billy," Lola interrupted, smiling, "the way you talk, I believe you did take a swig of that gin Flora brought. Maybe—"

Lola checked herself quickly as Billy flung up a warning hand.

"You hear it?" he whispered, looking at the ceiling. "Maybe I just imagined it. Sounds like some one up there."

"Well, what of it? Just some one in the room above."

"But there is no room above this, Lola. Just the attic. You know, something about this joint reminds me of a place I ran across once that had been fitted up especially for blackmail purposes. Maybe Yut Doy has done the same here—fixed every room so he can look in, and hear everything that is said."

"Gee! You're cheerful, Billy!"

"Always best to imagine the worst—then go ahead. And I'm going now. West thinks a couple loads of dope came up from the border last night, and that the birds who brought them are to meet Yut Doy here this forenoon. I'm going out in the hall to cruise around and see if I can stumble onto that meeting. If I'm stopped, I'll remember that I'm supposed to be spificated—can't find my room, or something. Meanwhile, Blue-eyes, you keep your door locked—and don't drink all the gin!" Billy picked up Lola's handbag and hefted it. "Where's that deadly little automatic you usually carry in this beautiful sack?"

"None of your business!" Lola told him, smiling. "I can get it quickly if I need it. You take care of yourself—"

TH**E**R**E** was a sharp rap on the door. Billy and Lola exchanged startled glances. Remembering he had locked the door, Billy hastened to open it.

Flora breezed in, her mercenary gray eyes looking colder than ever in contrast with her painted smile.

"Sorry to bother you, but I came to move you to another room. You see, a couple o' the boss' friends dropped in for some business with him, an' they always use this room. I'll fix you two up better'n this, and it won't cost you a cent more. Nice room—shower bath an' everything. A cold shower will help you get over it, Billy!" Flora's laugh rang harshly in the room.

"When I get over this one," Billy said, raising his right hand solemnly, "I'm goin' to—hic—*get on a good one!* Of course we'll move to accommodate you. Let's go! I got no—hic—baggage but a wife an' a bottle. Don't forget the—bottle!"

They left the room and followed Flora down the hall toward the rear. Flora got out her keys, unlocked a door on their right, and flung it open.

"Make yourselves at home here," she said with a wave of her jeweled hand. "Play the piano—do anything you want to. The people next door won't bother you if you don't bother them. Want anything more from the bar? No? Well, all right; I'll leave you. 'By!"

FLORA left, closing the door. Billy heard her humming a tune as she went down the hall toward the stairs.

"What a break!" whispered Lola. "Just as good as told us that Yut Doy was to meet his two men in the room we just left!"

"Yes," Billy answered absent-mindedly. He was glancing quickly around the room. It was a beautiful place—soft, blue-toned carpet, shining satin-covered chairs, a Chinese teak table with a gold cloth, blue-and-gold cushions on the chaise-longue. Through a draped doorway was revealed a short hall ending in a bathroom with tiled floor, built-in tub, and a dressing-table with three-part mirror and an array of gold-topped jars.

In the opposite corner of the room was a piano with a blue-and-gold cloth on which were two beautiful Fuchien vases. Directly opposite the hall door, between the draped windows, was a fireplace. On the mantel was a small gold clock, its musical ticking sounding strangely loud in the otherwise silent room.

In the wall at the left of the piano was a door partly covered by Cantonese drapes of blue trimmed with gold tassels.

"A woman's room," whispered Billy. He nodded toward the piano. "Play something while I look around—something noisy."

Lola laid her handbag on the teak table, went to the piano and struck the opening bars of a lively march.

A moment later, Billy came to her side. The music stopped abruptly.

"I'm almost ashamed of my playing, since I've been hearing Dr. Jacobi," Lola said softly. "I never knew before how beautiful music could be. Dr. Jacobi—"

"Yeah?" Billy remarked sardonically. He put his lips close to her ear.

"Keep playing!" he whispered. "*Yut Doy is in the next room!*"

LOLA started, missed a note, then played on. "Alone?" she asked.

"Alone as far as I can see. Keep playing for a while. I'm going to look around. Now and then stop and say something as if I were right beside you."

Lola nodded. Billy went to the hall door. The latch was on, but as a further precaution he shot the night-bolt. The only other door he found was in the big combination bathroom and dressing-room. This was already bolted.

There were two large closets, each containing an array of gowns and other wearing apparel. The windows were screened, the screens all securely hooked.

Satisfied that he and Lola were alone, but feeling strangely uneasy, Billy went back, dropped to his knees at the drapery-covered door, and again looked through the key-hole.

Directly in range of his vision, not far from the door, was a small table on which stood a glass ash-tray. Yut Doy had seated himself at the table. The long-nailed finger of his withered right hand was unhurriedly knocking the ash from the cigarette in his jade holder, which he held in his left hand—an odd trait Billy had observed before among Chinese smokers.

Suddenly, above the sound of Lola's playing, Billy heard a knock. Yut Doy's hard eyes flashed to the hall door; his flaring nostrils tensed. Then a look of relief came over his smooth yellow face.

"You are late," he accused. "What delayed you?"

"Plenty!" the caller jerked out nervously. "I couldn't find Dr. Jacobi. But I got the money. Say, Doy, did you know that Shannon, of the Secret Service, was on your trail?"

"I didn't know it," Yut Doy answered unemotionally, "but I'm not surprised. Sit down."

A man stepped to the table and sat down facing Yut Doy. He wore a gray

suit that seemed to heighten the pallor of his face. His lips twitched; his little eyes were feverishly bright. It was the man Billy knew as Gleazon.

Yut Doy drew slowly on his cigarette. He put his head back and blew the smoke toward the ceiling.

"What is this you say about Shannon, of the Secret Service?" he demanded then.

"Well, it's like this, see?" Gleazon jerked out. "I go to Dr. Jacobi's office for the money. The Doc aint there. Maryn says she don't know where he is just that minute, but she gave me an earful."

"Talk English!" growled Yut Doy. "She gave you—what?"

"She gave me the low-down, see? Doc had gone to the San Francisco hotel to meet the guy from China—a professor or something. He—"

"Professor Joseph Enslow?"

"That's the geek. An' there, who does he run smack into but—Shannon."

"What was Shannon doing there?"

"Why, the Secret Service has sent him out here to act as bodyguard for this bird Enslow. See?"

Yut Doy nodded. He was looking at the ceiling again.

"I see trouble ahead," he muttered presently. "Serious trouble. And all Jacobi's fault because of his attentions to Shannon's daughter. She no doubt learned from him—of our plans. . . . Well, give me the money!"

Gleazon took a package from his pocket. "One hundred grand," he said, tossing the parcel onto the table. "I made Maryn count it."

UNHURRIEDLY, Yut Doy laid his cigarette on the ash-tray. His long fingers slipped the rubber bands from the package and opened it, disclosing a large bundle of yellow notes.

"I am ready," he said, and began counting the money.

Gleazon arose and passed out of Billy's sight.

In the grip of a strange spell, Billy peered through the keyhole at Yut Doy's repulsive hands slowly going through the money note by note. What in heaven's name did all this mean? This talk about Dr. Jacobi? Surely they did not mean the Dr. Henri Jacobi that he and Lola knew so well.

Billy looked around in the room behind him. Lola was softly playing the "Melody in F." Into Billy's dazed mind



flashed the staggering realization that Gleazon could have meant no other than the Dr. Jacobi they knew, the man whom Lola had gone to see that morning, the man whose playing of that very melody had one time so captivated Lola!

The sound of some one rapping on the hall door of the other room drew Billy's attention. Yut Doy had divided the money into two piles, slipped both piles into his pockets, and called out loudly: "Come in!"

Two men stepped up to the table. Billy could not see their faces. There was some talk that he did not catch; then Yut Doy spoke:

"Everything is satisfactory, so far as the goods are concerned. But I don't want the stuff delivered to the usual place. I have received reliable information that the United States Secret Service is honoring me by taking an interest in my little affairs. Nothing to worry about—yet; but I want you to deliver both cars to my place up the river. I will pay you half the agreed sum now," he concluded, taking part of the money out of his pocket. "The balance—"

"You'll pay all now, as usual," one of the men broke in, his voice low, smooth, with a foreign accent. "Otherwise—"

The rest was said too low for Billy to hear. He pressed closer to the keyhole, tucking the door-drape about his head to drown the sound of Lola's playing.

Lola recalled suddenly that Billy had told her to stop now and then and speak as if he were standing beside her. She stopped, looked around—and for a single horrible instant was paralyzed.

Not two yards away were three men—between Lola and the open closet door. Two of the men had automatics. They were moving swiftly upon Billy.

The third man wore a gray suit. His white face was tense, his lips twitching, his little eyes aglitter. In his long white hands he held a twisted silk scarf.

As if enraged because he had been discovered, Gleazon's lips drew back in a

wolfish snarl. He raised the scarf, and leaped at Lola just as she screamed a warning to Billy.

Gleazon expected Lola to try to get away; so he rushed headlong at her. It would be easy, he thought, to slip that twisted scarf around this girl's pretty white neck and choke her.

But Lola didn't back away. As she slipped off the piano stool, she bent over, turned, and caught Gleazon on her right hip. The force of his rush furnished most of the power; Lola furnished the skill. Swift as the lash of a whip she snapped Gleazon off the floor, over her head—sent him crashing into the wall.

Without even a glance at the man, Lola sprang back. Her automatic seemed to leap magically into her hand. Her finger on the trigger, she faced the two other men.

One of those men was on the floor struggling with Billy. The other was staring in amazement at the crumpled body of Gleazon on the floor by the wall.

Suddenly ripping out an oath, this man whirled on Lola.

"Drop it!" shouted Lola.

Ignoring the order, the man raised his automatic, and sprang at the girl as if to crush her with a single blow.

Lola fired—but the impact of the bullet did not halt the man's rush. His heavy body hurled her backward against the piano, and the barrel of his weapon struck her a stunning blow on the head. As he sank to the floor, he dragged her down with him.

Struggling to rise, Lola caught a glimpse of Billy and the other man. They had got to their feet. Billy lashed out with his fist, striking his assailant a terrific blow in the face. The man staggered backward, struck the corner of the piano, and fell across Lola, knocking her to the floor again. Her head struck the oak floor between the carpet and the wall. Through the sudden roaring in her ears she heard Billy shout something. Dark figures seemed to be rushing at her through the blinding lights. One of them, just emerging from the closet, she recognized as Yut Doy.

CHAPTER V

"HAVE a seat, Mr. Shannon," Dr. Jacobi invited cordially. "Use my telephone there if you want to try again to locate Miss Lola. Direct outside connection."

Shannon sat down and got out his old pipe. There was an expression of uneasiness on his rugged face as he regarded Jacobi. Unable to locate Lola, he had directed that Professor Enslow's baggage be checked at the ferry station; then they had all driven in Jacobi's car to the latter's office.

There, claiming that they had urgent confidential business to discuss, Cragmont and Duk Kee had remained in the music-room while Shannon and Jacobi went to the latter's private office—Shannon intending to try again to get in touch with Lola and Billy.

"You have a fine lay-out here, Doctor," Shannon remarked, searching his pockets for tobacco.

Dr. Jacobi nodded, smiling.

"I try to keep up. Chemistry—electricity—radio—all interest me far more than medicine. In my laboratory I have several interesting inventions of my own I'll be glad to show you. Meanwhile, I'll step out and speak to my secretary while you telephone."

Shannon made no objection to that. He saw Jacobi close the hall door behind him; then he lifted the receiver and quietly called the office of Customs Agent West.

Dr. Jacobi hurried down his private hall, opened a door on his right and stepped into a large, softly lighted room.

Cragmont and Duk Kee were standing by one of the windows. As Jacobi entered, Cragmont jerked around. Scowling, he hurried toward Jacobi.

With a quick gesture, Jacobi silenced him. He stepped to a table and picked up the French telephone.

"Any report, Maryn?"

"Yes. Gleazon was here for the package. I gave it to him."

"Did he say anything about Miss Shannon?"

"He said he left her at the ferry station. She had a ticket to Washington and had inquired how long she would have to wait for the Pacific Limited."

"Good! Any word from Yut Doy?"

"No. And I couldn't get him on the phone. So I told Gleazon what you phoned me awhile ago about Shannon showing up so unexpectedly."

"That was right, Maryn. And now listen: I left Shannon at the ferry station with the rest of the party. I'm going back in a few minutes and will go down the private elevator—the way I came in. Meanwhile I shall be with Leong—and must not be disturbed."

As Jacobi broke the connection, he looked up to find Cragmont at his side.

"Listen, Doc!" growled Cragmont. "This is a hell of a mess! I can't go on to Washington with Shannon dogging my steps! And the job Duk Kee is to do there—we couldn't get away with that, with Shannon—"

"I thought you understood that Shannon is not going with you," Jacobi cut in quietly.

"Yes, I got what you hinted at. But good God, Doc! You can't do that here! The Secret Service knows that Shannon is in San Francisco. Maybe we were followed here—to your office! You don't dare—"

"I dare to do whatever becomes necessary!" Jacobi snapped with sudden anger. "When anyone gets between me and what I have planned—as Shannon has—I merely eliminate that person. Don't be foolish! You have come all the way from Shanghai to carry out this scheme; you need the money, and I need the share that goes to me. Even if there were no money in sight, we don't dare fail the Tribe of the Tiger now. Yut Doy is causing me trouble as it is; if we blunder in this, there's no telling what the consequences will be. Compared with what we have to gain, and what we stand to lose if we fail, Shannon is not worth *that!*" Jacobi snapped his fingers.

"I guess you're right," Cragmont admitted slowly. "Think he is suspicious?"

"No. Why should he be?"

"I wish I knew! Damn him! Yes, I guess we have to do—what you say. With Jim Shannon snooping around, I wouldn't be safe in America—even after the stunt we pulled off this morning."

"Now you're showing sense!" Jacobi approved. "And here's another thing: Yut Doy and I have fooled the Customs for a long time; but sooner or later they're going to put Shannon on our trail—if they haven't done it already. Getting Shannon out of the way now will kill two birds with one—whiff of gas."

"Well, I'm ready," said Cragmont. "What do you want Duk Kee to do?"

"All you need to do, Duk Kee," Jacobi said, "is to stand back and be ready to help Leong if he needs it—which he won't. I'll go and tell Leong now. Then I'd better hurry back to Shannon."

Jacobi swung about and strode briskly to the door, opened it—and stepped back with a startled exclamation.

Jim Shannon walked in.



"Pardon me, Doctor," he said, smiling. "Thought I'd better join you. My job, you know, is to keep an eye on Professor Enslow."

"Yes, of course!" Jacobi managed a smile. "I—I was just going after you. Now, if you'll pardon me, I'll speak to my secretary a moment. I'll be right back."

Jacobi left. Shannon strolled over to where Cragmont and Duk Kee stood by the telephone-stand.

"Well," Shannon said, addressing Cragmont, "as my affairs have turned out, I'm glad you decided to wait for the Overland Limited tonight. And I think that, if you really were in any danger, we have dodged it. So you may enjoy our day with Dr. Jacobi. You seem worried."

"Naturally," returned Cragmont. "The commission intrusted to me is of such tremendous importance! I'd feel easier, Mr. Shannon, if I knew just why you were sent to accompany me. Who took up my case with the Secret Service?"

SHANNON took out his old pipe, looked thoughtfully at the empty bowl for a moment, then put it back in his pocket. He glanced at the door.

"I'll tell you about that later, Professor. Before Jacobi comes back, I want to ask you something: Our information was that you were to be put out of the way, and that a man who bears a close resemblance to you was to take your place. Now, have you noticed any such person since you left Shanghai?"

"Great Scott, no!" exclaimed Cragmont with an amazement that was not all assumed.

"Have you, Duk Kee?" Shannon went on.

"I have not, sir," Duk Kee declared emphatically. "And I am sure that if such a person had been on the boat, I would have seen him."

"No doubt," admitted Shannon. "But here's the most important thing: after this unknown person had taken your

place, he was to go on to Washington. There, while posing as a representative of the Chinese Government, he was to commit some atrocity that would cause grave international complications, maybe plunge America into war. From what you know of the situation in China, have you any idea what that atrocity would be? You see—"

THE hall door opened. Dr. Jacobi stepped in. "All ready," he said.

"Just a minute, Doctor!" said Shannon. "Come on in—and shut the door."

Jacobi flashed Cragmont a surprised look, but he did as Shannon asked.

"I think I'll let you three go to your laboratory while I do a little work," Shannon said. "I don't know anything about science, anyway. And I have a big job on my hands. Professor,—and you, Duk Kee,—go ahead and answer my question: have you heard any talk that would give you an idea what this unknown criminal intends to do in Washington?"

"Not the slightest!" declared Cragmont.

"Nor I," added Duk Kee. "I can't even imagine who, in my country, would plan any such thing, sir."

"It was planned," said Shannon, looking at Duk Kee, "by a secret society called the 'Tribe of the Tiger.'"

"The clan of the Eight Tigers, I suppose!" echoed Duk Kee, wide-eyed. "But sir, that ancient criminal society passed out of existence years ago! There must be some great mistake!"



Shannon turned to Cragmont. "What do you think, Professor? Surely you have heard of the—"

"I have heard of that society," Cragmont intervened, frowning; "but like Duk Kee, I understood that it was no longer in existence. I think there has been some mistake. Somebody has been having a nightmare."

"The name sounds like a nightmare!" Dr. Jacobi spoke up. "But if there is any such organization in existence, Leong will know it. Let's go see my laboratory, then we'll ask him. But we'll have to go slow and be very diplomatic. Leong is queer. And for all I know, he might belong to that Tiger bunch himself!"

"That's possible," Shannon agreed. "After all, I'd better go with you."

