

BLUE BOOK

Magazine, February

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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

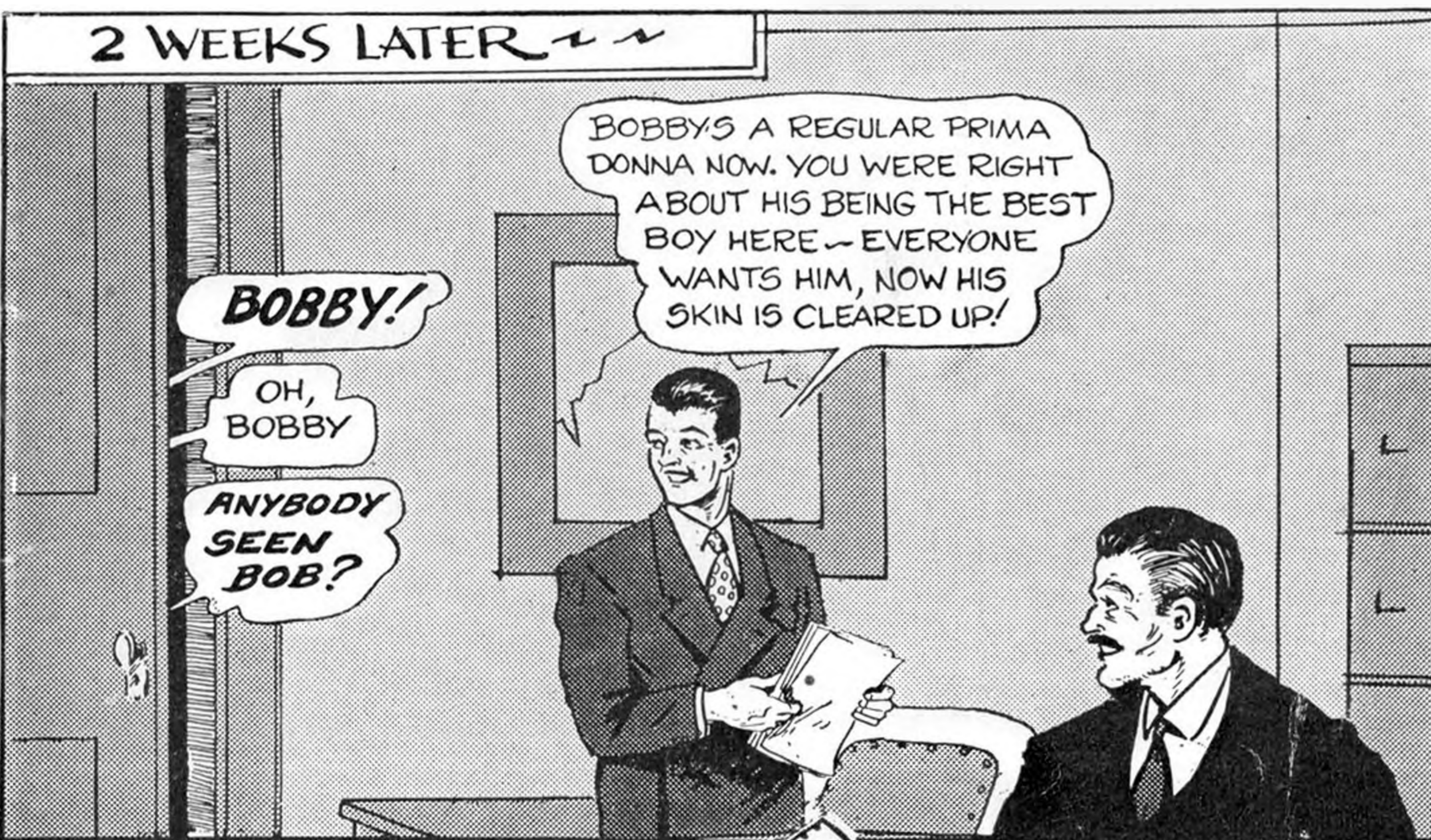
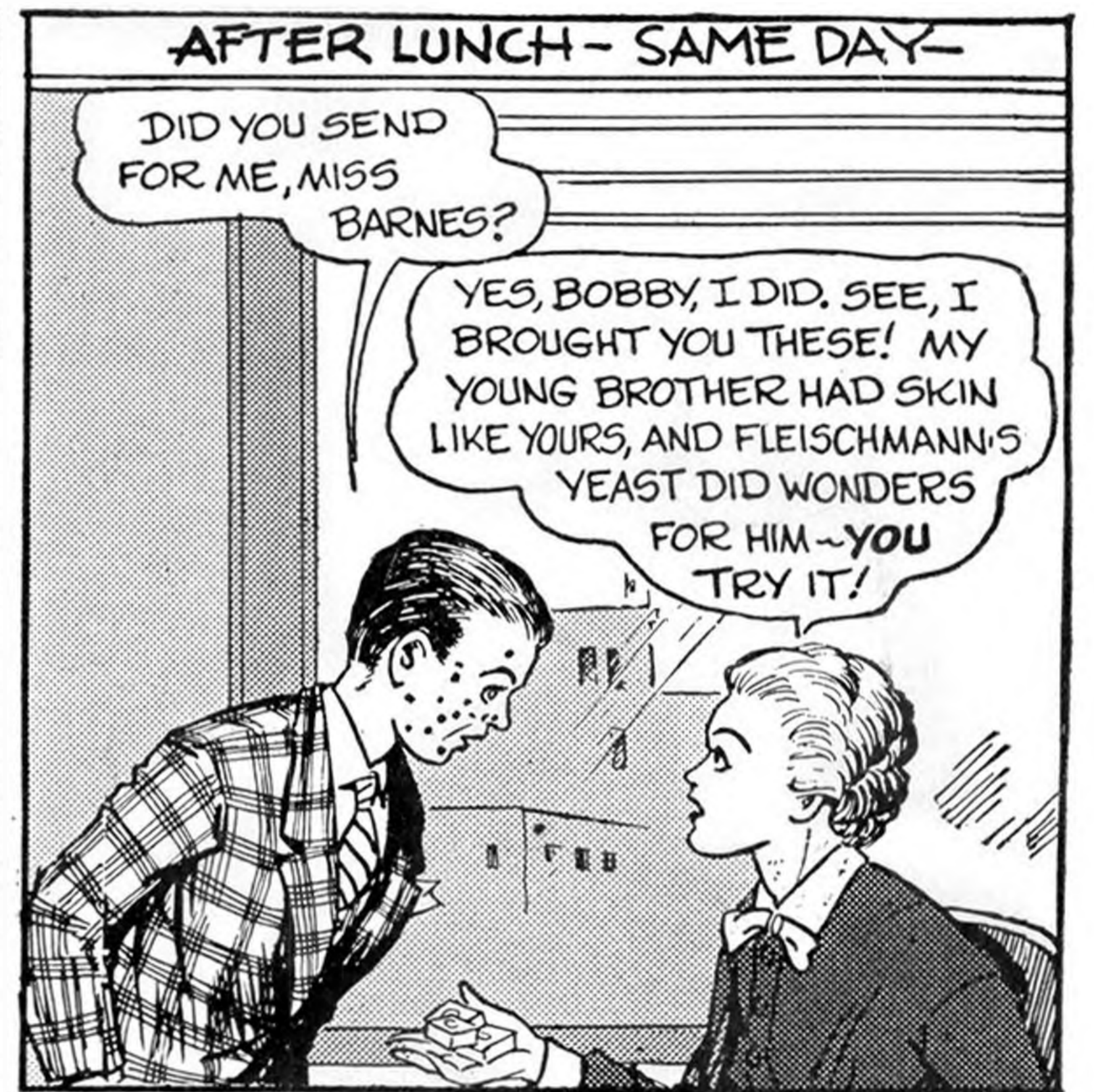
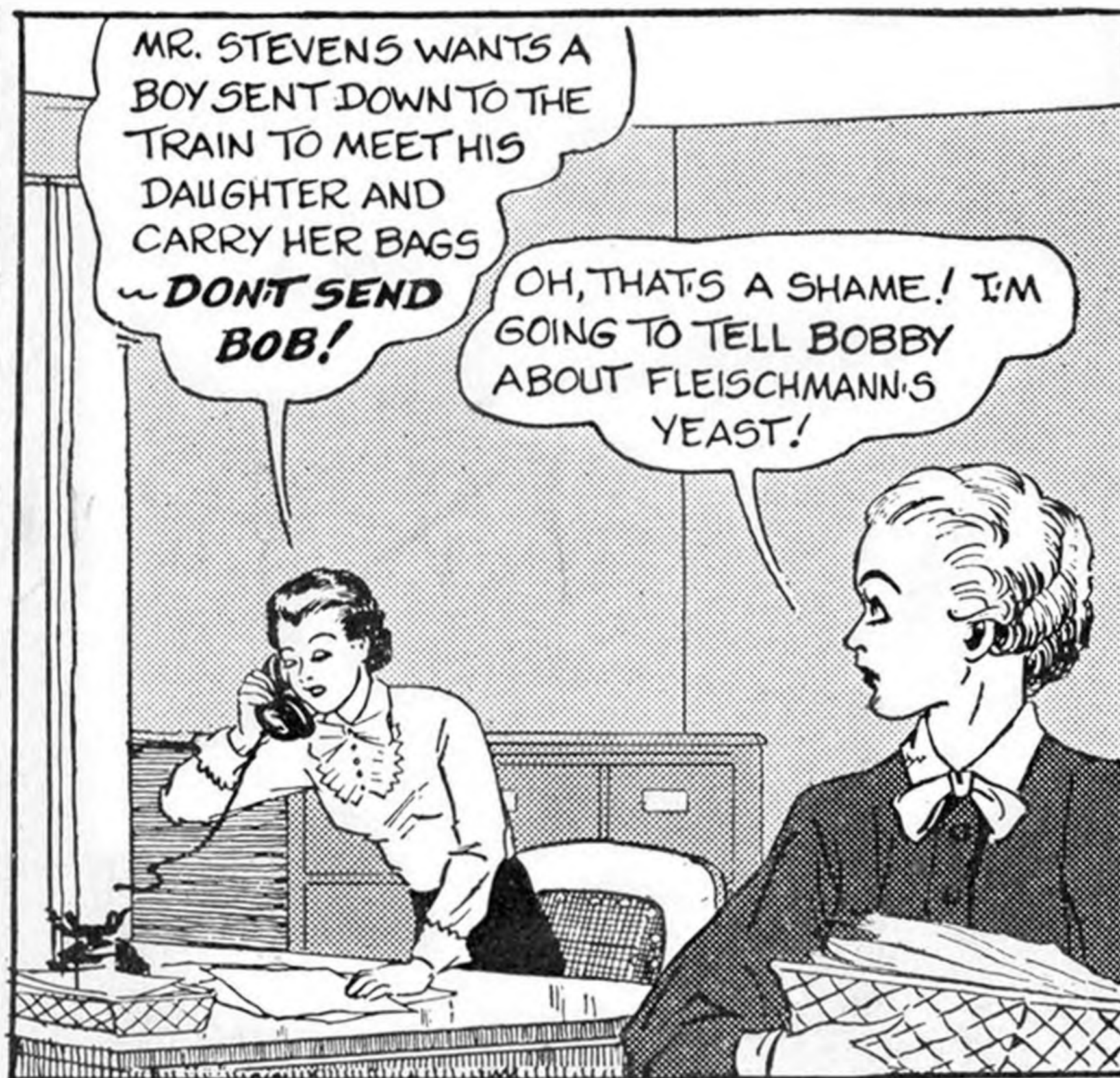
VOL. 62 No. 5



PAINTED BY HERBERT MORTON STOOPS TO ILLUSTRATE "CONQUISTADOR"

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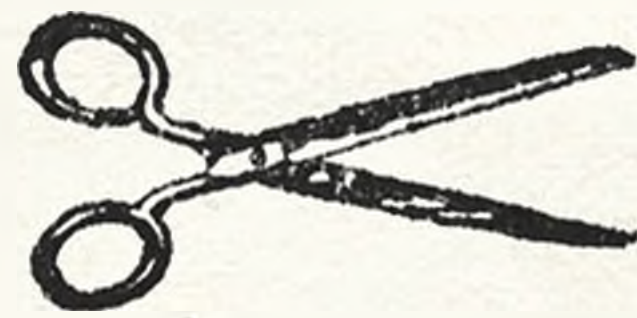
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BLUE BOOK



FEBRUARY, 1936

MAGAZINE

VOL. 62, NO. 4

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He accompanied the man who'd tried to kill him—to complain about the gun.

- The Sailor's Scrapbook** By Coulton Waugh 5
Cover Design Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

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DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

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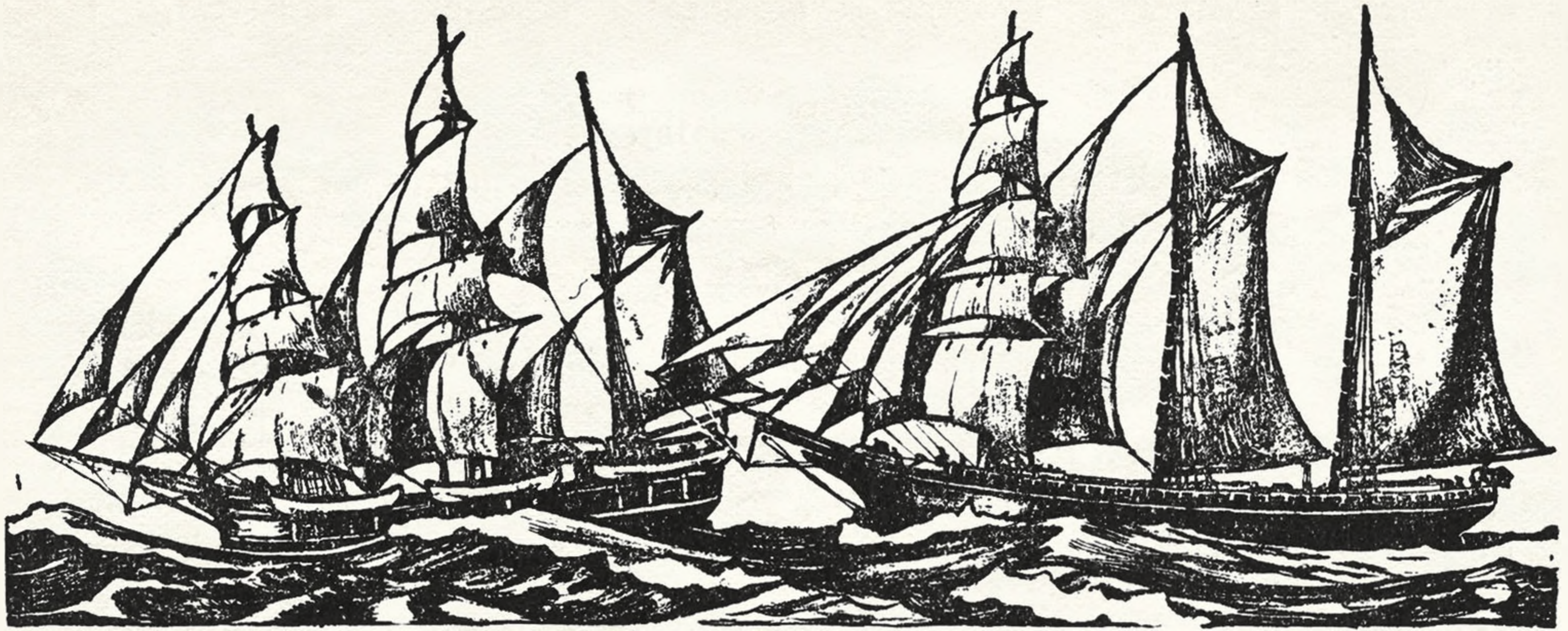
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A Sailor's Scrapbook

Bark and Barkentine— *by* Coulton Waugh

THE rigs of barks and barkentines combine fore-and-aft and square sails. On a bark the mizzenmast is fore-and-aft-rigged, while mainmast and foremast are square-rigged.

This was the favorite rig of the whaling ships. Only a few years ago one could still see those romantic old vessels with their white spars and yards and clumsy hulls lying in old New England ports—home from the most dangerous sport in the world. Who that has read “Moby Dick,” Melville’s great classic of whaling, can forget the end of the *Pequod*, as the great white whale bore down to crush her under his battering-ram of a head? Yet here fact equals fiction.

On March 27, 1902, the whaling ship *Kathleen* of New Bedford was struck in the bow by an enormous whale. Three boats were out of sight chasing whales; the fourth boat was close alongside. The Captain set signals to recall the other boats and ran to warn his wife. Seizing her parrot’s cage, she covered it. But while being lowered into the whaleboat Polly stuck his head out, looked around and remarked, “Well, now, this is damn’ bad luck!” Five minutes later the *Kathleen* went down; and the boats, having found each other, held a council of war. They were a thousand miles from land. The Captain had saved a little bread and water from the ship. They headed to the nearest land, the island of Barbados. It was a desperate situation, for there was not enough water for the thirty-nine souls who composed the little fleet. By the rarest chance, three of the boats were picked up the next day by a vessel. But the fourth made the long journey alone. It took eleven days, and