Jacobi and Cragmont hastened out. Shannon, just ahead of Duk Kee, took out his watch and carefully noted the time.

Jacobi kept up a running talk about nothing in particular as they went down the hall. When they stopped, Shannon saw no indication of a door—but Jacobi touched the apparently solid wall, and a door slid back, revealing a small elevator. All crowded in.

"You'd never suspect there was a door, or this lift," remarked Jacobi as he pressed a button which closed the doors and also started the cage going up. "The truth is I rarely take anyone to my laboratory. The secret door is just one of my electrical whims."

The elevator stopped automatically, and the door opened. They stepped out into a large room that was windowless, but brilliantly lighted by some means that Shannon could not discover. There were many tables and shelves—retorts and other apparatus of glass, shelves of bottles, racks of test-tubes and some electrical gadgets.

A bell rang. Shannon looked around to see a broad-faced Chinaman in white clothes turn quickly to where something in a copper kettle was simmering over a Bunsen burner. He saw a blackened, scarred hand shut off the gas-flame.

"That is Leong, my assistant," Dr. Jacobi spoke up. "Fine chap! Took post-graduate chemistry in Berlin. . . . You'll find him an interesting character."

Leong was walking up to meet them. Jacobi introduced him briefly.

"Interesting place," commented Shannon, getting out his empty pipe again. "What's in that copper thing up there shaped like a coffin?"



They looked around as Shannon pointed to where a large rectangular copper vat was suspended over a bed of glowing charcoal. A glass gooseneck curved from each end of the vat, ending in lead condensers.

"Leong, explain that to Mr. Shannon and Duk Kee," said Jacobi. "I want to show Enslow my new process for localizing mineral poisons in the human bloodstream. Come on, Professor!"

Dr. Jacobi and Cragmont turned quickly and walked away. Duk Kee stepped casually in front of Shannon, while Leong, bowing, touched Shannon's arm and motioned him toward the copper vat.

"It will be a pleasure, Mr. Shannon," said Leong, lifting his lip in a mirthless grin. "Not often do I have the chance to discuss our most interesting work with one intelligent enough to appreciate it."

Over his shoulder Shannon saw a swinging door close silently behind Jacobi and his companion. He put his cold pipe away. Walking between the two Chinese, Shannon allowed Leong to lead him toward the glowing vat that hung over the charcoal fire.

"Possibly you are familiar with Chinese wines," Leong said as they paused beside a work-table. "Before Prohibition, they were imported from China. Since Prohibition, our Chinese have missed their native wines. For instance—*Mui Kwei Lo*, which, translated, means *Dew of Roses* wine. Now of course, we do not intend to make the wine," Leong hastened to explain, "but

we are perfecting a process of making the essence—dew of roses. I will show you what we have accomplished so far."

Leong opened a drawer in the table. Duk Kee stepped back as if showing deference to the white man.

With his left hand Leong took a large towel from the drawer, uncovering an egg-shaped bottle of extremely thin glass partly full of a greenish fluid.

Still holding the towel in his left hand, Jacobi's assistant started to take the egg-shaped bottle out of the drawer.

"You will be astonished—and delighted—with the delicate fragrance of our essence, Mr. Shannon," Leong said. "After long experiment—*Haie!*"

With that cry Leong clapped the towel over his face and sprang aside. The glass bottle struck the table and shattered to bits.

Swift as the explosion of gas, a greenish vapor ballooned from the table.

Shannon, his body twisted, a gasping cry bursting from his lips plunged backward, striking Duk Kee, knocking him across the floor against a shelf of glassware.

Over the towel pressed against his mouth and nostrils Leong's eyes flew wide with sudden dismay. Snatching an automatic from his pocket, he sprang toward the white man.

Shannon, halfway to his knees, ducked swiftly beneath the gun and drove his fist into Leong's face. The Chinese was lifted clear of his feet. His body struck a small stand on which stood a large glass carboy in a swinging frame. Stand, carboy and Leong crashed against the brick base of the charcoal burner, smashing the glass carboy with explosive force.

AS the acid flew over Leong, he uttered a shriek of agony. Shannon, ignoring his own peril, bent over to drag Leong away—just as Duk Kee fired. The bullet passed over Shannon's bent head and smashed into the copper vat. Grabbing the screaming Leong by his hair, Shannon dragged him out of the pool of acid.

Again Duk Kee's pistol roared in the crowded laboratory. Shannon, his eyes blazing, leaped to one side. His Government .38 snapped down on the Oriental.

"Drop it!"

Duk Kee had the stubborn bravery of his race. He hesitated, his narrowed gaze meeting Shannon's squarely. But he also had sense, and the look in Shannon's

eyes warned him. His pistol clattered to the floor.

Shannon started forward, but halted abruptly. Above Leong's dying cries rose suddenly a frightful hissing sound. Jerking around, Shannon saw a swiftly growing cloud of steam above the charcoal bed. A pungent, sickening odor assailed his nostrils, stabbed his lungs, made him instantly reeling sick. Gasping, he staggered toward Duk Kee. He saw the Oriental's face whirling through the poisonous steam; then it vanished.

CONSCIOUSNESS returned to Shannon as swiftly as it had left. He found himself lying flat on the floor against the wall farthest from the charcoal burner. His head ached frightfully, his mouth and throat felt raw.

Weak, nauseated, he turned his head—and saw what had happened. Duk Kee's bullet, intended for Shannon's head, had struck the heavy copper vat. Acid of some kind had slowly leaked out onto the charcoal fire. Before he realized it, Shannon had inhaled some of the poisonous vapor. Now ventilators in the ceiling were rapidly sucking the steam from the laboratory, and the hiss of acid had died to a low hollow bubbling.

Groggily, Shannon sat up. Duk Kee lay on the floor near him, face down. Beyond, where Shannon had dragged him, lay Leong—a hideous sight—obviously dead.

Questions came tumbling through Shannon's mind, but he knew this was no time to sit still and think. He reached out, caught Duk Kee by the shoulder, and turned him over. Duk Kee moaned hoarsely and flung out his arms.

As he went limp again, his left hand fell across Shannon's knee. Getting out his handcuffs, Shannon snapped them over Duk Kee's wrists. As he did so, his gaze rested for an instant on the ring on the Oriental's finger. A strange look came over the Secret Service man's face as he regarded the jade ring more closely.

He sprang up, saw his service gun on the floor by Leong, pocketed it, grabbed Duk Kee by the collar, and started dragging him toward the door that he had seen close behind Jacobi.

He was within ten feet of the door when it silently swung open.

Shannon snapped back, gun in hand. Then a puzzled look came over his face. The door opened into a hall. But—*there was no one in the hall.*

The explanation flashed into Shannon's mind. Approaching the door he had intercepted an invisible ray of light from a photo-electric cell, and the "electric eye" had caused the door to open. He dragged Duk Kee on into the hall.

Duk Kee, breathing hoarsely, was alive, but apparently still out from the effects of the poison steam. Shannon's rugged strength had enabled him to stand it better than the Chinaman.

Shannon looked around. The hall ended in a stairway to the lower floor. There were no windows, no doors, no furniture, but the floor was covered by a deep rug. Light came from some source Shannon could not locate.

About to start down the hall, Shannon turned suddenly, bent over Duk Kee and twisted the jade ring from his finger. Slipping the ring into his pocket, the Secret Service man went silently down the hall to the stairs, and looked down.

At the foot of the stairs was a small landing, and a door. Shannon glanced back at Duk Kee. The Chinaman lay motionless.

Making no sound on the deep carpet, Shannon went quickly down the stairs. He saw now that the door slid back into a recess in the wall. He took hold of the knob and tried vainly to open the door.

OBVIOUSLY there was some hidden catch. Shannon looked the door over, but found nothing that helped him. He was about to try the knob again when he heard a muffled voice coming from the other side of the door:

"About time, Jacobi."

"Don't be impatient!" Dr. Jacobi complained. "Leong knows just what to do. And being a Chinaman, he'll take his time and make no mistake."

"But afterward—"

"I told you there'd be nothing afterward. When Leong and Duk Kee come down here, your friend Shannon will be in that big copper vat!"

"Good God, don't call Shannon my friend! I wish I'd never even heard of him! And there'll be some stir, Jacobi, when he turns up missing! Washington knows that Shannon was assigned to my case. They probably know that he got here this morning. We're not out of the woods yet!"

"Nonsense! We haven't seen Shannon. We know nothing about him. You're going on to Washington and do the job as planned. And reap the profits! After that, let the Secret Service ask all the

questions they please. You'll be gone—and I know nothing, even if they question me. Which they won't. Remember, I stand high with Shannon's daughter. I'll give her my heartfelt sympathy, assist her in every way to find her missing father." Jacobi laughed.

Shannon crouched against the door, scarcely breathing. His big fists were clenched until the knuckles were white. His face at that moment would have struck cold terror to Jacobi's heart could he have seen it.

No one in the room beyond the door spoke for a moment. There was a regular, dull sound as if some one was nervously pacing the floor.

Then the voice of the man Shannon knew as Professor Enslow:

"You made a hell of a mistake taking up with that girl, Jacobi! It'll end in disaster yet. How'd you leave Enslow?"

"If he isn't dead, he will be soon. Remember, I had to make it appear natural. All the more so, after I heard Shannon join you back there. Clever move of mine, walking right in. Eh?"

"Yes. But—"

The rest was drowned in the roar of an automatic. It came from behind Shannon, at the head of the stairs. A bullet smashed into the door panel within a hair's-breadth of Shannon's cheek.

The Secret Service man dropped to his knees, whirling around just in time to see a flash of flame through the smoke at the head of the stairs. Another lead slug struck the door. Knowing that he was in a trap, Shannon fired with more haste than aim.

Through the lifting smoke he saw Duk Kee sink to his knees. The gun dropped from the Chinaman's hands from which he had somehow slipped Shannon's handcuffs. He pitched forward, down the steps to Shannon's feet. A single glance at him told Shannon that Duk Kee would never tell anything now.

HE listened. From the room beyond the door came no sound. Standing to one side, Shannon pounded on the panel with his gun. "Open up!" he shouted.

There was no answer. Shannon backed off, drove his foot at the panel. It shook beneath the force of his kick. In a moment the lock was shattered. He threw the panel open. Gun in hand, he looked into Jacobi's office. But there was no one in sight. The hall door stood open.

Warily, Shannon stepped into the room, passed around the couch, and got



quickly to the door. There was no one in the hall, no sound.

For an instant Shannon hesitated. Had the two men fled? Or were they in hiding, waiting for Shannon to appear?

Gun in hand, Shannon ran silently down the hall to the front. The door to the reception-office was closed. Shannon flung it open, and jumped back. Nothing happened.

Cautiously he stepped inside. Maryn was gone. Papers were strewn over her desk. A vase of white roses had been upset. One of the desk drawers had been jerked clear out, lay on the floor.

Shannon stepped quickly to the desk and snatched up the telephone. He called the San Francisco hotel.

"Listen close and get this the first time!" he shouted at the clerk. "There's a man dying in Room 577. Get a doctor—two or three of them—a policeman—and break into that room. Arrest everybody you find there with the dying man! But get the doctors to work on him at once! This is a case of life or death, and seconds count!"

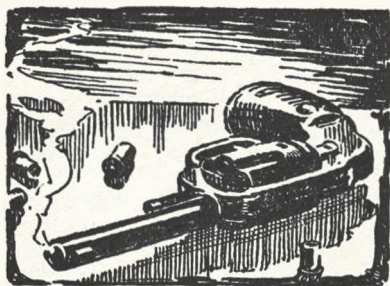
Shannon then called the police station. He talked with Captain Clark, whom he knew. He told briefly what had happened, and gave a description of the man who called himself Professor Enslow.

He did not mention Dr. Jacobi. That was a matter Jim Shannon was leaving for his personal attention.

He was turning away from the telephone when he heard a step in the outer hall. The door was thrown open. A heavy-set man with close-clipped gray mustache stamped in excitedly, saw Shannon hunched over his .38 and stopped short.

"Shut the door, West!" ordered Shannon. "See anything of Jacobi?"

Special Customs Agent West slammed the door and hastened up to Shannon. "Did I?" he exclaimed. "That's why I'm here! Jacobi and another man just went out, both arguing hot at each other, and both looking scared. Jacobi's secretary was just behind them. All three hopped



into Jacobi's car and beat it. You told me to wait for you, but—"

"You've done right. Wish you'd grabbed Jacobi and the other man, but you didn't know. Maybe I should have chased after them, but I thought it more important to get the doctors working on Enslow. Did you hear from Lola?"

Agent West, looking worried, shook his head. Shannon grabbed up the telephone, called Lola's hotel, and snapped out a question. Neither Lola nor Billy were in, nor had they left any message.

Shannon slammed up the receiver. "Listen, West! There's been trouble here. Two dead men. Police are coming. You stick right here until Captain Clark comes. Tell him I'll explain everything later. Right now the living are more important than the dead. As soon as Clark is on the job, you skip over to that San Francisco hotel. Room 577."

A few minutes later Jim Shannon was hurrying down the fifth-floor hall of the hotel. Before the door of 577 stood a man Shannon knew to be the house detective. Shannon identified himself, and went on into the room. There were four men in the room, and a girl in a nurse's uniform. A man who looked like a detective was questioning her.

Two men, apparently physicians, were working over a man in the bed. The fourth man was the hotel manager.

"Your telephone-call was referred to me," the manager explained to Shannon. "I got busy at once—as you see. The nurse claims that Dr. Jacobi called her here to care for a patient in a bad way with heart trouble. Says the man was to be moved to a hospital soon. But the doctors say it isn't a heart attack. They aren't sure just what it is, but think it is a case of poisoning of some kind. They say they think they can save him, but that five minutes more would have been too late."

"How was he registered?" Shannon asked.

"As J. W. Smith, of Shanghai, China."

Shannon stepped to the foot of the bed. One of the doctors was injecting something into the man's left arm. As he finished, and stepped back, Shannon checked a startled exclamation.

The man on the bed appeared to be not much over thirty. He had dark hair, a high forehead and heavy dark brows. His eyes were closed. His face was deathly pale—and smooth-shaven!

CHAPTER VI

"IT gave me quite a start at first—he looked so much like Cragmont," Shannon told Customs Agent West when, a few minutes later, they were in a taxi speeding for the Skylark. "And of course, the papers we found all bore Cragmont's name. The strong resemblance, and the papers, would have been such good identification that fingerprints probably wouldn't have been suggested. Result—the murdered Enslow would have been buried as the crook and counterfeiter Hubert Cragmont, making the world safe henceforth for said Cragmont. Clever scheme, eh?"

"Yes," West agreed quickly. "And it would have worked—except for you!"

"I merely happened to be on the job in time to save Enslow," shrugged Shannon. "Certain that the man was Enslow, I found evidence in the room that Jacobi had shaved off Enslow's beard. All routine stuff, West. The big thing is that Enslow won't die—and that now I know that the man who claims to be Enslow is Hubert Cragmont, the crook we've wanted for years.

"I hadn't the slightest suspicion of anything wrong when I walked into Enslow's room this morning," Shannon went on. "The other men on the job of watching Enslow reported that nothing had happened. We had a tip that the Tribe of the Tiger were going to take Enslow out of the game and put their own man in, and I was to—" Shannon broke off. He took out the jade ring he had twisted from Duk Kee's finger. "Say, did you ever see a ring like this before? No, it's not an ordinary jade ring! Take a good look at the setting."

West shook his head. "I've never seen one like it. Queer thing, eh?"

"I believe it's the ring of that Tiger outfit," Shannon explained. "The carving that looks like a cat's eye is what the Chinese call the green tiger eye. I noticed this ring on Duk Kee's finger this

morning when he fussed around the supposed Professor Enslow, handing him his gold pencil and orange-juice. It gave me a hunch, and I began to watch Duk Kee. I didn't yet suspect the supposed Enslow; and of course, I never dreamed that Dr. Jacobi was mixed up in the plot.

"But when we went up to Jacobi's laboratory and they left me with the two Chinese, I got suspicious. When Leong pulled out a glass bottle that looked like a hand-grenade, I filled my lungs—and when he smashed the gas bomb, I blew the fumes away from my face while throwing myself backward. At that, they almost got me!" Shannon concluded. "I hope you're right in thinking that Jacobi and Cragmont headed for the Skylark to warn Yut Doy! If we can grab them—"

"Well, here we are!" West called out as the taxi swerved sharply into the gravel road between the pepper trees. "And the boys are right behind us," he added as another car ground to a stop near them.

"You take one of your men and cover the rear," Shannon directed. "I'll take the other and crash the front."

HE jumped out and took a quick look around. Through the pepper trees he saw the afternoon sun glinting on the radiator of an automobile that had been run off the roadway. There was no one around. The Skylark had a deserted appearance. Shannon looked up at the drawn shades of the second-floor windows, and wondered. If Lola was here—

With West's man, Shannon strode across the veranda and jabbed the bell-button. In a moment Flora's cold gray eye showed at the peepsight.

Shannon showed his silver star. "Open up and be quick about it," he advised.

The door swung open.

"Whose car is that out there?" Shannon asked.

"I don't know," Flora replied civilly. "Gentleman just dropped in."

Shannon turned to West's man. "Tom, you stay here where you can keep one eye on this door and the other on that car. If anyone tries to leave the house, stop him!"

Tom went to his post. Shannon shut the door and turned to Flora. Her mercenary eyes met his gaze unflinchingly. Shannon recognized her for what she was—hard, treacherous, but clever.

"Who's here?" he demanded. "And what's your name?"

"My name's Flora, and I'm all alone except for the gentleman who just came in that car. He's in the reception-room. If this is a raid—"

"Get on in there!" Shannon ordered.

They passed the stairway and came to a curtained door. Flora looked in, shook her head, and led Shannon on down the hall. "Guess he went back to the dance-room," she told him, opening a swinging door. "Yeah, here he is!"