only a sudden tropic shower saved the ten men therein from dying of thirst.

The barkentine is square-rigged on the foremast, and fore-and-aft-rigged on main and mizzen. The latter masts are in two sections, the upper parts called main topmast and mizzen topmast, the lower parts mainmast and mizzenmast. These are constructed just like a schooner’s masts. The foremast, however, is in three sections, called (from the deck up) foremast, fore topmast, and fore t’gallant mast, and carries square sails.

This is a rig still seen in the sugar trade between San Francisco and the Hawaiian Islands, also carrying dried codfish from Newfoundland. Picturesque barkentines compose the fishing fleet which annually sets out from San Malo, France, and is blessed by a prelate of the church before spending months in fishing on the Newfoundland Banks.

Perhaps because of their ability to head so close into the wind, barkentines have lasted longest in the valiant battle of sail against steam. This rig is practical because the fore-and-aft sails permit the vessel to go to windward, and because the square sails are at their best when running before steady trade-winds.

Many of these handsome and able vessels were built along the Maine Coast and in Nova Scotia within the last forty years. And they could sail! The barkentine *Toboggan*, built in Yarmouth in 1890, was well-named, for she arrived in New York on July 30, 1891, only thirty-eight days out from Montevideo—a remarkable passage. Even now one may occasionally come across one of these graceful mementoes of an old and gallant tradition, foaming along with a fine bone in her teeth.

The Poisoned

By GREGORIO

Illustrated by



DOWN on the Rio Balsa, a white man was twice wounded — by an Indian arrow, and another. And he was two hundred miles from help, except via radio—a device which did not astonish the Indian, for he had a magic of his own. A remarkable story by a New England writer who chooses to use a pen name.

ACROSS Lake Maracaibo the morning sun was shining bright. Boss Carroll walked rapidly along the concrete path beneath the coconut palms of the Lake Oil compound. The Boss was an extremely efficient man of fifty. Some of his colleagues thought him a little too efficient.

"This is going to be a tough day," thought the Boss with a grim smile of anticipation. He loved tough days.

He turned in at the radio shack beside the main office. Jim Bailey, Chief of Communications, was waiting by his instruments.

"Come on, Jim," ordered the Boss crisply. "Let's get going."

Jim Bailey looked at his watch.

"It's only quarter to nine," he said. "Rio Balsa won't be on the air until nine."

The Boss sat down and drummed with impatient fingers on the desk. He hated delay; he hated waiting. He hated the radio, with its "calling hours" and cumbersome code-words to foil eavesdropping competitors. But a telephone line to Rio

Balsa was out of the question. The camp was in the Motilone country; and the Indians stole every bit of wire they could get their hands on.

Jim Bailey looked at the Boss carefully, gauging the state of his mind. It didn't look too good, but he decided to take a chance.

"Say, Boss," he asked, "how long are you going to keep Tom up at Rio Balsa?"

Tom Preston was Jim's best friend.

"Just till he gets through the hard digging. Maybe a week."

"You ought to keep him there another month, Boss," said Jim. "You know why."

Boss Carroll looked up with a frown of annoyance.

"No," he snapped; "you asked me that before. I won't do it. I'm not going to waste him on easy digging. He was a fool to get mixed up with that Claire woman."

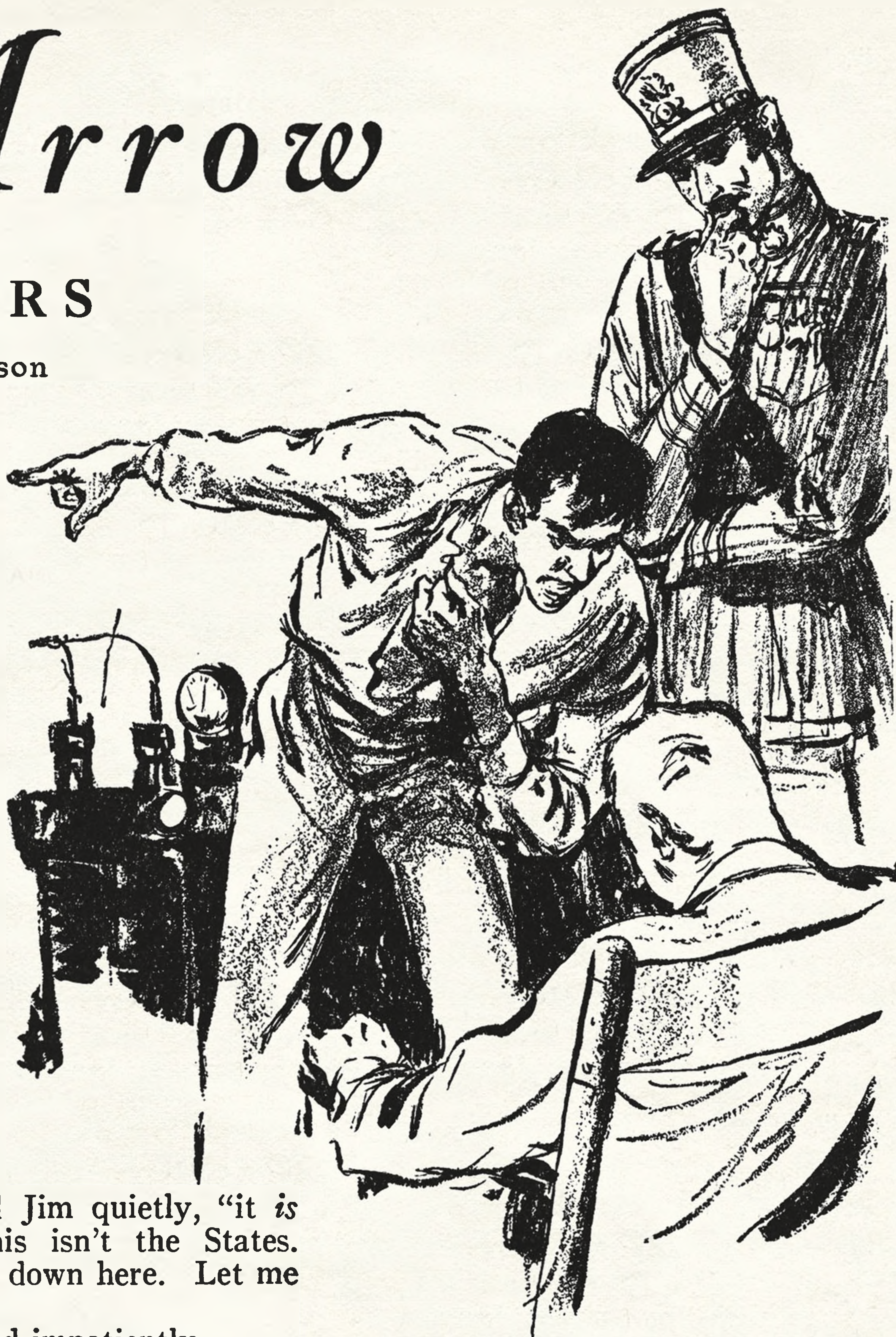
"She'll ruin him, Boss," warned Jim, "the way she ruined Mike Lenihan."