They stepped into a large room—a long bar at one end, a dance-floor in the center, tables around the wall. A man stood at the bar, his back to them. As he turned around, a door at the rear opened, and Agent West came in.

"Well!" exclaimed West, addressing the man at the bar. "What're you doing here, Gleazon?"

Gleazon's brilliant eyes flashed knowingly from one man to the other. "Just loafin', Mr. West," he jerked out. "What's this? A raid?"

West drew Shannon to one side. "I think we're too late," he whispered. "If Jacobi came here, he tipped them off and they're all gone. But this bird Gleazon works for Yut Doy, and he may know something. What do you suggest?"

"Stay here and question him! I'm going to take Flora and go through the house."

"Okay, but questioning Gleazon won't get us anything, I'm afraid."

Shannon was of the same opinion, but it was the only thing they could do. He left West with Gleazon, told Flora what he wanted, and they started on a tour of the house.

ROOM after room they looked into, Flora saying little, Shannon nothing. He felt that it was a futile task, and the sooner over the better. It struck him as significant that all the doors were unlocked, every room in perfect order—just as if Shannon's visit had been expected.

They had left the last room, and Flora was about to lead the way down the rear stairs, when Shannon saw, just opposite the stairway, a door partly concealed by drapes. The drapes were brown, the color of the woodwork; and in the gloom Shannon had almost missed seeing them.

"What's this?" he demanded, jerking the drapes aside.

"That door leads to the attic," Flora answered. "We never use it. In fact, I think it's nailed shut."

Shannon had tried the door. It was both locked and nailed.

"Get a hammer!" Shannon ordered. "And be quick about it!"

Flora hurried downstairs, returning quickly with a hammer and a bunch of keys. In a moment Shannon had the door open. He found the switch, and turned on the lights, revealing narrow stairs, heavily carpeted, almost free from dust.

With eager anxiety, Shannon skipped up the stairs—and found only a large bare room beneath the sloping roof. There was no furniture, nothing but heavy strips of carpet across the floor.

"I promised I wouldn't lie to you any more," Flora said; "but I had orders to not show this to anyone. This is where guests can hide in case of a raid. See?" She pointed to a trapdoor near where they stood. "Open that door, and you'll see the closet in the room below. Every room is fixed the same way. Want to see how it works?"

"Never mind," said Shannon. "You have any callers this morning?"

Flora shook her head. "We never have anyone here mornings."

"Didn't a young couple come here—a girl with blue eyes, and gold in her hair—a pretty girl with—"

"They didn't come here," Flora declared. "I've been here all morning."

Shannon turned away. About to start down the stairs, he saw a curtained window in the wall. He drew the curtains back and looked out over the back yard of the Skylark to where the shrubbery dwindled away into rolling sand-dunes.

SUDDENLY Shannon saw something that gave him a start. At the edge of the sand-dunes, hidden from the house below by the shrubbery, two men with shovels were hurriedly filling in a hole that looked like a grave.

"Look here!" Shannon cried, grabbing Flora's arm roughly. "What're those men burying?"

"Where?" Flora asked, looking out. "Oh! Why, that's just the Chinese cook and his helper. They bury the garbage out there every day."

At that moment Agent West called out from the lower hall. His tone betrayed excitement. Shannon hastened to join him. Worried about Lola and Billy, eager to hear what West had learned, Shannon missed the one swift look that passed between Flora and Gleazon.

"I've got the whole thing!" West exclaimed. "The young couple we've been worried about were here a long time this

forenoon. Gleazon says Yut Doy was here. And when Yut Doy left for his place up the river, Miss Shannon and Operative Briggs followed him."

"Good!" The word shot from Shannon's lips. "You know the place?"

"I had heard that Yut Doy had a joint up the river, but I could never learn just where it was. But Gleazon knows, and says he will show us the way."

"We'll have to take my car," Gleazon spoke up quickly. "You could never get in there any other way. Yut Doy's look-out won't think anything o' seein' me. An' you two can hide in the back. See?"

"Yes," said Shannon slowly, his eyes boring into Gleazon's. "I think I see. We'll go. But Flora, you're going with us. You'll sit in the back seat right between me and West. Understand?"

"But she doesn't dare leave the place here alone!" Gleazon objected.

"Put the cook in charge!" Shannon cut in. "Get ready, Flora!"

GLEAZON was silent an instant. Then an odd smile twisted his lips. "Lock up the front of the house, Flora," he called after her. "We'll be back in time for the night trade."

Flora made no answer.

"Gleazon," said Shannon, "how many men are at Yut Doy's place?"

"Besides Yut Doy, there'll be just two old Chinese: the cook an' a caretaker. You see, Yut Doy doesn't keep the place open any more."

"I'm sure you and I can handle it alone—if that's what you're thinking about," Agent West spoke up. "I'd like to leave both my men here. Those other parties might show up yet, you know."

With some uneasiness, Shannon agreed to that. He remained with Gleazon while West dismissed their cars and gave his orders to the men. Questioning Gleazon, Shannon learned that Yut Doy's place was about two miles down the river from a little village, and that it was connected with the town by a telephone. Shannon passed this information on to West's men, and a moment later they were ready to leave.

About to join Flora and West in the back seat, Shannon stopped, gazed for an instant toward the sand-dunes, then hastened to where Tom stood on the front veranda. After a few words with him, Shannon returned to the car, and they were off.

Not knowing when they would get another chance, Shannon and West ate

lunch in the boat restaurant while they were crossing the bay. Gleazon and Flora declined food, but Shannon kept them with him.

About a half-hour after they had left Oakland, Shannon told Gleazon to stop at Joe's Place, a well-known roadhouse. "Get your car serviced, Gleazon," he directed. "I'm going to get some cigars. Flora, come with me. Maybe I can get you a drink here. You look as if you needed one."

Flora looked surprised, but got out of the car and went with Shannon into the café. After ordering, Shannon left Flora in the booth and excused himself a moment. She was smoking thoughtfully, her drink untouched, when he returned.

"There's something on your mind," she told Shannon, watching him narrowly. "What is it?"

"I called up the Skylark—as I had arranged," Shannon said, studying the woman's face. "I was in a hurry to get going back there, so didn't wait. Besides, I wanted to give you time to think things over. You're in bad, Flora, and you know it."

Suddenly Shannon's hand darted out and picked up Flora's handbag—an ornate affair of velvet and silver. He opened it, took out an automatic pistol, dropped the gun into his pocket, and returned the handbag.

"Now we'll talk!" snapped Shannon, leaning over the table. "Who killed Bert Graham? And why?"

FLORA never even blinked. Shannon surmised she had expected the question. "So that's what you went back to tell Mr. West's man, eh?" she said, her eyes narrowed calculatingly. "An' they puttered around in the dunes until they found him?"

"Buried four feet down," Shannon added. "He had been shot twice. Papers in his pockets identified him. The two Chinese—" Shannon left his sentence unfinished. The two Chinese had got scared and skipped, but Shannon hoped to convey the impression that they had talked. "Instead of Miss Shannon and Operative Briggs following Yut Doy, they were taken along—prisoners, eh? Were either of them hurt?"

Flora lowered her gaze.

"Out with it!" snapped Shannon. "Were they hurt?"

Slowly Flora looked up at Shannon. Tears stood in her eyes—tears that did not deceive Shannon for an instant.



"I didn't have a thing to do with it!" she cried, her lips trembling. "And I knew this would get us all into trouble. I knew it when Gleazon told us you were on the job. Ever since we left the Skylark, I've been wishing I could tell you just what happened. I want to help you. See? I don't belong with that bunch. I'm not one of them."

"Miss Shannon and Mr. Briggs came to the Skylark this forenoon," the woman went on hastily. "I knew them as Mr. and Mrs. Enders. Mr. Briggs had fooled me completely by pretending to be all lit up. I never suspected them for a minute."

"But soon after they came, Gleazon blew in and told us who they were. Yut Doy then had me move them to the big room I showed you. Then Yut Doy pulled off his deal right in the next room, where he knew they would see him and hear everything. It was partly his crazy idea of a joke, but mostly because he wanted to take them by surprise."

"At Yut Doy's signal, three men dropped from the attic I showed you into the closet of the big room. There was a fight. Your daughter plugged Graham but didn't kill him. Gleazon fired the shot that killed Bert—but he intended it for the girl. See?"

"Both Miss Shannon and Mr. Briggs were hurt. How bad, I don't know. Being tipped off by Gleazon that you were in town, Yut Doy decided to take the two up to his place on the river. So we cleaned the joint, had the Chinks plant Graham, and then Yut Doy and two of his men skipped out in Doy's big car with their prisoners."

"And left you and Gleazon to lead me into a trap, eh?"

"Not me!" Flora denied quickly. "I refused to have anything to do with it. It's Gleazon who is taking you to sure death. And that's the main thing I wanted to tell you. Gleazon is to deliver you to Yut Doy. Then you—your daughter—and Mr. Briggs—all three—"

will be sunk in the river and never seen again."

"So that's it! Well, what do you suggest?"

"That you let Gleazon run us on to Highbank. Then slap him in the can, get a couple men at Highbank to help, and I will show you how to get into Yut Doy's grounds without his guards seeing us. That's your only chance of saving yourself—and your daughter. I—I got a daughter of my own, and—"

"Aw, shut up!" growled Shannon in disgust. "Your lies make me sick! But I suppose you've told part of the truth. Anyway, what you suggest seems to be my best chance, so I'll take it. Put down your drink and we'll go."

"I didn't want it in the first place," Flora said. "I just wanted a chance to talk with you. And I've told you the truth, as God is my judge!"

Shannon let it go at that. They returned to the car. Gleazon gave Flora a hard look, but said nothing.

"I've been telephoning," Shannon said, hoping Gleazon would accept that part truth without question. "Got to phone again when we get to Highbank. Step along, Gleazon! Getting late!"

DUSK found them winding through a rough country dotted with huge oaks. Gleazon had not spoken, had been driving hard, but now slowed down.

"Bad stretch for about five miles," he called out over his shoulder, switching on his lights. "Curtains if we slip off one o' these curves!"

Shannon could see that. The narrow road dipped and rolled, curving abruptly on the brink of a deep ravine. The headlights flashed on spreading oaks on the hillside, then shot into space as Gleazon jerked the car around a sharp turn.

Presently Gleazon shut off his dash-light. "I can see this tricky road better without it," he explained.

No one made any reply. Gleazon cut his speed down a little more.

"Hope we don't meet anyone," Flora spoke up, her voice tense. "This place always—"

The rest was a shrill scream of terror. The car had suddenly shot straight at the black yawning ravine—as Gleazon flung the door open and leaped out to safety.

Flora was still screaming as the car dropped over the cliff, struck a jutting rock, and shot into space, turning over and over.

Gleazon heard the crash as the car landed on the rocks, far below. White-faced, shaken, he crept to the brink and looked over.

There was no sound. And at first he could see nothing. Then—a faint glow—a swift leaping red flame!

"God!" muttered Gleazon chokily. "They're goin' to burn! . . . Sorry, Flora, but I had to do it. . . . An'mebbe you had it comin'."

CHAPTER VII

STRUGGLING in a hideous nightmare, Lola Shannon slowly recovered consciousness. She felt as if she were crushed to death. She tried to cry out, but only a smothered moan came from her tightly bound lips. Gradually she realized that she was lying on a bed, that her feet were bound, that her wrists were tied to her waist, and that a gag of some sort had been bound tightly over her mouth.

Then suddenly she became aware of voices. There was a dim glow in the room where she lay. The light came from the adjoining room—where two men were talking in low tones.

"What happened?" It was the harsh voice of Yut Doy, speaking angrily. "It is past midnight. Everyone is asleep."

"Except your damned guards!" That was Gleazon's voice. "Jees! I've had a time of it! But listen, Doy! Everything is jake. See? The car's gone. Burned. But—"

The rest was said in a voice so low that Lola caught only a few words—but enough that a chill of horror swept over her.

"Shannon was lookin' for Jacobi," Gleazon went on. "Did he come here?"

"Yes, the fool!" growled Yut Doy. "He and Cragmont and Maryn. Jacobi has about ruined everything. And he hasn't yet come to his senses. When he learned that I had the Shannon girl here, he asked me to keep her gagged. He was afraid she might cry out. And he doesn't want Maryn to know she's here. You are sure Shannon is dead?"

"Hell, yes! So's West. Sorry about Flora, but I think—"

"Never mind. There are plenty of women. Well, I see no reason now why we shouldn't go ahead with our first plans. Dr. Jacobi need never know. If he suspects, he won't dare say anything.

He tried to kill Shannon this afternoon, and bungled the job. There must be no more mistakes."

"Has the girl come out from under the dope yet?"

There was a moment of silence. Lola tugged frantically at the cords that bound her wrists.

"No," came the growling voice of Yut Doy. "And—*she never will.*"

A chair scraped on the floor.

"Better bring that flashlight," said Yut Doy. "What I'm going to do must be done right."

The room suddenly darkened. Fighting against a paralyzing terror, Lola turned her head. Two shadowy figures, moving softly, came to the bedside.

A pencil of light struck across Lola's face, blinding her for an instant. Out of the dark behind the light came a savage growl. The light moved quickly—and in that light Lola saw, reaching toward her throat, the long-nailed, hideously shrunken hands of Yut Doy!

THE realization came over Billy Briggs suddenly that for some time he had been staring into black, impenetrable darkness.

Then remembrance came swiftly—Lola's cry of pain, a blow from behind as he struggled toward her, Yut Doy running from the closet as he fell, some one forcing a bitter draught between his lips. . . .

Now he lay on a bed, or couch—his head aching frightfully, his mouth burning dry. He tried to move, and found that his wrists were tied to his waist, his ankles bound.

He wondered why he had not been gagged. Perhaps there was no one to hear him if he cried out. Perhaps his captors wanted to know when he came out from under the drug.

He listened for sounds. At first he heard nothing. Then he made out a noise like trees swaying and tossing in a gusty wind. Nothing else.

A few deep breaths helped to clear his brain. He began tugging at the cords that bound his wrists. At first the task seemed hopeless; but as his strength returned, he worked on feverishly.

Either his captors had underestimated the Secret Service man's strength, or they had counted too much on the drug they had given him. In a few minutes Billy was free, and standing by the side of the bed, hastily searching his pockets for a match.



He found none. Even his watch and money had been taken.

His mind still groggy, his limbs numb, Billy groped along the bed to the wall, felt over the wall for a light-switch and found none.

Again for a moment he stood still and listened. In the house there was not a sound that he could hear.

It occurred to Billy suddenly that Lola might be in the same room—a prisoner as he had been, drugged.

"Lola!" he called out in a cautious whisper. "Lola!"

His whisper echoed weirdly in the pitch-dark room, but there was no answer.

Turning away from the wall, Billy struck out boldly for what he thought was the center of the room. Perhaps there was a light globe hanging from the ceiling. Sliding his feet over the floor cautiously, he felt around in the dark, but found nothing.

Then suddenly his outstretched hands struck something that gave beneath his touch with a noise like the crackle of paper. Too late, he realized that he had run into a window shade, had jarred the spring loose. The shade shot up with a bang!

He jerked around, his back to the wall by the window, and listened. Still no sound in the house. Only the low moaning of the wind in the trees.

Relieved that he had not aroused anyone, Billy took a look out the window. In the distance, black trees were swaying and tossing against the faint starlight. Below, light falling from another window shone on moving water.

He tried the window, found it could be opened, but did not raise it. He might have to use that as a get-away later; just now he was anxious to find Lola. Surely she was somewhere in this house—perhaps in this very room.

He struck out again, this time keeping his right hand touching the wall. In the corner he found a dresser. Then he

came to a door. He tried the knob. The door opened.

Inch by inch, he cautiously pushed the door back. At first he thought there was a light in this room; then he saw that it came from the room beyond. But there seemed to be no one in either room. The house was as still as death.

He stepped inside. Gradually his eyes became accustomed to the dim light. He saw a bed against the left wall, dark shapes of other furniture. The curtain on the window that overlooked the river was half drawn.

Sliding his feet over the carpet, fearful now of making the slightest noise that might betray him, Billy started toward the lighted room.

Suddenly he stopped, his heart pounding. Nearer the bed, he saw something he could not see from the doorway. It was a girl, fully dressed, stretched out on the coverlet. Light from the other room brought out tiny glints of gold in her hair against the pillow.

SURE that he had found Lola, Billy stepped forward with more eagerness than caution—and the floor beneath his foot creaked sharply.

The girl stirred, opened her eyes, saw Billy standing in the light from the doorway—and leaped up with a startled scream.

"Henri!" she cried, running toward the lighted doorway. "Henri, quick!"

She punched the wall-switch, flooding the room with light.

From behind Billy came a man's sleepy voice:

"What the devil—Maryn?"

Billy jerked around. On the couch by the window lay Dr. Jacobi. He blinked at Billy, then shot to his feet, reaching for the revolver that lay on a stand by the head of the couch.

In a split second Billy realized that before he could cover half the distance between him and Jacobi, the latter would have his revolver. Neither could he escape back through the door by which he had come. There was only one chance. He made a dive straight for Maryn.

With another scream, Maryn leaped toward Jacobi, putting herself between him and Billy—as Billy had hoped. Out the door he went, into the lighted room. It was another bedroom, unoccupied. By the left wall was a stairway, leading down. Billy ran for it—just as Yut Doy, gun in hand, came running up.

The two men met at the head of the stairs. Before Yut Doy could use his gun, Billy lashed out with his fist, striking Yut Doy in the mouth, knocking him backward down the stairs. Billy tumbled down the stairs after him, into a lighted room that looked like a kitchen. At that instant Gleazon came running in from the adjoining room, which was dark.

Yut Doy had been stunned by his fall. His automatic lay on the floor near his groping hand. Just as Billy spotted it, Gleazon snatched a carving-knife off the table and sprang at him.

At that same instant feet pounded down the stairs behind the Secret Service man. A gun roared deafeningly.

Billy stopped short. He might get to Yut Doy's automatic ahead of Gleazon plunging at him with the knife. But that shot from behind had barely missed him. Whirling, he evaded Gleazon's savage blow, and closed with Jacobi as the latter sprang from the stairway.

"Stay back!" Jacobi shouted at Gleazon. "I want to—"

The rest choked in Jacobi's throat as Billy, trying to get Jacobi's revolver, clung to the gun with one hand and drove his other fist into Jacobi's face. Jacobi was thrown backward, dragging Billy with him. They struck the table. Table, dishes, and the remains of a meal were upset. Jacobi tripped, fell; and the Secret Service man, overbalanced, toppled over with him, losing his hold on Jacobi's revolver.

Both men were stunned for a second; then they scrambled up. To Billy's surprise, Jacobi lashed out at him with his fists. As he dodged the blows, he glanced around, looking for the weapon.

BUT that brief glance proved almost fatal. For a split second he was off guard. And Jacobi, his eyes glittering like those of a madman, drove his fist against Billy's jaw, hurling him backward into a chair.

Jacobi followed up the blow; but the Secret Service man leaped to his feet, meeting Jacobi's headlong rush with a straight-arm jab in the neck. Jacobi let out a wheezy groan and staggered back. As Billy struck again, Jacobi cried for help.

What happened then, Billy never could explain clearly. He remembered hearing shouts of men, the crash of splintering doors, the crack of pistols—as some one struck him a brutal blow from behind.

Then he was flat on his back on the floor. Jacobi was bending over him, his dark face murderous, in his hand the long, glittering knife.

CHAPTER VIII

CRAGMONT was awakened by the shot that Jacobi fired at Billy from the stairway. He sprang up, dazed for an instant. Hearing the sound of fighting in the kitchen below, he ran from his room and found Maryn standing at the head of the stairs.

There was no need to ask what was going on. Cragmont, a coward at heart, waited. Presently he heard a shot in the kitchen—a commotion outside. Maryn, a choked scream on her lips, dashed past Cragmont down the stairs.

Cragmont followed. As he dashed into the kitchen, Gleazon rushed like a madman through the door from the veranda. His face was ghastly, his eyes wild.

"Great God!" he shrieked. "It's Shannon! *It's Shannon!*"

For an instant Cragmont stood paralyzed. Then, hoping to gain the darkness on the veranda, he plunged headlong through the door.

In the light from the doorway he saw Shannon, gun in hand, pounding toward the kitchen. He was hatless. His clothing was torn and smeared with dirt. One side of his face was streaked with blood.

"Stop!" barked Shannon—but Cragmont did not stop. The sight of Shannon seemed to snap something in his mind. He flung up his arms. An insane screech burst from his lips. In two jumps he crossed the veranda, leaped to the railing—and plunged far out into the river.

Shannon struck the water close behind him.

Cragmont came to the surface, and disappeared quickly as the current carried him away from the light. Before Shannon could catch him, Cragmont sank again.

Some one shouted from the riverbank, and the ray of a flashlight swept over the water. In its glow Shannon saw Cragmont not a yard away. He was sinking, his arms flailing the water frantically.

Shannon had handled drowning people before. As Cragmont grabbed for him, Shannon struck him a hard blow on the jaw, then caught him quickly by the collar and turned toward the shore.

Two men with lights came to Shannon's assistance as he staggered into shallow water close to the bank. They dragged Cragmont to safety.

"Damn you, Shannon!" Cragmont burst into hysterical cursing. "Why didn't you let me drown? Why—"

Shannon did not hear the rest. Dashing the water from his eyes, he hurried back to the house.

The kitchen was crowded. Gleazon and Yut Doy, handcuffed together, were being guarded by one of the men Shannon had brought with him from Highbank.

The doctor Shannon had brought, thinking of Lola and Billy, was bending over some one lying on the floor. A girl was kneeling beside him—Maryn.

Suddenly the room rang with a glad cry. Lola darted away from Billy's side and flew to her father's arms.

THE first flush of dawn was showing above the willows along the river when Shannon, in dry clothes, and with a cup of hot coffee by his side, sat on the veranda and told Lola and Billy of the tragic death of Agent West and the woman they knew only as Flora.

When he saw that Gleazon had hurled the car toward the cliff, Shannon tried to grab the steering-wheel, but the sudden lurch of the car had thrown West against him. Then he saw it was too late. The front wheels were already over the edge when Shannon jumped. He missed the roadway, dropped over the cliff to the rock ledge, and was knocked unconscious.

"I don't know how long I was out," Shannon concluded. "When I came to, the car was still burning. And I couldn't get from the ledge back up the cliff, or get on down to the car.

"After a while another car came along, saw the fire, and stopped. After helping me up with their tow-rope, we went down the road to a spot where we could get down the cliff, and walked back to the burned car. But we could do nothing.

"Later they brought me to Highbank. There I got several men, and—but say, Billy, what happened here? Was it you shot Jacobi?"

Billy did not answer.

"Daddy," said Lola, putting her hand in Shannon's big paw, "I—I have been all kinds of a blind fool. Can you ever forgive me?"

"There's nothing to forgive," Shannon told her quickly. "Jacobi had all of

us fooled. As for you—well, everyone makes mistakes at times, Lola.”

“I knew that you would understand, Father,” said Lola. “And I know you’ll understand the—the rest of it. . . . Yut Doy and Gleazon were standing beside me when Maryn screamed. They ran out of the room. I began tugging at the cords around my wrist. I could hear terrible fighting in the kitchen. Finally I got my wrists loose from my waist, but they were still tied together.

“As I sat up, I looked toward the kitchen. A revolver lay on the carpet by the door. I rolled off the bed and over the floor and got the gun.

“Then I looked into the kitchen. Dr. Jacobi was standing over Billy with a knife. His face was terrible. I was so tightly gagged I could not cry out. So—” Lola’s voice broke, then she went on steadily. “So I shot—to save Billy.”

Shannon pressed Lola’s hand. Words were unnecessary.

The physician from Highbank stepped into the doorway.

“Jacobi is conscious now, Mr. Shannon,” he said. “He may live, and he may not. If you wish to speak to him—”

Shannon followed the physician into the room where Jacobi lay. For a moment no one spoke. Then Jacobi asked the physician to leave the room.

“Shannon,” he said a moment later, “I’ve been seeing things I never saw before. Been something wrong with me, I guess. Crime fascinated me. But it’s wrong. You’ve won. . . . You saved Enslow. . . . Smashed us. . . . But you don’t know—what you prevented—at Washington. Listen!”

Jacobi lowered his voice to a mere whisper. . . .

“Good God, no!” exclaimed Shannon. “Surely you don’t mean—”

“I mean just that,” Jacobi went on calmly. “Duk Kee was to do it. And it would have been done—except for you. Far better now, that—no one ever knows.”

“Yes,” said Shannon. “No one ever will know.”

Jacobi’s voice dropped again to a whisper: “Tell Lola—I’m sorry.”

A moment later Shannon stepped out to the veranda. At first he did not see Lola—only Billy’s broad shoulders. . . . And neither one saw nor heard him.

“Huh!” grunted Shannon, smiling, as he turned back quietly. “Well, if I can find my pipe, I’ll have a good smoke—if I can find my tobacco.”

REAL EX-

Most of us have been through at least one tremendously exciting experience. In this department five of your fellow-readers tell of their most thrill-filled moments (for details of our prize offer for these stories, see page 3). First an old-time circus man tells of what happened when fourteen elephants broke loose and followed the call of the wild up in British Columbia.

Elephant Rebellion

By ORVILLE

THINGS always happen in threes on a circus. At Edmonton, six of our fourteen performing pachyderms stampeded at sight of a small boy’s goat-cart and messed up things in that Alberta metropolis. But we got the truants back into their bull-car without doing much more than scaring people. The next day, at Calgary, eight of the bulls ran amok in a hospital grounds and a cemetery. But before nightfall they were chained up in their car. We left the circus-fixer in Calgary, trying to adjust a bevy of suits for legal damages. The day after that, at Cranbrook, British Columbia, the entire fourteen bulls declared an elephant holiday. Most of them took to the wilderness.

There was a clause in my contract with the circus which stated that, in addition to assuming several specific professional duties, I must “make myself generally useful to the management.” Such a clause appears in every circus attaché’s contract, which is why circus stars of the arena may sometimes be seen working on canvas when a traveling show is short-handed. During many hectic years of big-top trouping I had been everything from chambermaid to performing poodles

PERIENCES



F. STEWART

to assistant general circus manager. But until those bulls stampeded out of Cranbrook that August morning I had never been called on to hunt trained elephants gone wild.

The first few days were not so serious. Boss Bull-man Jimmy Dooley took care of that. Dooley had been cut on the face by the steel end of his bull-hook while trying to check the first stage of the big stampede. But he followed his charges into the tall timber, sighted Trilby, the leader, and called to her. Trilby knew and liked her master's voice. She waited until Dooley caught up with her. Without bothering to hobble this docile "bull," he walked her up to the four other runaways. Dooley's assistant reached under Trilby's belly and snapped short chain hobbles on the front legs of the four who were trying to escape from the circus routine. Then the whole five were marched back down a mountain to the circus train.

You never can tell about the tamest bull. Snyder, a four-ton male elephant, wandering along in a strange country, sighted through the trees a quintet of his pals returning to the tent-show business. He decided to beat the Trilby crowd to

it. Back through Cranbrook, Snyder paced on his own power, reaching the bull-car alone—to find its doors closed. So he butted the doors down, getting well scratched for his trouble. Nevertheless he took his place in his stall at the end of the car. When the other five returned he shuffled himself in amongst them and peacefully awaited the attentions of the veterinary.

In the meantime eight valuable performing pachyderms remained at large in a Canadian-American wilderness. I went after them, a local ranchman obligingly accompanying me.

About ten miles from Cranbrook, in very rough country, we located three of the missing elephants—about nine tons of bull—on a rampage. Joined by other hunters, we beat the surrounding brush. One of the trio charged a hunter. The latter took refuge behind a tree and yelled for help. We rushed to the rescue.

By a stroke of luck each bull wore a regulation collar-chain. The technique of capture was, therefore, relatively simple. You crept up on an elephant from behind some brush or a tree. With a long pole you slipped another chain through a ring in the runaway's collar-chain, then fastened the extra chain to a very stout tree. The business required concentration; however, presently we had three runaways hobbled. We worked them cautiously to an open spot where Trilby, under guard, was stationed. We anchored the trio to the docile Trilby and thus convoyed them to the circus bull-car. Only five bulls remained now at liberty.

With great relief I received orders from General Manager Zack Terrill to take the show-train on to Spokane, Washington, leaving our captured elephants chained in their car at Cranbrook, while he remained to complete the hunt.

Two days later a wire from Mr. Terrill told us two more valuable "rubber mules" were again in captivity, and soon afterward he brought in the twelfth; but two valuable beasts still remained wandering the wilds; and I was ordered out again to round them up.

Four Canadian ranchmen piloted us into a maze of unsettled back country. It became a combination of camping-trip and Wild West Show, for a tribe of native Indians came along with our party to do expert tracking. After two days and two nights of mighty rough going a large female elephant named Myrtle got wind of us and crashed her way into the thick timber. "Spot" Griffith went alone after

her. When we caught up with Spot the following evening we found him suffering from being sapped by Myrtle's trunk. When an elephant saps you, it's like being kicked by a mule. Spot had been nervy but not tactful in approaching his quarry.

We paused for a few hours and patched up Spot. After we had resumed the trail I said: "Spot, are we ever going to get those elephants?"

"I'm going to get them," he replied positively, "unless they get me first!"

We heard a shot from near-by woods after we had made camp that night. Pretty soon the cook came running into camp. "I almost ran over Myrtle," he explained. "Got within twenty-five feet of her before I saw her. She came for me and I shot at her. She chased me half a mile before I could get rid of her."

We waited until dawn and then, spread out fanwise a quarter-mile apart, proceeded on horseback down a steep mountain covered with deadfalls, trailing the pugnacious pachyderm. About ten o'clock Spot yelled: "Come on, boys! Here she is!" I came on, with the rest of them.

There is plenty of glamour around a circus lot, with the flags flying, big-top billowing, brass bands blaring and "towners" milling about; but when you meet an old pal of an elephant in a Canadian wilderness, with that pal gone cuckoo and reduced to skin and bones by wandering in strange territory, but savagely determined to make a messy end of any captor—well, that's not the kind of trouping that appeals to me.

MYRTLE, a skeleton from lack of hay and sufficient water for six weeks, went completely haywire when she caught sight of us and heard our voices. And no wonder, the way those Indians yelled! She mounted a large deadfall and ran back and forth on it until she finally tripped and fell, striking the ground on her side. We rushed in while she was half stunned, and hobbled her. Spot and I got her hindlegs hobbled close together, ran a chain from her collar-chain to a nearby tree, and then stood off to see how she would take it.

Pretty soon she got to her feet and started lunging at us. This didn't last long; the poor animal was too weak. She lay down by the deadfall. Twenty or thirty miles from anywhere, with a five-thousand-dollar elephant coming down with a real case of pneumonia! I sent one of our men to a mining-camp. He

came back with five gallons of linseed oil. We heated this and tried to feed it to Myrtle, but she could only take a few sips of it. The next day she died. It was a sad ending for one of the best performers of the show, with the rest of her pals doing their tricks somewhere in sunny California—all except the mischievous Charley-Ed, who was still at large and might be somewhere in our vicinity.

We left Myrtle lying there and returned to Cranbrook, where I reported her death to the Canadian officials and wired the news to Manager Terrill. His answer was brief: "Get Charley-Ed."

I offered Myrtle's carcass to the Canadian Government but it refused the offer. Eventually the Canadian Pacific Railway sent a taxidermist to the scene, and the next time you make the city of Winnipeg you can see in a museum there all that is left of Myrtle.

WHILE the taxidermists were doing their work I was getting the show's bond released—a guarantee that each and every elephant in our herd would be taken back across the border into United States territory—except as to Charley-Ed. That clownish, mischievous elephant had given me many a laugh on a circus lot. As a "punk" he was famous for sliding down wet clay on his little rump; for breaking bailing-wire with his trunk, spreading the hay for his siesta pillow and many other pranks. But as he had grown up he had developed a tendency toward truancy.

This last of our runaways was reported, by one of my Indian trackers, to be in a stretch of timber about twenty miles from where Myrtle had met her untimely end. The Indians and we troupers went after him. I was close to my finish, though I didn't know it then. We had hardly reached real hunting country when this bull, to whom I had fed bushels of peanuts, came rampaging out of some brush and gave me a good idea of an elephant's speed. I won the race, but by a scant margin.

That noon I was slowly recuperating when an old Indian chief rode into camp and reported: "Me catchum el'phant."

"I hope so," I answered, though pessimistically. The Indian insisted that he had the elephant, so at three o'clock I rode out to investigate. An uproar in a valley compelled my attention. It developed that the uproar was caused by Charley-Ed.

With one rear leg in a rope noose he

was charging at everybody who came within charging distance of him. I've seen many angry elephants, but he was the most furious. While Charley-Ed charged futilely at us, the Indian related his simple story. After locating a trail made by our last truant in going for water from his hiding-place, the Indian had left a heavy grass-covered rope noose between two mammoth trees at either side of the trail. Charley-Ed had innocently stepped into the noose, which was securely fastened to a tree. The noose had tightened—and Charley-Ed was a captive. No wonder he was wild!

While some of us kept his attention centered on us by getting in and out of range of his lashing trunk, the elephant's trainer whom we called "Front Door" slipped up behind the angry Charley-Ed, eased a chain around the free hindleg, drew the two hindlegs together and made a quick but sure loop of the chain. That raging bull yelled bloody murder, and his beady eyes glared straight at me. I shivered slightly.

Then Front Door did some more of his stuff. With greater courage than good sense—he can't help it; he's built that way—the little trainer of mighty elephants sneaked up behind a handy tree and eased hobbles around one of Charley-Ed's busy front legs. This almost closed life's portals for the nervy Front Door, as the mad bull trumpeted and lunged for his trainer. Luckily for the latter, Charley-Ed tripped. While he floundered on the ground we drew his hindlegs tight to a tree.

Still he lashed out with his trunk and thrashed about until he had exhausted himself. Too tired for further fight, he permitted Front Door and me to slip hobbles on his other front leg. A chain running from his collar-chain to the hobbles on his hind legs completed his fetters. We had secured Charley-Ed.

THIS being Sunday, we rested for the rest of the day. On Monday we fell into line for a tiresome march through and over timber, rocks and white-water streams while Charley-Ed sulked, balked and butted. It rained. The rain turned to snow. It was snowing hard when our informal circus procession entered Cranbrook Tuesday noon. I looked at Charley-Ed and thought of pneumonia.

But my luck was fifty-fifty on that last pachyderm round-up. We rented an old skating-rink, removed some of the floor planking and driving half a dozen

six-foot iron stakes deeply into the ground, we chained our captive to them. We covered him thoroughly with blankets and heated the building; fed him hot bran mash, and saved our elephant. By morning he was thoroughly reformed—and probably concluded that the wide open spaces were not in it with circuses.

SO mild of manner was this leading figure of the greatest elephant-hunt in either of the Americas, that I gladly accepted an invitation—on behalf of Charley-Ed—for a rechristening and a farewell celebration under the sponsorship of Cranbrook's mayor and General Superintendent Ironsides of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Always an actor who played his part, the bull who had led us such a merry chase—and who had chased us not so merrily—entered joyfully into the spirit of the comedy.