"I can't help it. It's none of my business."

Arrow

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"Sure, I can help," said Mike. "I can fix Tom's arm; I can make the Motilonos let the camp alone. *But I won't do it—I won't save Tom, so she can get his bonus!*"

"Yes, Boss," said Jim quietly, "it is your business. This isn't the States. Things are different down here. Let me tell you—"

Boss Carroll glared impatiently.

"All right, tell me. I'll listen. Tell me *why* things are different. Tell me *why* I've got to worry about my men's love-affairs. And while you're about it, you'd better tell me *why* you all fall for Claire. An unmarried American girl hanging around Maracaibo is just one thing: Why don't you pick her up and drop her, the way you'd do back home?"

"No, Boss," said Jim very earnestly, "it's not like that: Put yourself in Tom's place, Boss. He's never been out of the States before. He's lonely. He can't meet the decent Venezuelan girls. He doesn't know how. And he's too decent himself to be satisfied with the other kind."

"So what?"

"So he kids himself about Rose Claire. She's good-looking. She's American. She was brought up right. She dresses right. She talks and acts like the girls he would

have known if he hadn't come down here. She's the only girl like that in Maracaibo."

"So what?" insisted the Boss.

"Can't you understand, Boss?" pleaded Jim Bailey. "Tom's a decent, honest feller with a lot of ideals about women. If he can't find the right girl, he'll take the best there is around, and kid himself she's O. K. Claire's out for the money, that's all. She's poison. But you can't tell Tom that. He won't hear a word against her. He wants to think that he's found a nice, decent girl who's going to marry him. You ought to hear him raving about the house he's going to build for her in Dallas."

"He's a fool."

"Sure he's a fool. As soon as she gets his bonus money, she'll ditch him the way she ditched Mike Lenihan. She told Mike her mother had to have an oper-

ation. She got all the money he could raise. Then she threw him out."

"He ought to be glad he got rid of her."

"No, Boss. It broke Mike all up. He was building his life around her—just the way Tom is now. Come on, Boss. Keep Tom up at Rio Balsa for at least another month."

"What good will that do—if he's really in love with the woman?"

"He's weakening, Boss. I've been working on him over the radio. And by that time, Claire'll have her claws on somebody else."

"No," snapped the Boss. "I'm running an oil-company. I need Tom here."

"You needed Mike Lenihan too," reminded Jim. "When she gave him the air, he quit his job and beat it off in the bush and lived with the Motilones. You had him put on the black-list. He's been on the beach ever since. *That* didn't do the company any good."

Boss Carroll's mind was closed. He banged his fist on the desk.

"Get your gadgets going, Jim," he commanded abruptly. "It's close to nine."

Jim Bailey shrugged his shoulders and went to the instrument-board. He snapped three switches. A row of tubes glowed yellow. A low hum filled the shack. Jim put the head-set over his ears and listened eagerly. He enjoyed calling the camp on the radio.

In his mind's eye he saw the ether-waves sweeping out from the shack in ever-widening circles: Over the hot little city of Maracaibo they flew; over the cactus desert near the town; over the jungle shore of the upper lake. Up the Rio de Oro, where the monkeys swung through the tangled vines; up the Rio Balsa—that dangerous stream; up to the Motilone country, under the white peaks of the Sierra de Perijá. . . . It was nearly two hundred miles by boat to the test-well on the Rio Balsa; but the radio made it in less than a minute—time for the tubes to warm up.

JIM heard the hum in the phones die down. Then he heard another faint sound, which gradually grew in volume. He was expecting to speak with Alec Reed, machinist and radio operator, the other American at the camp. But even before he could distinguish the words, he recognized the voice of his friend Tom Preston. There was an urgent, anxious ring in the voice. Gradually the words grew clear, like a telescope image coming to focus.

"Calling Maracaibo," chanted Tom monotonously. "Calling Maracaibo. Calling Maracaibo."

"Here we are, Tom," said Jim. "You're two minutes early."

"I've been calling since daylight, Jim."