I fitted an iron plate over his head. The youth and beauty of British Columbia covered this plate with wild flowers. Great wreaths of posies were strung around his neck. Townsfolk, ranchers, cowboys, Indians, news-reel camera-men and reporters assembled to speed the departing guest.

In Cranbrook's center a little girl, held in the arms of His Honor the Mayor, broke a bottle of champagne over Charley-Ed's brow. "I rechristen you 'Cranbrook Ed'," said the little girl. The elephant who might have smashed us all had we been unlucky licked his lips when champagne bubbles cascaded over cheeks which had been wet by the dews of many wilderness nights. Then he continued his triumphal journey down the main street of Cranbrook, British Columbia, feeling the air with his trunk. Restaurant owners brought to the street curb their prettiest waitresses, who fed fresh bread to the famous pachyderm, while the crowds cheered. As he and his less interesting human companions passed through the Canadian Pacific Railway station, he stopped at the ticket window and we secured his ticket. From that ceremony it was but a step to a special baggage-car—for Cranbrook Ed was going home to his circus as a special express package, at extremely high rates.

The locomotive bell jangled. Townsfolk and countryfolk waved a farewell. From the open door of his special car Cranbrook Ed nodded solemnly and waved his trunk. "Thanks for the party," he seemed to be saying. He was such an innocent-looking elephant!



The Robbers' Shield

*A daughter of the frontier is caught
in a battle with bank-robbers.*

By MRS. GERALDINE CLARK

MANY years ago when I was a young girl, I kept house for my widowed father, who was a cattle-buyer, in a small town in southern Oklahoma. I was left very much alone; but I was a large, strongly built girl, could ride and shoot as well as most men, and so never was at all nervous.

Early in the summer of 1907 Father left on a cattle-buying trip. I had planned to visit some friends in Fort Worth while he was gone, but the day after he left, I was thrown from a half-broken horse and snapped the bone in my left arm. The neighbor women were very kind, and for the first few days one of them was constantly at the house doing for me, but in a little while I became used to the splints and sling and could do my own housework.

One afternoon I went to the store to order some groceries.

When I came to the store, I saw four rather hard-faced men loitering on its porch. Tough-looking male creatures were no novelty. But these were strangers to me; and I gazed curiously at them as I mounted the steps leading to the porch. One of them evidently mistook my curiosity, for as I started to enter the store, he planted himself in front of me and made some familiar remark. In the city no doubt any girl would have ignored him; but I had been raised to look after myself. I grasped the front of his shirt and jerked him to one side. The unexpectedness of the action as much as the strength I put forth caused him to lose his balance and fall off the porch. His companions raised a shout of laughter. I walked on into the store.

I had hardly reached the counter and greeted Mr. Foster, the storekeeper, when some one grasped me roughly by my broken left arm. I could not suppress a shriek of pain. It was the man whom I had thrown off the porch. His face was twisted with rage.

Suddenly his grip was torn from my arm and I saw a man's fist strike him in the face, knocking him to the floor. Then

half a dozen men were trying to get at him. My rescuers were several men whom I knew. They handled the fellow rather roughly until a deputy sheriff appeared and stopped them—and ordered the man to get out of town at once and not to show up again or it would be too bad for him.

Wiping the blood from his cut face and mumbling threats, the fellow left. I sat down for a few moments until my arm felt better, and then, accompanied by Mr. Foster's wife, went home.

Fearing that I might be frightened by my experience, she suggested that I come to her house and spend the night, but when I told her I was quite all right, she departed to get her thirteen-year-old daughter Mabel to stay with me.

When Mabel arrived, I set her to peeling vegetables for supper and went out into the back yard to feed the chickens. Our house was at the very end of the main street. We had no immediate neighbors.

I finished feeding the chickens and started to enter the house. Suddenly there came a burst of shots from the direction of the town. I ran around to the front of the house and peered up the road to try and see what was the matter.

Coming toward me at a gallop were four men on horseback. Behind them I could see other men mounting horses, and in the middle of the street I saw two men lying in the road directly opposite the town's bank.

As the mounted men drew about level with me, two men ran out of one of the stores uptown with rifles. I saw them drop on one knee and begin to shoot. Their aim was good; directly opposite my gate two of the fleeing men's horses went down in a heap, spilling their riders. The men were not hit, though, for they scrambled to their feet and ran—toward me! I saw that they were headed for my house and turned to run inside, but barely had I reached the door when they were beside me. One struck me in the face, knocking me into the house. They

slammed the door and bolted it before I could get to my feet. One ran past me toward the rear. I heard Mabel, who was in the kitchen, cry out—then the sound of a blow, and she began to whimper.

The man who was in front jerked me to my feet. I recognized him at once as the man who had insulted me in the store earlier in the afternoon.

He thrust me down into a chair and told me to stay there unless I wanted to get hurt.

While I sat trembling in the chair, the man broke out all the glass in one of the windows facing the road with his gun. I could not see outside, but I heard excited shouts. Then I heard a man shout: "You men in the house there! Come on out—you can't get away."

I recognized the voice of Sheriff Garret. The bank-robber, for it later turned out that my surmise was correct, cursed savagely and shot.

There was a cry of pain from outside, and the voice of the Sheriff called: "All right, Allan. Send those girls out, and we'll come in and get you."

"Not us. We aim to keep these girls. Don't try to rush us or they'll get hurt," the man called Allan answered.

I could hear voices talking outside; then there was a sudden silence. The man came in from the back of the house dragging Mabel by one arm. She had stopped crying and seemed quite interested and excited. Allan asked him if there were many men at the back, and when he said there were about a dozen, told him to get back and watch. Then he ran from the room, leaving Mabel with me.

I stood up and tried to look out the window. I had a glimpse of several men lying in the grass at the other side of the road; then Allan shoved me roughly against the wall; my broken arm struck it, and I could not help screaming with pain. There were shouts from outside. Allan ran to the window and began to shoot. I heard footsteps on the veranda; Allan fired, and something fell against the door and began to moan. There were more shouts from outside and I heard Sheriff Garret ordering some one back.

ALLAN loaded his gun. For perhaps half an hour there was no sound from outside except the moaning of the wounded man at the door. Then from the back of the house there came a string of shots. Allan, who had been walking back and forth, ran back there. I tried

to get to my feet, but felt so faint I could not have done so if Mabel had not helped me. Leaning on her shoulder, I reached the door. Just as I opened it, Allan ran in from the back.

Mabel pushed me ahead of her out on the veranda. I tripped over the man lying across the doorway, and fell headlong down the front steps. Across the road men were running toward me. I tried to get to my feet again and nearly succeeded; then a heavy body struck me and I fell on my stomach. It was Allan.

Holding me flat on the ground in front of him with one arm, he lay behind my body and shot at the men who were running. I tried to wriggle away from him, but his strength seemed enormous; I could not move. I saw one of the running men—I recognized the druggist—reach our gate and jump over it. While he was still in the air, Allan shot him.

The rest slowed up, all except Sheriff Garret. Turning my head over my shoulder, I saw Allan aiming at him. I could see his finger move—and then a flying figure lit on his shoulders. Hands clawed at his face and pulled his hair. It was Mabel. The gun went off, and the bullet entered my right leg.

Then the Sheriff was on top of Allan. I heard his gun-barrel strike the bank-robber's head.

I saw men run up the steps and into the house—heard more guns, and then they came out. Women came then, and two men carried me to Mrs. Foster's. Then I fainted when the doctor cleansed the bullet-wound in my leg.

Allan died in jail; he had been shot four times. His companion was killed in our kitchen, and the other two men were caught a month later. They had held up the bank, but on their way out some one inside had shouted a warning to a passer-by, and there had been a pitched battle in front of the bank in which two townsmen had been shot, I learned later. The rest I already knew.

Mabel was the heroine of the town. The bank gave her a hundred dollars and a trip to Fort Worth. I saw her a couple of years ago; she is now a very quiet young lady indeed; to look at her, one would never get the impression she had once jumped on a desperate robber's back.

My husband is ungallant enough to say that I am now plump enough to furnish cover for a whole regiment of bank-robbers; but then, husbands do not always mean what they say. Do they?

A Battle with Slavers

A one-time British marine who is now an American citizen tells of his part in an attack on Arab slave-traders off the coast of Africa.

As told by W. F. COURTNEY to F. RANSOM

IN the latter part of the year 1890, the H. M. S. *Conquest* received orders to proceed to the island of Pemba, a few hours' sail from Zanzibar, and there capture or destroy any ships that might be engaged in the slave-trade.

The long, low island of Pemba is surrounded by a coral reef which has several navigable passages. There are a number of small bays and inlets, and the island itself is covered with a dense vegetation. There are large clove plantations which created a constant demand for slaves.

On the arrival of the *Conquest*, volunteers were called for, and seven ship's boats were piped away, each one manned by twelve men, and provisioned for a month's stay away from the ship. Each boat was assigned a certain passage in the reef, and in this way the entire island was blockaded. Our plan of action was simply to lie in wait in the inlet, out of sight, until such time as a slave dhow should make its appearance. They were all sail vessels, and as soon as they were too far in for them to tack out again, we were to board them, take the crew prisoners, and with the slaves set out for Zanzibar.

The boat in which I was stationed landed the spare provisions on a white sandy beach about a thousand yards long, where a hut was erected for their shelter. The boat was then moved up the lagoon out of sight of any vessel that was standing in, and a lookout was posted on a neck of land at the entrance. As this neck of land was only dry for a short time at low tide, the rest of the time the lookout was compelled to climb a tree. The relieving lookout went down to the post in a small native canoe which the relieved man brought back. In case of alarm, the lookout had to swim up the lagoon.

For nine days not a sail was sighted. We lived in the boat, cooked our meals on a little iron stove, rifles ready to hand. The days were very hot, the nights cool with a heavy dew. We had no blankets, and had to curl up, shivering and cramped, in the bottom of the boat. Our only exercise was a swim each morning.

By the tenth day everything had become very dirty, and the sergeant in charge decided to clean up. We beached the boat, took everything out of her and turned to with scrub-brushes and sand. A mess of porridge was cooking for our breakfast, and all hands were feeling good, glad to be where they could stretch their legs without kicking some one in the face, joking, playing pranks on each other.

"Sail ho!" came the cry.

One look. A slave dhow headed straight in. Breakfast was left for the birds and monkeys; oars, rifles and ammunition went into the boat; cutlasses and six-shooters were buckled on, and we shoved off without water or provisions.

A native had put off in his canoe to warn the slaver, and it immediately swung down the coast, with a fair wind and three-knot current in its favor. We came into the open and away after them, but inside the reef. Here we lost the current, and the land held up the wind from our sail, but our "white ash breeze" held us even. Sweat streaming from us, muscles cracking, gasping for air, a bend in the shoreline at last gave us a little advantage. One of the boys unshipped his oar and began firing, but as we were still a thousand yards apart, his shots were ineffective. The fire was returned, with the Arabs yelling defiance.

Three miles down the coast the slaver turned to shore and grounded in about four feet of water. The irons were knocked off the slaves, and they were driven overboard—we could see the long, black line of them making for shore, the spear-points of the crew driving them on.

Before we could come up, the last of them had disappeared in a dense, almost impenetrable swamp through which they had to pass before reaching dry land. Springing ashore with a cheer, we double-timed after them, eager for the scrap we felt sure was waiting for us.

We entered the swamp with our rifles ready, and found—silence. Dark green slime, water from a foot to eighteen inches deep, covered any trail that might have



been left; roots of trees, vines of every description, formed a network through which we struggled, expecting every moment to tread upon some reptile. Coral rock reached its teeth through the sand and mud, lacerating our bare feet. Twisted tree trunks made forms half human in the twilight under the thick foliage, and vines crawled like great snakes across the branches.

Separating so we could cover more ground, before long I found myself alone in the eerie half-dark. Here and there I found a slave stranded, lost from the line. "*Nequenda pana,*" I would order. ("*Go to the beach.*") If they hesitated, I pointed my rifle at them as a gentle hint that it was better to obey. They had been told that we were cannibals and would eat them, so I can't blame them much for not being overjoyed to see us.

I stepped into a pool—and went in over my head. I managed to keep my rifle dry and get out, scrape a little of the green scum from my face and hair and go on, expecting every instant to be ambushed by the slave crew, but I did not meet them.

I found an old man who implored me to shoot him and end his suffering. He roused my sympathy, and I loaded him onto my shoulders and started back to the beach. Staggering, tripping over roots, slipping, almost sprawling flat at times, somehow I managed to reach the water's edge, and at sunset I was back to our boat. All hands were there, hungry, tired, filthy and half dead from thirst. We had captured thirty-four slaves, men, women and children, three of them babies, and the captain of the slaver. The slaves were in worse plight than we, for they had been three days and nights crossing from the mainland, where they had been taken on board the dhow. Chained neck and neck, they were forced to lie on deck, exposed to the sun by day and cold winds at night, with very little food or water in the entire time.

The tide was out and had left our boat high and dry. While waiting for the flood, we waded out to the slaver, which we stripped of the mainsail. We also found a few gallons of water, some provisions and a little cotton cloth. This we gave to some of the slaves who were entirely naked. After we had stripped the dhow of everything useful to us, we set fire to it and returned to our own boat.

The water and provisions were divided share and share alike; then twenty-five of the strongest slaves were sent overland to our camp with an escort of three men, and the rest were placed in our boat, which by this time was floating clear. The sea was choppy as we shoved off, and a ragged black cloud was spreading over the southern sky; once beyond the shelter of a small headland, we realized that we were in for a terrific tropical storm.

We fought it for hours. Spray and rain lashing, wind tearing at us until it stopped our breath; occasionally a wave swept over us, and we had to bail like mad. Our oars were practically useless; a sail would have been in ribbons in an instant; we were tossed and whirled, driven before the wind.

About midnight the wind dropped somewhat, and we anchored, hoping to rest our aching muscles; but our anchor dragged, and every half hour, all the rest of the night, we had to up-anchor and pull offshore. Four hours' hard rowing after daylight took us back to our old anchorage in the lagoon. The party that had gone overland arrived during the morning in good condition.

We set up the slaver's mainsail as a shelter for the slaves. We ourselves had to sleep outside. A message was sent across the island to the ship, asking that the slaves be taken off our hands, and we posted sentries, as we fully expected to be attacked. A few shots were exchanged during the first night, but the slavers evidently decided we were well prepared, and we were not molested after that.

OUR time of duty ended a few days later, and the *Conquest* picked us up, another boat's crew taking our places. I was in the sick bay for the next six weeks with fever, but after that I was all set for another brush with the slavers.

Today a native Christian church stands on the site of what was once the largest slave-market in Africa, in the city of Zanzibar. The British marine, like his Yankee brother, usually accomplishes what he sets out to do.

The Pants Bandit

*A chain-store manager forgets modesty
—and danger—to capture a vicious thug.*

By FRANZ BLAU

AS a reward for good and faithful service as a clerk in a certain chain of grocery stores for about two years, I was offered the position of summer relief manager. Since a clerk who gets this position not only gets the pay of the manager whom he relieves for a two-weeks' vacation, but also has a chance to get a permanent managership of his own, I was very glad to accept this opportunity.

For a week everything went well in the store I had taken over; the clerk and order-boy who worked with me were nice fellows and did their work well; I had made some acquaintances among the other chain-store managers in the neighborhood; and best of all, the customers did not mind, as they sometimes do, the change of managers, so that I was able to take in almost as much money the first week as the old manager could have. So I was able to start the second week light-heartedly.

On the Tuesday of this week I came in early, about ten to seven, as was my custom, and went about my regular early duties. I opened the door, pushed the order-boy's pushcart to the curb, punched the time-clock, opened the safe and counted the money from there into the till.

I had about thirty dollars in cash, a few small endorsed checks, and a few dollars in change. After I had finished this, I pulled the stale milk to the curb where the truck-driver who collected it could get it; and I was rolling in a can of fresh milk, when a man entered the store and took his place at the counter. I immediately shoved the can into a corner and went behind the counter.

"Good morning sir," I said politely, for our stores demand polite attentiveness for their customers. "What can I do for you?"

He looked around the store and then at the entrance; then suddenly said:

"Put your hands on the counter and keep them there!"

I was very much surprised when I heard this, until I realized that the man's

right hand was in his coat pocket, from which he was pointing something at me. It took no great imagination to realize that very likely it was a pistol! Then I realized that this was probably the thief who was robbing the chain-stores in this neighborhood. All the chain-store men in the vicinity had told me about him.

"Don't make a move," he warned me as he came around back of the counter.

I didn't, because I was afraid he would shoot. I remembered that in stories that I had read, nervous men had sometimes fired at the slightest move of their victims, and this man certainly appeared nervous. Anyway, I thought to myself, the money is insured by the company, and there's no use getting shot for it. So when he told me to move to the back of the store, I did. He stopped at the cash register and suddenly said:

"Take off your pants!"

I started to argue. I didn't want to take off my trousers at all. In the first place, because I had about ten dollars and my watch in them; secondly, because since I had become a relief manager I had started wearing my good clothes to work and I didn't want these trousers to become creased or dirtied; and furthermore, I knew that I just wouldn't feel right without my trousers on, and just plain didn't want to take them off.

But the bandit only kept getting more and more nervous as I spoke, so at last, afraid he might shoot if I argued any longer, I took them off and gave them to him. It's a terrible feeling to be in a store in broad daylight without trousers on; somehow I just didn't feel myself.

The bandit then ushered me into the back room, shutting the door and snapping the lock. By this time I was getting mad. Holding me up and taking the company's money was bad enough, but taking my trousers was more than I could stand. It boiled me up to have that crook make me feel like such a sap.

I remembered that Eddy, from the X— store, had told me that when the man took his hand out of his pocket there was no bulge there such as a gun would



surely leave. And after all, how did I know that he did have a gun? I had only seen his hand in his pocket. Besides all these proofs that he wasn't dangerous, I was mad clean through; that dirty so-and-so had taken my trousers, and he wasn't going to get away with it! I started to pull the boxes away from the side door which we only used on Mondays and Fridays when the warehouse order came in, and which the thief hadn't noticed.

I swung open that door with a force that almost tore it from its hinges. The bandit was running down Fulton Street toward Brooklyn Avenue when I came out of the store. I immediately took after him, for I noticed that he had my trousers under his arm. He looked back and saw me; then, to my utter surprise, he ran still faster! I had slowed down and was preparing to dodge behind an elevated pillar if he started shooting at me, but when he simply turned and ran faster, I was certain that he had no gun. I shouted to some men to catch him, but they just stopped and watched us. When I ran past them I noticed that they were laughing at me. It must have been funny to watch me run down the street without my trousers on.

When he reached Brooklyn Avenue, he was a half-block ahead of me and still gaining. I was rapidly getting winded at that speed, for a grocery store is no place to keep in condition for long runs. I was slowing up in my despair, when a taxi came down Fulton Street. I yelled for it to pick me up, and the taxi-driver, a quick-witted fellow, slowed up just enough for me to jump onto the running-board and then immediately speeded up again while I gasped out my story.

I kept my eye on the crook, who had turned and seen this latest development in the chase, and now turned down Troy Avenue in a belated effort to throw us off his trail. The taxi-driver put on a burst of speed and cut across the street, barely missing the elevated pillars. As we pulled up beside him, the crook lost his head completely and dodged into the

gateway of one of the old-fashioned brownstone houses which line that part of Troy Avenue. With a squeal of brakes we slowed down and I jumped off after him.

As the crook ran down the short path that led to the basement of the house, with me at his heels, he threw my trousers from him into a muddy little garden on the left of the path. That was the last straw. Even if I did not know that he had no pistol, I should have jumped him as I did then. He had backed up against the grilled iron gate which protected the basement, and was whining like a dog.

"So you'd steal my trousers, you dirty _____," I howled as I punched him in the face. I let him have it again in the same place. Then I grabbed him by the collar and dragged him to the taxi, swearing at him all the way. I smashed him into that taxi and told the driver to take us to the police station.

"Aw, listen, buddy," he cried, "I got a wife an' three kids to support—"

Bam! I let him have it in the face again. His wife and kids must have lived on Park Avenue in that case, because he robbed about three stores a week, getting between thirty and fifty dollars in each store.

We were getting near the police station when he opened up again:

"Listen, buddy, I aint workin' alone, see. I got a gang, an' they'll get ya sure. Lemme—"

Bam! I let him have it again.

We pulled up at the police station, where I brought him in to the policeman at the desk. He started to laugh when he saw me. I realized that I had no trousers on! While I preferred charges against the thief, the taxi-driver drove back and got my trousers.

TWO days later I received a letter from the company thanking me for saving their money. But I got docked just the same for the time I was gone when I had to appear against the crook in court!



The Land of

In "My Arctic Outpost" Mr. Brower told you of his extraordinary adventures in capturing the great bowhead whale with primitive Eskimo weapons—and of the many other unique experiences as the chief pioneer of America's farthest North. Here he carries on his remarkable narrative.

IN April of 1900 the ice looked good. The edge was eight miles offshore, and the flaw was mostly old fresh-water ice with long strips of new ice between, making an ideal flaw for the whales to run under.

Ned Arey was here this winter with no outfit. I shipped him to take charge of the station while I was away on the ice, and I shipped George Beardsley to look after the sleds and dogs; if there was any bone to haul, he was to help with that. Klinkenberg was going whaling with his dinghy. He hired four men to help.

After cutting our road, we had to wait until almost May before the ice opened; then everyone was off. Two of my boats stayed near the road, and the rest of us went south nearly thirty miles until we found a place that suited us. Klinkenberg came south with us, and for a time he seemed to have all the luck. Then my two boats at the road each killed a large whale, and then we started. One day I had five dead whales at one time to cut, including one of my own. I went to work on the two closest, and this took all day; and then, with my boat's-crew, I went south six miles where the others were. One was cut when I arrived; the others were under the ice, a hundred yards from the edge.

The ice where the whales had been killed was four feet thick. It was a hard job cutting away this ice, making holes

large enough to get the head up so we could hook on the tackles. Everyone with axes and spades went to work, when we found the head, which we located by the bubbles of gas escaping from the mouth. We cut all around it, and when we had the hole large enough so the fin would not catch under the ice, the worst was over.

When all the bone from the five whales was in, most of our boats went north, nearer the road. Jack Hadley and one other stayed south the rest of the spring. On our way north I met Appiyow going offshore. He had just harpooned a large whale. It was not hurt very badly, and he asked if I would help to kill it for him, which I did, getting one fourth of the head of nine-foot bone for my share. When we reached our road, all the boats were offshore, chasing a school of large whales going slowly north. As soon as we unloaded what bone we had in our canoe, we too went after them. We were too late to get in on the fun, but the boats had two dead whales when we reached them. One was ours; the other belonged to a village boat.

From the shore ice, the boat's-crews had seen this body of whales playing. They did not seem to be going anywhere, but were just lobtailing and breaching half out of the water, and then rolling around with their fins out, having a good time. After watching them for a while, three boats went off. As they got close, they could see that there was one whale that floated high in the water. Once in a



the Long Night

By CHARLES
D. BROWER

The grand old man of the North—for a half-century he has maintained a whaling station and trading post at Point Barrow, the most northerly spot under our flag.

while the others would butt him with their heads, rolling him almost over. It always came back to the same position. The crews thought it might be a dead whale, the way it acted.

When quite close to the whale, one of the school came alongside the canoe of Atkins, one of my boat-headers; his boat-steerer struck and killed it with one bomb. The other whales left, except the one that did not go down. The village boat went to that. It was not dead, but nearly so; some one south of us had shot a bomb into it. The village boat killed it with their darting-guns.

Early in June most of the boats were congregated at the road. We thought the season was over, for we had not seen a whale for several days. Generally the last run of whales is made up of large ones; they all come along in a body, and pass in a day or two if the ice stays open. Most of the big ones had gone by offshore. As the pack was gradually closing in, several of us went off to the pack, paddling south, hoping we might pick something before the wind-up. The edge of the pack was scattering. We were unable to make our way for more than two miles, before the ice got so thick we had to stop.

A few miles south, we all hauled onto a large field to look around. Then we could occasionally hear a noise as if twenty men were snoring. From a high piece of ice, one of the men spotted a whale. He called to us to make no noise, and watched it for a while; the whale was high out of water, and for a time we



thought it was another wounded one. Then the fellow on lookout said he thought it was asleep, and if it was, all our noise would not awaken it. I had never seen a whale asleep before, and never have since. All the boats started for it. Oxina, one of my men, was ahead; they ran right on top of this whale; and the boat-steerer, using both his darting-guns, and another man with the shoulder gun shot it at the same time. If the whale was asleep, it woke up in the whale's heaven, for it was killed instantly. We cut it up there on the offshore ice and our boats divided the bone and filled up with meat.

THAT June we had the greatest *nelak-tatak* (dance) I ever saw—not that it was different than the others, but that everyone seemed to have a better time, and they kept it up longer. It lasted over ten days. I did not care, as there was plenty of time to clean bone. No one was going away hunting, as all hands wanted to see the big dance, which was to be held later when the people came from the inland and east.

Beardsley was the only boat to leave early; he hired an old Eskimo to go with him as guide. I tried to have him wait until some one from here was going that direction. He took a man from the east who did not know anything about the coast, but George was in a hurry to get



started and thought he could make it all right, as he had a chart of the coast line from Point Barrow east.

Late in June we started buying bone as the Eskimos had a great deal this spring. Our own catch for the spring was twenty-three thousand pounds, and the trade was near twelve thousand, making the best season I ever had. Bone was worth between three and five dollars, according to length.

ABOUT July 20th the visitors came from the east. They had assembled at a place on the big lagoon where there was good fishing, and all hands came in together. There were over fifty oomiaks, more than I had ever seen at one time. I knew many of the regular summer visitors, but there were many strangers that came from over the mountains whom I had never previously seen. There were young people among them who had never seen white men before.

A few days after the dance was over the ships arrived, and what few furs remained with the Eskimos were soon sold, mostly for bad whisky. The steamers only stayed a few days; then they were off for Herschel Island; but it was long enough for the Eskimos to get some kind of sickness, something like the flu. It was worse with the people from inland. Whole families were sick at once. Their devil-doctors said that it was because the coast was not good for them, telling them to pack up and start inland, and they soon would get better. They had all started at once, many hardly able to walk. From the day they left, in their oomiaks, they started dying, all along the coast and up the rivers. Some did not get more than ten miles from their camp at Berinak, and they were taken out of their boats and left on the banks of the lagoon. The first we found was a woman with a young baby. She had evidently died on the bank when left behind by her people; the baby was alive for some time after the mother died, as it had moved away from her a short distance.

Some of the Utkieavi hunters brought the news of the great disaster to the inland people. It was evident that the sick people were taken from their canoes, placed on the bank and abandoned; there was no one left strong enough to take the boats up the rivers. Then they had camped, dying just where they were. I don't think that of the more than two hundred people that came to the dance, there was one left alive. That fall and

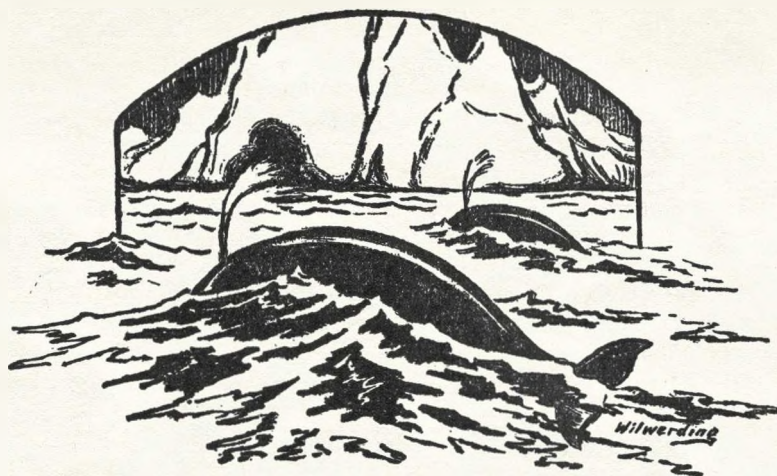
the next summer many bodies were found, with all their belongings. What became of their dogs was a mystery, as none was found inland; they must have starved, and been eaten by the other animals.

Our own Eskimos fell sick, and a few died from pneumonia; the rest were soon around again. In the middle of August the *Bonanza* arrived with our stores and trade-goods. Tom Gordon and Fred returned on her, and I was mighty glad to have them back; Jack Hadley and John Greuben left for San Francisco on the *Bonanza*. I think she had the richest cargo she ever carried, being loaded with whalebone and furs.

Early in the fall I received a letter from Beardsley from Flaxman Island, saying he thought he had struck it rich. He was going to prospect a little while longer, then come to Point Barrow as fast as he could.

A few days after the ship left, a man from Point Barrow came to the station saying he had seen a canoe lying on her side, drifting past the village in a lot of slush ice. The sail was set and that kept the boat from turning over and sinking. From the description, I was almost sure it was the boat I had built for Beardsley. It was blowing hard and no one could launch a canoe through the running ice, to make sure. Two days later another oomiak came in from the east; they had been with George at Cooper's Island. It was blowing a gale, and George wanted to get to the station, and persuaded a man and wife, with two children, to come along with him. They evidently had come as far as Dead Man's Island and had been swamped in crossing the entrance between it and the Point, all hands being drowned. None of the bodies were ever found. Later, a pair of Beardsley's pants washed ashore on the sand-spit; they were tied in a bundle, and contained a few silver quarters and dimes. I never knew where he came from, but he said he had been outfitted by an English syndicate. I have always wondered what rich find he made, as was suggested in his letter.

THE winter passed without anything of account happening; not many Eskimos went hunting, for since the winter of 1897-'98 there had been no caribou in the country. Those that were killed were taken far inland near the mountains, and they have never been abundant here since.



The reindeer, which were introduced from Siberia, were increasing rapidly, and many young men were needed to attend the herd. The boys seemed to like the work. A few, however, seemed to think that all they had to do was chase the deer, just as if they were wild. From the time they could understand anything, they had been used to killing whatever they saw. To conserve and guard deer was something the older ones never heard of, and the boys in some cases had the same attitude.

The Government made no appropriation for taking care of the reindeer, so I financed the work at Barrow for a number of years, taking my pay in fox-skins which the boys caught during the winter.

Many seal were being caught in nets after the sun left; one man caught eighty-eight in one night. This was the most I have ever heard of at one setting of the nets. When netting seal, a man stays all night, and as fast as a seal is caught, the net is hauled, the seal killed and the net reset.

This winter the devil-drivers made their last endeavor to keep some control over the Eskimos. Finding they could not make the people believe the things they used to tell them, they tried another tack. They said they had received messages from above, telling them of another new religion better for the Eskimos than the white man's. For a while each had a small following. Eventually they lost all their prestige, and then they too became converts.

The spring of 1901 the ice looked good, but for some reason there were no whales taken—that is, no large ones; several small inyutos were caught, just enough so the Eskimos had some whale-meat and blubber to help them out. Summer

came early; the first part of July the lead opened along the ridge, and the pack was not far off, so all the boats were off walrus-hunting day and night.

To our surprise, the steam whaler *Grampus* arrived opposite the station on the morning of July 15th; we were not expecting anyone for some time as the pack ice was not far away. The first night there, one of the crew deserted, coming ashore over the ice; he started inland to look for a town. The next night some of the Eskimos found him and brought him to the station for me to take care of. I told him to go back aboard his ship, as all he had to do was walk over the shore ice and go aboard. He would not, so I told him he would have to shift for himself, and away he went, staying with the Eskimos.

The ice started in July 19th, and Porter shifted the ship to where he thought he would have some protection from the pressure. But it was no use; at nine o'clock that night the pack caught him, crushing the stern of the ship and damaging her rudder and propeller. The pressure of the pack-ice held her stern up out of the water several feet; while in this position, she did not leak. Next morning the wind changed, and the pack went off also, leaving open water to the beach. As soon as he could, Porter got under way, and steamed to where he could beach the *Grampus*. As he was going south, the *Jeanette* was going north. Newth of the *Jeanette* stayed by the *Grampus* until she was on the bottom, where she could be kept free of water. Porter sent for me to come down as he wanted to hold a survey on his ship. Fred and Mr. Spriggs went along to see what had happened. I took along Porter's runaway sailor, to put aboard the ship if she

would proceed on her voyage. On the way down the sailor said he would rather die than go back aboard; he complained of not being treated right. He insisted he wanted to see the American consul!

I told him that if that was all he wanted, he had better talk with Mr. Spriggs. That was too much for Spriggs; he could not keep a straight face. As the fellow insisted he wanted to die, rather than go aboard ship, I showed him a hole in the ice near the beach and told him there would never be a better time; we would all sit on the bank and watch him. As he received no sympathy from us, he gave up the notion of dying and came along. The *Grampus* was on the beach twelve miles below the station. She was so badly stove there was nothing we could do except to condemn her; then all the crew transferred to the *Jeanette*. The *Grampus* was put up at auction, and I bid her in for the company. As she was fitted for wintering, she had a pile of goods aboard, and I made a good buy. As soon as I had bought the ship, Porter went to the *Jeanette* and Newth started at once for Point Hope, where he landed the whole crew.

I soon had all the Eskimos from the two villages at work discharging the *Grampus* on the beach. I put up several large tents made from her sails, and set the galley stove in one for a cook-tent, with some women to do the cooking. In three days everything in the ship was on the beach and under cover, except her coal. I had to sack that. We kept one hundred and fifty tons; and I gave the rest to the natives who were working for us.

NEXT year on April 20th, the ice had opened seven miles from the beach. Some men out hunting reported whales, so we started out the next morning, all hands going the same day. I wanted to be out first, and was.

The other boats had more sense than I, saying it would be better to wait a day or so and see what was going to happen.

But I talked Callao, one of the boat-headers, into coming along with me. Putting our boats in order, we started with the fair wind, sailing most of that day. The edge of the ice was fine and level as far as we went, nearly thirty-five miles, in a southeasterly direction.

Finally, we stopped to cook; the crews had nothing to eat all day, and started kicking, or we would have gone farther. While we were setting up a tent for a little shelter, the women were making

coffee. It had just been taken off the stove when some one said the ice was getting closer—that the pack ice was coming toward us. I wanted to be sure we were not adrift, so took the sounding-line to the edge to see how much water there was and if we were drifting any. We had sixty fathoms and were slowly going north. How long we had been adrift, it was hard to say. There was nothing for us to do except to start back for the road. We intended doing this as soon as we finished eating, which meant that we would have to paddle all night; even that was denied us, for in a few moments, the pack came in hard and we were forced to move the boats back in a hurry.

THERE was nothing to do but haul back to shore ice, which from our position, just north of the Sea Horse Islands, meant a haul of at least twenty miles. We packed the boats onto the sleds, getting all the food and whaling gear in the bottom so as to keep the load in the center of the boats; then we took our whale-lines and made springs from bow to stern to stiffen the boats, and started on our way. Good luck was with us. We hauled over smooth ice all night with hardly a ridge to cross; and the next day the same, but along toward evening the ice was rougher. The nearer we came to the shore ice, the worse it was, and the last three miles were frightful. By taking one boat at a time we finally reached a heavy cake, two hundred and fifty yards from the ground ice; we could go no farther with the loaded boats. As there was no danger of the oomiaks crushing under, where we were, we took all our dunnage, making packs of not more than fifty pounds, on our backs, climbing over the moving ice until we reached the grounded ridge.