"What do you think I am, pal? I got to get some sleep."

"Listen!"

"I'm listening. How's every little thing?"

"*Listen!*" cried Tom, almost screaming. "The Indians jumped the camp. Alec's dead. And three natives."

"Christ!"

"Get the boss."

"He's right here."

Jim handed the head-set to Carroll.

"*Motilones!*" he whispered very low, as if the Indians were near and listening. "They jumped the camp. Alec's dead."

CARROLL grabbed the phones and jammed them over his ears. He was visibly shocked, but still efficient.

"Carroll speaking," he said. "Give me the report."

Rapidly Tom told the story.

"I don't know much, Boss," he said.

"But this is it: We were asleep in the tent—me and Alec. We had a native on guard outside with a rifle. The rest of the natives were in the other tent. They had a guard too. I woke up sudden. I heard a lot of yelling. Then I heard Alec scream. I grabbed the flash-light and turned it on. Alec had an arrow in his side. The tent was full of arrows. They were sticking all over.

"I turned off the light quick. The Motilones gave another yell, and I heard the bowstrings snapping outside and the arrows coming through the canvas. I dropped down on the floor and felt around for my gun. I heard some more screams from the natives' tent. Then I found the gun and fired some shots through the wall. One of the natives fired a rifle. Then we didn't hear another sound."

"Why didn't you put that sheet-iron up around the tents the way I told you to?" demanded Boss Carroll angrily. "What do you think I sent it for?"

"Aw, Boss, lay off! I'm a fool. But I was busy, and I thought I could get away with it. We didn't see any Motilones."

"Nobody ever sees the little devils."

"What shall I do, Boss?"

"What *did* you do?"

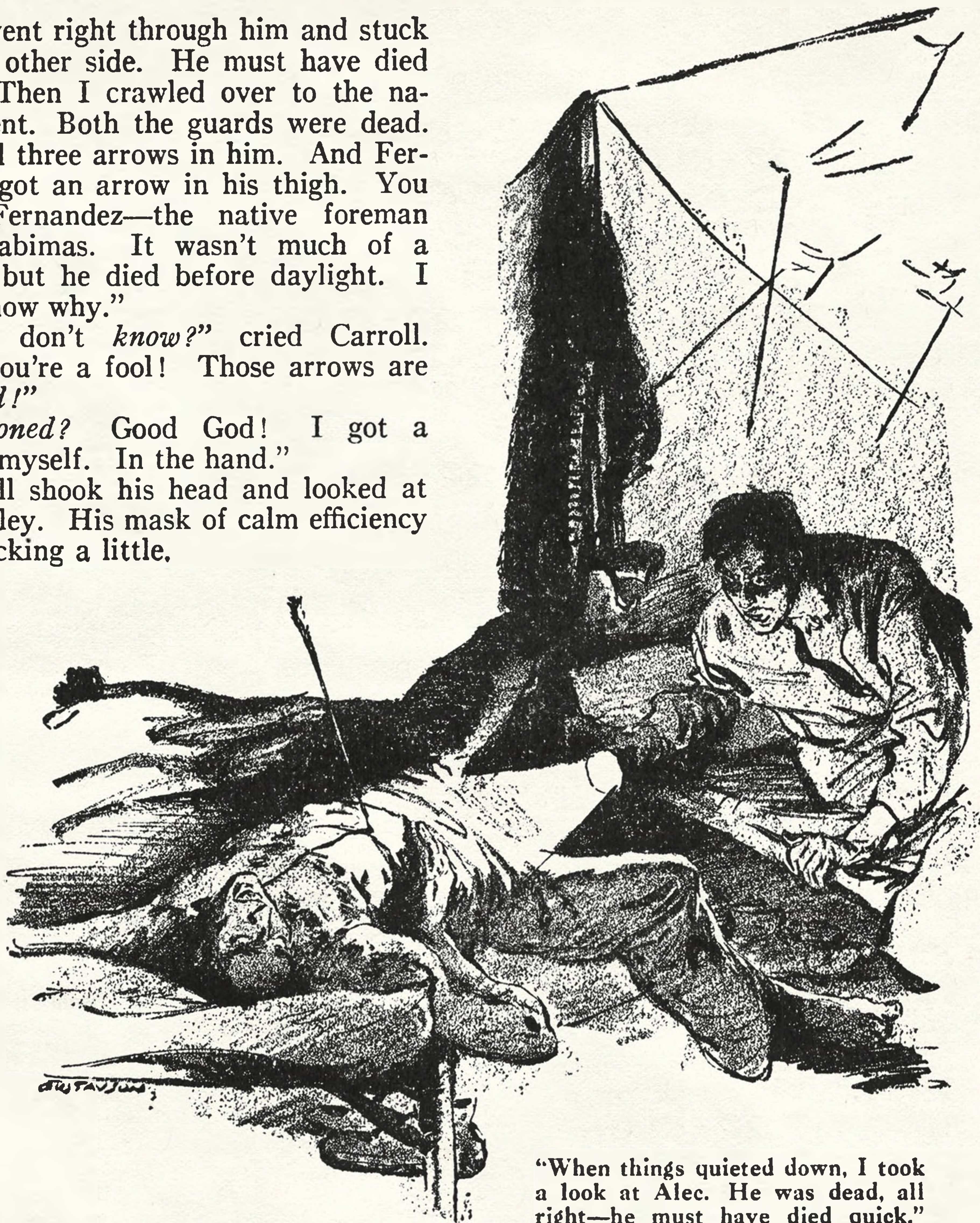
"When things quieted down, I took a look at Alec. He was dead, all right. The