No whaling was done until late that season, and then a few small ones were caught, with hardly any bone in them. It was a bad season for us. I don't think we had over a thousand pounds of bone for the year.

In the latter part of July the ships came, bringing our mail from outside. They stayed only a short while, as they were all anxious to get east to the whaling-ground. The sailing-ships were now becoming scarce. Many were lost in different places and as they were not replaced the fleet was small. Only the steamers seemed to be catching any oil and bone. The *Bear* came to Barrow in August. (*This same ship is in the Ant-*

arctic with Admiral Byrd in this year 1934). Captain Tuttle brought a crowd from Nome, that wanted to go mining over on the Coleville River. Ned Bosqui was head of the outfit; he had been appointed Commissioner for the District. They were all miners and hoped to strike it rich in where they wanted to go. Some prospectors had come to Nome the winter before with a lot of gold nuggets. At first they would tell no one where they had found them; finally they said they had found the gold on the headwaters of the Coleville River. I knew better, as no one had been in there for years.

These false rumors started this outfit on a two-year chase. . . .

In the early part of September, 1902, one of the Steam Whaling Co's. steamers arrived from Herschel. They brought a sick Eskimo woman out with them, and without telling anyone what was the matter with her, dumped her on the beach, leaving almost immediately for the west. The people around the station put up a tent for her, doing all they could to make her comfortable. She did not last long, but died in a couple of days. Soon afterward the Eskimos started getting sick, and for a time I could not diagnose the cases, until they began to break out with blotches all over them. Then Dr. Marsh and I came to the conclusion they had measles. When they told us it was the same as the sick woman had, I knew we were in for a time.

There was no one except Marsh to help, and he did not have any medicine to do anything with, and neither did I. One after another took sick, until almost all were down. Spriggs left on the *Bear*, as Mrs. Spriggs was expecting a baby and wanted to be outside when it arrived, so I had to take care of all the people about the station, while Marsh looked after the few in the village.

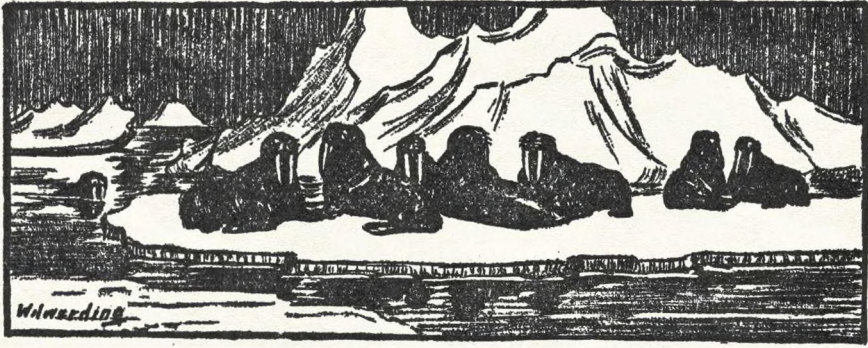
Before the worst happened, Bosqui and his men came back to the station. Their schooner had been sunk in the lagoon at Flaxman Island. There was nothing else for them, so all hands came to Point Barrow.

The measles does not seem a bad sickness in civilization. Here, as the natives got it, they had high fever, lasting until the rash came out; then they began to feel better and insisted on going outside their houses, and caught cold. That was the end of them, as they soon developed pneumonia, which carried them off inside of two days. No matter what I told them, it was the same. I could control some



that lived alongside the station; the rest, living in the village, would not obey orders. For a spell, every Eskimo in the village and at Nubook was sick at once. It kept me busy attending them; they would not help each other in any manner. Every day there were some dead. Bosqui and Graber were the coffin-makers, and Klinkenberg, Fred and Tom were the undertakers. At times, whole families would die during the night; then it was Marsh or myself that found them. I tried to keep my wife and family quarantined in their house; but it was no use. Toctoo insisted on helping me with those near the station. Soon she sickened, and a few days later she died, her young baby dying the day after. . . .

At Point Barrow the village was nearly wiped out. Those that did get better left as soon as they were able, going east to their fishing-places. They passed the disease on to others, and many died away from the village. Not one of the whites was taken sick; even Marsh's children were immune. He took all kinds of precautions with them, however, not allowing anyone near his house, and he was careful to fumigate himself before going home. I buried one hundred twenty-six people before Christmas. Most of them died in October and November; during December there were only a few deaths. How many there were that died away from the villages, I never knew.



Whole families from Nubook, I know, never came back from their eastern trip in the summer. By the middle of November those that had been sick first were well enough to leave for their fishing places, on the rivers; they managed to just reach there, and that was all; they were so weak they were unable to set nets for some time.

We had to feed the natives during the sickness; if we had not been here, every one would have died from starvation. Every day I had some one go the rounds and find out how they were fixed for food. If they could not cook, I had some one do it for them. Bosqui and his men had moved to Tom's new house, which they were fixing for the winter. They walked down to our place every morning as long as the sickness lasted; they, along with Klinkenberg, were a great help to us.

I DON'T think I ever saw the country so overrun with foxes as it was that fall; everywhere we looked we could see them running across the tundra—not one at a time, but in droves. There was no one to trap them, until along in December, and then some of the trappers got to work. Before spring I had the largest collection I ever had at Barrow—about thirty-two hundred, mostly white foxes.

Christmas was not so cheerful this winter. Tom had lost his wife and baby a few days after Toctoo died, and although our cook had a good dinner for us, we did not have much of a time. We all stayed home and so did the Marshes. . . .

When the sun came back on the 21st of January, 1903, Bosqui thought he would try and reach the Coleville River with a lot of reindeer sleds. I tried to tell him he could not do it, as none of the deer had ever been broken into hauling. Twice before this, the boys carrying the mails had attempted to make the journey with their deer. In both cases they had to abandon them and finish the trip with

dogs. Never did they get past Wainwright. Bosqui thought differently. He and Marsh talked it over; the deer were driven close to the station, and then the herders lassoed thirty young bucks. They put halters on them, making one end of a long rope fast to the ice on the lake, and then they ran them in circles until the animals were so tired they could handle them as they saw fit. After being run for a few days the deer got so poor that they could hardly stand; then they were let run in the herd for a time to feed. These were supposed to be broken; they were, but they were broken-hearted. While the deer were being broken, some of the boys were making sleds. In three weeks' time Bosqui and party were ready to leave. Sixteen sleds were loaded with at least three hundred weight each, and two deer were to pull each load. Bosqui himself was to take a dog-team and go ahead to where he wanted his camp, before the others reached him. He was to have a cache built to hold his grub and other outfit which the deer were pulling. Bosqui and his party got along all right; they waited a month for the men with the reindeer, but they never got past Point Tangent. Some of the deer lay down the first day; the others died all along the way, until at Tangent the boys had to turn them adrift. They stayed until the next winter, when they were driven back to the herd.

After waiting a month, Bosqui hired a native he found camped on the river and returned to the station, leaving his two men at the camp. With his dogs, he hauled in another load, staying there until late in the spring, when they all came back to Barrow, just as whaling began. There had been a split in their party, Hayes leaving the outfit on their return and living with Klinkenberg. Bosqui went to Marsh's for the rest of the summer until the ships returned from the east; then he went to Frisco in the *Bel-*

videre. Graber returned to the river. Hayes worked for the station during the whaling and then went east on a prospecting trip.

As we were going to move the whaling-station south a half-mile, using the old Refuge Station for the main house, I moved one of our warehouses to the new location before whaling started. It was quite a job, for I had no jacks and had to wedge the house from its foundations, and then get it on skids. I hauled it to the place I wanted it with tackles, leaving it blocked up until summer, when I put a foundation under it.

Whaling was not much of a success this spring; for a long time we saw no whales and then one of the village boats caught a small calf with no bone. Its mother must have been close by, but no one ever saw her.

Late in the season, a point made out for a quarter of a mile where I was. The pack-ice closed in on this, leaving a long lead of open water south. The night it closed, there came a big run of whales; at times there was a whale spouting at every hole in the ice. For some time I was in bad luck, but I finally picked a place, and a big whale came right to my boat. As there was no chance to get the boat into the water, we all were lined up along the sides, and everyone that had a gun let go at him, killing him instantly. As we were getting ready to cut it, another came in the same hole; this we killed also, but it sank so quickly we could not save it. The third whale was a small one, and we bombed and harpooned him the same as the first. The whale was so small that all the bombs went clear through and burst in the water, without killing him, but he was hurt badly and did not go far, coming up in a hole a short distance away. We all made for it with the shoulder-guns, and used all the bombs we had; finally we stuck it full of side irons, making it fast to the ice; and Atkiana, one of my crew, finished it off with a long knife from the ice, cutting the large veins in the back of its neck. Some of the other boats belonging to the company saw our flag and came to our assistance; we were able to cut both whales before the ice moved out, which it did the next day, and finished the season.

DR. MARSH went out this fall, taking two Eskimos along. They stayed but one winter, as they did not like the white man's country as well as they thought

they were going to. Marsh himself stayed out three years, before returning. While Mr. Spriggs was outside, he had been in touch with the Post Office Department, in Washington, and he established our first mail route from Barrow during the winter. The herders were to use their reindeer to transport it as far as Kotzebue.

They tried it twice, but that was enough. They could never make a success of using deer hauling freight or mail; the deer were good for a day or two; then they would have to stop for rest and feed. It was impossible for the deer to travel all day and rest and feed at night. When the deer were all in, they just lay down, and nothing one could do would get them on their feet again. We were supposed to have two mails each winter, one to leave in November and the other in January. The boys were so long on the first trip that Spriggs had to hire Klinkenberg with his dogs to make the January trip. He made it down in nineteen days, returning in seventeen, a round trip of about fourteen hundred miles.

THE ice came in early this fall; sealing was good; everyone was laying up enough meat to last all winter. It was fortunate that it happened so, as there were no deer in the country, although many parties were out. Trapping was fairly good, so with what furs we caught, the people were not hungry. In December we had a heavy blow from the southwest, one of the worst I ever saw here. The new ice was sixteen inches thick on the ocean, and no ridge had formed in the fall, so it was just one level sheet of ice as far offshore as one could see. When the gale was at its worst, the pressure on the sea ice started it crushing onto the beach. If there is a ridge grounded offshore, the ice piles on that, protecting the beach. With no ridge, the ice came up on the shore, in some places sheeting a quarter of a mile inland. It looked as if we were going to lose our new house; but for some reason the ice broke and started to pile up before reaching the house, making a ridge forty feet high, not more than fifty feet from us. We all had our sleeping-bags on sleds in case it had come to the house. This was the second time the ice nearly reached our house. It was a good thing we had moved the station, for the ice was shoved two hundred yards past the old station. With that ice pressure, we would have had no station, nor warehouse left. I always was lucky. . . .

The Eskimos were getting no seals, after the sun returned in 1904. I could see no reason for it, until one of the old men said there must be some walrus around. He told me if the walrus are forced to winter in the north they feed on the seals, finally chasing all of them away. They were right. The ice opened and shut all winter with the wind. In February it opened as usual, and no seals were to be had. One day some boys reported that they had seen walrus along the edge; then everyone went hunting for them. Several days later they shot three, and two were saved, the other sinking offshore where they could not reach it. The stomachs of the two saved were full of seal-blubber; evidently they had eaten nothing except the fat. The two saved were both old bulls; their tusks were broken from fighting, and nothing but the stumps remained. The old men say that often the old bulls stay behind just to live on seal, as without tusks they find it hard to dig the clams they used to feed on. After the walrus were killed, the seal came back and were as numerous as ever.

SPRING passed without much of interest happening until it was time to go on the ice, and that did not look very promising; it was closed all winter. Dan Sweeney had come from Tigera and was going in one of my boats; he had nothing, so I was giving him a chance, even if it was a slim one. On the ice we just lay around most of the time, for it remained closed most all spring. With a great deal of south wind, the ducks came much earlier than usual, flying over the ice and landing in millions. I never saw them so early; everything must have been frozen where they go to breed. In two weeks they all came back south—not all by any means, for those that reached us were starving; there were a few small holes of water then, and these were covered with ducks. They were everywhere, dying and dead on the ice, and land; and when they settled, they were so weak they could not rise. Those that reached water were just as bad off, as the water was so deep they could not reach bottom to feed. When the ice opened, as it shortly did, the ducks were so tame they came to the boats for feed. Although we had no whales, there were plenty of seals, and we cut up seal meat and blubber to feed them. They liked the blubber best; soon there were hundreds of ducks around every boat.

After staying around for a couple of days, they recovered some strength, those

that lived, and left us for the east. I expected that there would be a shortage of ducks the next spring, but it seemed to make no difference in their numbers.

ONE day Sweeney was camped near me; the ice had closed, so we hauled back our canoes from the edge, where the ice was crushing some. Sweeney and I walked back to watch it pile up, and as there was no danger, we kept our hands and arms under our attigas for warmth. At the edge we stood watching the ice pile. As we stood there a medium-size bear came over the small ridge and slid down in front of us. Whether we were more surprised than the bear would be hard to say; I know that Sweeney and I started for the boats on the run. I reached them first, but Sweeney was a close second! Neither of us took time to look back until some of the boys that were watching us coming, started for the bear. The bear was going the other way, traveling as fast as we had been. Our crews shot it and we divided the honors.

Just at the end of the whaling season, the ice opened for a few days. Several bowheads were seen, but none were taken. Those we did see were all cows and calves. I could have struck a calf, but there was nothing in that, except a lot of work getting the meat home. I wanted the cows, as they were large, and any one would have made two thousand pounds of bone or more. When the cows and calves are coming along, the cow is never far from the young one. She may be right under it, or off on one side watching. If the calf is struck, the cow usually leaves it, going offshore in the ice. She may stay around all day or longer, but there is no chance of striking her, for she is watching the boats all the time. Only twice in my life have I ever seen a cow whale fight for her baby. In both cases we just had to haul our boats out on the ice and wait until she left. Once we killed the calf and had to leave it all day. The calves in the spring are not very old when they reach this place. At Tigera they are seldom seen; the Eskimos say the calves are born below Icy Cape, offshore of the smooth ice, and they stay there some days before starting north. By the time they reach here, they can travel quite well. When they get tired, I have seen them lying right on the mother's back, apparently quite at home when the mother sounds, for they stay right here. A calf is not able to stay under water for any great length of time, and for that rea-

son they are easy to catch. They will often come close alongside the boat as if they thought it some kind of whale. Once in a while I have seen a young one with its flukes curled on the corners, as though it had just been born and they had not straightened out. One old man told me the young were born on the ice. I did not take much stock in the yarn, but he insisted that the old Eskimos knew it was the truth. But neither he, nor anyone else I questioned, had ever seen it.

Captain Jim McKenna came north in the schooner *Chas. Hanson*. He was outfitted to winter in the east.

LATE in the summer, after Mac had left, the schooner *Laura M.* arrived with freight for the Bureau of Education. They were putting new and larger schoolhouses up all along the coast. One had been landed at Wales, one at Tigera, one at Wainwright and there was one for Barrow. We had a new school teacher and his wife this summer—John Killbuck, a full-blood Delaware Indian, married to a white woman. He was a fine man, and everyone liked him.

Oleson, the carpenter building the schoolhouses, came along early in the winter. As soon as the snow was deep enough, he had a large frame put up and covered with snow; here he cut the frame of the building, and had all the window- and door-frames ready for putting in as soon as he could work in the spring. Just before Christmas I was out hunting seal on the young ice abreast the house with a couple of Eskimo men. There was a light wind from the northeast, and we were expecting the ice to open most any time. Sure enough, while we sat there, the ice started to move off. No sooner had it opened a little than a bird came from under the ice. It was a guillemot. I knew they were around all winter, and the Eskimos said they lived under the ice the same as the seals. This was the first time I had ever seen one come up as soon as the water made. They will live under the ice, using the seal's blow-holes to come to and breathe; or if the ice is rough and spaces above the water available, they come up there and live, getting their food from the bottom of the ice or in the water. Once since then I saw a guillemot come up in a seal-hole to breathe, and killed it, sending the skin to a museum, with a lot of other skins I had put up for them.

The snowy owls are the only other birds to be seen on the ice during the

Lemming



winter; they will sometimes settle on high pieces of ice and stay there a long time. I could not figure out what they were watching for a long time; then I saw one make a dive for something in the snow. It was a lemming. These small mammals often wander onto the ice in winter, burrowing under the snow the same as they do on land. Sometimes we have many owls that stay all winter with us; at others there will be none for years. When they are around, they are a nuisance to the trappers, springing their traps. Many are caught that way.

Christmas I had a full house. Every one at Barrow came to the station for dinner. I had a darty cook, and he was a dandy; he came from Virginia, and stayed with me six years. There was nothing he did not know in his line, and we certainly lived well while he was at the station. We had dinner with Mr. Spriggs on New Year's (1905) and then spent the evening with Killbuck and his wife. The Eskimos liked Killbuck; he was a good teacher, and besides was always doing them little favors that they seemed to appreciate. Killbuck had a habit of calling his wife John, and for some time the Eskimos did the same. Mrs. Killbuck did not like the name very well from them, so she had me explain that she was John only to her husband. The younger ones stopped at once, but the old people called her John as long as she was here, finding it easier to say "John" than "Mrs. Killbuck."

The ice looked good as the whaling-time approached. Everyone was busy with their boats and gear, and I hired Carter to run sleds for me in case I needed extra help. . . . I had a whale come right to my boat, and we killed it. After we saved my whale, the ice closed again.

A little later one of my boats struck a whale that ran under the flaw, never coming out to open water; we thought

we had lost it. Shortly afterward the pack came in, and everyone was in a hurry to get their boats on the sleds, and haul back away from the crush. Just about this time a bear came right in among us. All hands forgot about hauling away; all they could see was the bear. It was soon killed, and then, instead of skinning it as it should be skinned, everyone who could, cut a piece of the skin off large enough to make mittens of. Just then the ice came in with a bang, and the ice where we were broke up, splitting every which way. For a time we had a job getting onto solid ice.

The same day we camped on the road we found the whale we struck the day before; it lay under the ice where we were camped, near one of the tents. It smelled so loud the crew that was closest knew that there was a dead whale close by them! Prospecting around they soon located it, and that same evening we had the ice cut around it and soon had the bone out and on the way to the station. It seemed odd the whale should die just under the road we used all the spring.

The ice opened two days later, so out we went again to try our luck. Our boats killed another large one before the season was over, and then all the hands hauled home.

During the dance which followed, several people were hurt. One had his kneecap split across so he was never able to walk right; and a woman being tossed in the walrus-hide came down on the edge, where the young men were holding the hide tight. As she landed, a man leaned over to catch her on his hip, and in so doing, caught her on the point of his hunting-knife, cutting her quite badly. When they brought her to the station I took four stitches to close the wound.

ON the first mail this summer Spriggs had a letter from the Department saying that on no consideration could any deer be delivered to me, as the first money had been appropriated for taking care of the deer at Barrow. I already had my deer and had a bill of sale for them. Spriggs wanted me to return the deer, but I would not. I was the first white man to get hold of reindeer in Alaska. For a long time no white nor half-breed was allowed even to go as an apprentice with deer. Today my boys own about a thousand.

The ships arrived a great deal earlier that summer than they usually did.

Most of them arrived in July and were all gone east before the first of August. The *Bear* came on the 29th of July. Captain Hamlett asked me if I cared to go with him to Nome and from there go out in a steamer. Of course I was glad of the chance. We left for the south the next morning with the rising sun astern.

WE had a family reunion at Mother's on Christmas, with my brothers' families. It was the last time we were all together. . . . Just at Christmas, word had come that all the ships were safe except the *Bonanza*, which had been wrecked at Kings Point. Captain Moggs had come out and was on his way to Frisco, while his crew had taken boats and gone to Point Barrow, as the ships wintering at Herschel were all short of food. . . .

Later I went to Washington, and one morning my friend Mr. Ailes called me up and told me he had made arrangements for me to meet President Roosevelt. Meeting him was not the ordeal I had thought it would be, for seeing a Masonic charm I was wearing, he put me at ease at once by calling me "Brother."

When my daughters were introduced, he talked to them for a while, complimenting them on their good looks, and telling them they were the first Alaskan-American citizens he had ever had the pleasure of meeting. He gave each of them a double carnation from a stand in the reception-room, and placed them in charge of an attendant who showed them the White House. Mrs. Roosevelt was in Havana at the time.

While they were gone, we told yarns about the hunting we had seen in different places. The President was much interested in whaling stories, and seemed to enjoy my telling him some of our experiences. It was a pleasant experience for me, and I know the children were so proud they could hardly keep their feet on the sidewalks.

I now had to leave for the West. . . .

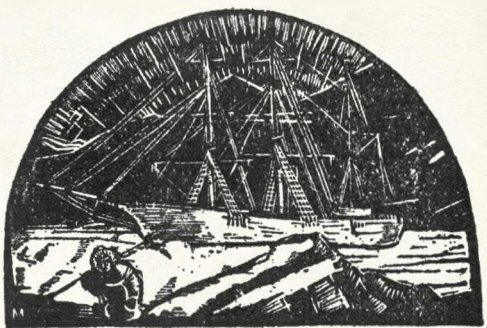
The *Vine* was loaded and ready to sail in June, so I left in her. All the way up we had fine weather, and we stopped at the pass long enough to catch a mess of codfish. Just inside the pass, I caught the largest fish with a hook and line I ever had taken. It was a halibut weighing one hundred thirty-five pounds.

The *Duchess of Bedford*, a small schooner, came in and anchored, while we lay at Point Hope. She was in charge of a Dane, Eijnar Mickelson and

they were on an exploring expedition, looking for land north of Alaska in what is known as the Beaufort Sea. The expedition had been partly financed by E. DeK. Leffingwell, who was one of the party; the remainder of the money had been put up by different ones, among them the Duchess of Bedford, for whom the schooner had been renamed. The expedition was flying the English flag and fitted out from British Columbia. They were having trouble with some of their crew; and when that was adjusted, they left.

Our next stopping-place was Icy Cape, where we had to lay while the ice on Blossom Shoals was moving off. The *William Bayliss*, *Harold Dollar* and *Thetis*, which was doing duty as cutter that summer, had all gone north some time before; we, being the only sailing vessel, had to wait until we could beat through. The *Vine* needed water; usually in the Arctic, when water is wanted, one hauls alongside a large cake, and water is pumped aboard; the ponds away from the edge are mostly fresh, especially if they have not eaten through or are far enough away from the edge so the salt water does not wash into them. We anchored just far enough away so we could run a line to a heavy piece of ground ice. Then the captain sent two men with a small line on the ice to cut a place to make his hauling-line fast; then we were to haul up, and get our water. The boys landed all right, and they went to the highest place they could find to make fast their line; just under them, the sea had eaten far back into the heavy ice and when they started to chop, the first cut slit off the whole overhanging piece. Both were on the outside and fell with the ice. Fortunately the piece was so it held them both, but for a while it rocked back and forth so it seemed they would go overboard. As soon as we could, we had another boat in the water and got the men; but Johnson took no chance on the same thing happening again; and when we took water it was from a lower piece of ice with no overhang.

When we did get around the shoals, we followed the land as far as Belcher, and then a day later we traveled to Point Franklin, where the ice held us. While we were tied up, another schooner came along, the *Carrie and Annie*, Captain Gifford; he was an old-timer, but had not been up whaling for several seasons. When the ice opened we went along to-



gether. Near the Sea Horses the ice was the heaviest I had ever seen it there, extending offshore fully ten miles; as we sailed along we could not see the land, which here is low. North of the Sea Horse Islands the ice was stripping from the ground-ice and the ice from the bay. We worked through the drifting ice all night, and during that time, we made fifty-seven tacks, though some of them were short. Either Johnson or myself was in the crosstrees conning the schooner all the time; we could see the open water inshore of us several miles away, but it seemed as if we would never reach it. The *Carrie and Annie* was with us all night, and we both reached the open water near Skull Cliffs early Sunday morning; then with the northeaster, we were able to stand up along the coast, reaching the station at one o'clock the same day.

The *Thetis* was at anchor as we came, and I went aboard her before going ashore; to my surprise Captain Bodfish was a prisoner. He had been accused by his crew of murdering one of his men, and was being taken to Nome for trial. He was afterward acquitted. Captain Cook of the *Laura M.*, which had been wrecked the last fall, was also aboard, and both he and Mrs. Cook were to go out on her, as well as the crew of the wrecked *Bonanza*, that had been with Fred all winter. The *Laura M.* had got caught in the ice along the shore the same as the year before, only this time the ice never went off, and when the pack came in, she was crushed almost on the beach. Phil Cook had put her up at auction, and she was sold to Derby, the new teacher who had just come in.

In the last half of August whales were reported offshore in the ice, but we had never whaled in the fall, never having seen them at that time of the year. The *Bayliss* was chasing whales, finally killing one that ran south. Bodfish, aboard

of the *Thetis*, was of course interested, and Hamlett steamed off to where they were cutting, so Bodfish could see that everything went right. As they came abreast of the station the launch from the cutter came ashore. Lieutenant Berry was in charge. While the *Thetis* was offshore, we saw a sloop coming alongside the sandspits from the east, and knew at once that it was Amundsen; so Berry, Fred and I started for the point in the cutter's launch, reaching there about the same time the *Gjøa* did.

Going aboard, we greeted Amundsen, congratulating him on the accomplishing of his Northwest Passage; we were the first people to greet him as he reached the point and finished that wonderful voyage. Shortly after we boarded him, the whole crowd from the *Duchess of Bedford* arrived; the little sloop could hardly hold us all. Captain Amundsen had broken one of his booms, and I thought that I might have something that would help him out, if he cared to stop for it. They anchored a few hours at the Point, but soon were on their way south, not stopping for the spar; I suppose he got what he needed from the cutter.

The fall of 1905 the Eskimos at the Point had seen whales going by, but made no endeavor to catch them until after the ice was made; then Annatossenna had taken his boat on the young ice and killed a small whale. We were seeing whales this fall, so I fitted some of our whale-boats for a chance, and was fortunate enough to get a large whale. That was a starter; now every fall the boats go whaling.

WHALING in the spring of 1907 started off fine; we had a good lot of men working together. My boat was first to catch a whale; we approached it head on, and as I went on it, we paddled past its head, and I struck it with both darting-guns. It died right there, never going a boat's-length after it was struck. When we had towed it to the ice I looked it over to see just what had happened to it. I was using a large No. 2 darting-gun for my second gun, and the bomb from that had gone through the whale, bursting in the blubber on the other side; all the under side was blown off for over eight feet in circumference. I never saw anything like it. If that bomb had exploded inside the whale, it would have blown it to pieces; the bombs we used were loaded with tonite.

A little later in the season, one of my boats went on two whales at once. They were coming along side by side, and Arnina the boat-steerer struck one with his first gun, killing it instantly, then as quick as a flash he struck the other with his second gun. This he hurt so badly we had no trouble saving it. It was the first and only time I ever saw this done, and Arnina was a proud man when we saved his second whale. Neither one was large, but it was a feat just the same.

TOWARD the end of whaling, the ice closed in for a day or so; there was no pressure from the pack, just a slow movement of ice. The pack came in and stopped, leaving a chain of holes up and down the flaw. I had my boat in a favorable place for whales to come to spout; two came without my chance to get an iron in either. The third one was a large fellow, and my crew put the boat right on his back, and before he could get under water I harpooned him. My man with the shoulder-gun shot at the same time I struck, and the whale hardly moved. We were all excited, trying to haul it alongside the ice, not paying attention to a lot of noise from the boat above us, until an Eskimo came running to me, saying one of their crew had been shot with a darting-bomb. He was so excited that he could not tell just what had happened, so I left the whale to my boat's crew and went to see how badly the man was hurt.

It seemed that they heard our guns go off and our bombs explode; then they heard us making all kinds of noise, and knew we had killed something. Cic-ric-cowra, the man hurt, thinking we might want another gun to finish off the whale, had tried to get the second gun from the bow of their boat. In the hurry, he had run his face against the rod that sets off the charge, forcing it back enough, so the gun went off; the bomb had gone through his cheek, taking off the end of his nose, and the powder from the shell was all over his face. When I got there, he was bleeding and looked as if some one had cut his throat. Two men were trying to stop the blood. Two others were trying to keep the boat-steerer from killing himself, for he said it was his fault the gun was left without the safety pin.

I looked the man over and saw that while the wound was bad enough, he was not going to die. I first quieted the boat-steerer and then started to see what

could be done for the wounded man. I soon had the wound cleaned, and I saw it was a case of sewing his cheek, for it was split four ways, looking like a star. First I had to get the powder out of the wound, and as we had nothing to work with, one of the crew said he would suck it out. I had heard about the mouth being full of germs, but it was the only way. While he was cleaning the wound of powder, I took a skin needle and heated it over the camp stove and bent it the shape I wanted it. For material to sew with, I took several hairs from the cook's head and had her braid them the same as they braid sinew for sewing; then with the help of the natives, I put six stitches in the man's face. I could do nothing to the end of the nose except cut off the fag ends with a knife, and bandage him up with the cleanest snow-shirt in the crowd. We were miles away from the station, and had to wait for a sled to take him in, so he sat around and watched us while we cut my whale; before we were finished, the ice opened, so we sent him to Mr. Spriggs to see if he had any bandages and would take care of the wound until I came ashore.

BEFORE the season ended, we caught another large whale, the last for the season. The ice did not close this spring, as it usually did in the first part of June; the pack moved off so far we could see no ice, and as there were no more whales we had to quit.

Late in the fall Eijnar Mickelson, of the Anglo-American Expedition, came to the station on his way to civilization. The *Duchess of Bedford* had been wrecked that spring, so there was no use of his staying any longer.

We passed an uneventful winter and spring; the ice looked good in 1908, but that was all there was to it. No whales were caught, except a few small inyuto, that gave us no bone. When the ice went off in the summer, the ships came along at the usual time, though they were getting fewer each year. Our tender the *Ivy* came in August.

When the cargo of the *Ivy* was all discharged, the ice came in only scattering, but still enough to bother her. The captain waited as long as he thought it safe, and then started for Point Barrow, hoping to get around the point for shelter. Just south of the point, the ice forced him on the beach. The skipper auctioned her off, Charley buying her for fifty dollars that I loaned him. It was a



Arctic Fox

lucky buy for Charley, as he had an outfit enough to last him a year besides the schooner, which he hauled off as soon as the ice moved away. The captain and crew left for Frisco in one of the steamers later.

We were getting to be quite a winter resort. When the ships came from the east, Mr. Leffingwell and Mr. Stefansson, who was out for the American Museum of New York City, arrived on the *Karluk*. Leffingwell went on outside, and Stefansson stayed here a while. He came from the Island to get some supplies; that summer he had made the trip down the Mackenzie river, along with Dr. Anderson. Steff wanted to go right back with his outfit; he needed a boat, and Tom Gordon loaned him an old sloop he owned. Steff got one of the men that had been on the *Duchess* to go back with him. Starting back, they were wrecked the first day, running on a piece of ice before they reached the Point; they were only a short time getting repaired, however, and then were off once more. This time they reached the bottom of Smith's Bay, where they ran on the mud flats. They discharged their cargo, and piling all they had on the beach, they made a trip east and then returning to Barrow in December, where he stayed until March.

The fall of 1908 all the whaling was off the station; we only used the house at Point Barrow a few days; then the ice swung in near the station, making it fine for everyone for the crews could get home nights, and have their breakfast before leaving in the morning. Our boats got two large ones, Jack Hadley as usual getting one of them. The village and Point boats caught three more, so everybody was satisfied and I had a good season to start off with.

Just before the holidays, Marsh and Stefansson took a trip south as far as

Icy Cape and did not get back until January, 1909. Then I had my hands full for a while acting as interpreter for Steff, who was getting all the folklore stories he could from the Eskimos.

In February, 1909, Stefansson left Barrow for Smith's Bay, where he had his cache. Some Eskimos he had hired to hunt for him, and Anderson, had camped there; most of his outfit had been eaten.

WHALING started in April; four of our boats left for the flaw on the 20th. Jack Hadley had one of them. The water was a long way out, and they were to report if whales were seen. That same night it started to blow hard from the northeast, and before morning the ice had broken several miles inside of where the edge had been. I had men out to where the edge was, hoping to hear from the boats already out. The gale lasted four days; then I had all the boats out at once to see if they could find out what had happened to Jack and the others. The second day out, we heard shooting to the northwest of where we lay, and that same night we could see two boats hauling in over the young ice. We managed to reach them and help them in. They were all right, except that they were out of grub, having eaten two weeks' supply while they were gone.

They and Jack had all been together when the blow started, and then Jack had killed a whale which he would not abandon; all hands stayed with him until the bone was out; then, when these two boats found that the ice was broken off inshore, they packed up and started for the lead inside, hoping to get across before it widened too much, for they knew it would be so rough they could not make it. We did not hear what happened to Jack, for six weeks.

During the first days Jack was lost, the women, belonging to the men in the boats, were coming out at all hours hoping to have word of their menfolks. One young woman, just about to be confined, came to my boat looking for her husband, staying all day; on her way home, the dogs ran away with her, throwing her from the sled. She managed to crawl home, hurt badly, and during the night her baby was prematurely born. She was found in the morning in her igloo, dead, with her baby beside her.

While we were out whaling Stefansson came back for more outfit, leaving on May 16th. We did well this season, and

if Jack had not been away with the other boats, we would have felt fine.

I was ashore in the early part of June. We had not hauled in the boats as yet, so early one morning I was surprised to see two boats hauling up the ice along the shore. When they reached the village, I saw it was Jack Hadley and Servunna, coming home. When they had to abandon their bone, the boats were near the edge of the pack, on scattering ice. This was drifting very fast, and as it was possible, they hauled back to the heavy pack; they stayed on their piece of ice several days and then hauled to the solid pack, which was going south. When the gale was over, they tried to get to the water but the wind from the northeast had piled the young ice on the pack so it was impossible to sled over it; they were far from land by this time, and could take no chances breaking a way through, and there they stayed for almost a month. . . . Finally they were able to put the boats on their sleds and hauled all the way home, over a hundred and fifty miles. They had each saved their whaling guns and bombs but everything else was thrown away. None of them had been hungry, as there were plenty of seal, and they had also shot some bears.

Leffingwell returned this summer, with a small schooner, the *Argo*, stopping here only a short while. He wanted to finish his surveying around the Canning River, and he brought the schooner so as to be able to cover more territory. The *Argo* was a power-boat and did not draw much water, so it was an ideal boat for the coast he wanted to work.

IHAD taken Jim Clarke from the *Ivy*. He went offshore and caught the only whale we took that fall; they were three days off northwest of the point cutting; then had to wait two days before the ice let them home to the point. In December the *Ivy* was lost. She disappeared during a blow, and no one saw her go; the ice had broken from the shore, taking her with it.

When whaling time arrived, we, as usual, all went out on the ice. Our boats had some good luck, Jack and I each getting large ones, and the others each caught a few small whales. Tom was getting skunked.

When this whaling was over, I decided to take a trip out for the winter, and let Tom have the station for a year.

The conclusion of Mr. Brower's unique narrative will appear in the next, the March, issue.

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