arrow went right through him and stuck out the other side. He must have died quick. Then I crawled over to the natives' tent. Both the guards were dead. One had three arrows in him. And Fernandez got an arrow in his thigh. You know Fernandez—the native foreman from Cabimas. It wasn't much of a wound, but he died before daylight. I don't know why."

"You don't *know*?" cried Carroll. "God, you're a fool! Those arrows are *poisoned*!"

"*Poisoned*? Good God! I got a scratch myself. In the hand."

Carroll shook his head and looked at Jim Bailey. His mask of calm efficiency was cracking a little.



"When things quieted down, I took a look at Alec. He was dead, all right—he must have died quick."

"Call Doctor Jackson, Jim," he ordered. "Tell him to come here quick."

He turned back to the radio.

"Now listen, Tom," he said very seriously. "Do just what I tell you, and do it quick. Is your hand swelling any?"

"Yes, Boss. It's swelling above the wrist."

"Well, take a razor-blade and open up the cut. Don't be afraid of making it bleed. That's the idea. When it's bled a lot, you put a tourniquet above the elbow and cut off the circulation. The Doctor'll be here soon. He'll tell you more. But do this *now*."

"O. K., Boss."

Tom's voice was shaking a little.

"So long, Boss," he said reluctantly, as if he didn't want to leave the friendly radio.

"So long, Tom. I'll call you as soon as I can. Do what I told you."

Boss Carroll sat for a moment thinking. Jim Bailey saw for the first time an irresolute expression on his face. It was gone in a flash. He grabbed the telephone and jiggled the hook.

"Carroll speaking," he ordered. "Get me the Governor."

"The Governor?" questioned the operator in the main office.

"Yes, you fool!" shouted Carroll. "Governor Torres-Colima."

"He won't be in his office yet."

"Get him in the Palace. It's an emergency."

Impatiently he waited while the call fought its way to the Governor's ear. Outraged secretaries yielded unwillingly. At last came the booming voice of Torres-Colima himself. Carroll poured a flood of rapid Spanish into the phone.

"Your Excellency," he cried, "the Motilones have attacked our camp on the Rio Balsa. They have killed one American and three Venezuelans. I want some soldiers quick."

Governor Torres-Colima was a slow and leisurely man on ordinary occasions, but a hint of crisis stirred him to joyful action.

"At once, Señor Carroll! At once. I shall call the barracks at once. While the soldiers are on their way to the pier, I shall start for your office."

"The greatest thanks, Your Excellency. I shall be at the radio."

Carroll hung up. Then he jiggled the hook again. He called the hospital. Doctor Jackson was on his way. He called the American consul. He sent a rush cable to the head office in New York. He called the Colombian consul. The international boundary ran close to Rio Balsa.

Rapidly the news of the disaster spread out from the radio-room. Telephones rang all over Maracaibo. Lake Oil employees left their work to drift in little worried groups toward the radio shack, where they gathered to whisper and stare.

Presently Doctor Jackson arrived. He listened carefully to Carroll's account. He was not encouraging.

"I don't know a damn' thing about the Motilone poison," he said helplessly. "Nobody does. It's an alkaloid of some

sort, which works through the lymphatic system. It's slow but very toxic. The Indians have an antidote, but nobody knows what it is. I'm afraid Tom Preston's a dead man."

"Can't you tell him *something*?" pleaded the Boss. "I said you would."

"Sure I can. But it won't do any good."

The Doctor put on the head-set and spoke into the mouthpiece.

"Hello, Tom," he said. "This is Doctor Jackson. How's the hand?"

Tom answered at once. He'd been waiting.

"I opened her up, Doc," he said, "the way the Boss told me. She bled a lot. Then I put a bandage above the elbow. I got a native to twist it good and tight."

"Is your arm swelling above the bandage?"

Tom hesitated a moment. When he answered, his voice was artificially quiet and calm—to conceal the terror pressing behind the words.

"Yes, Doc. It's swelling all the way up to the shoulder. And it hurts in the armpit now."

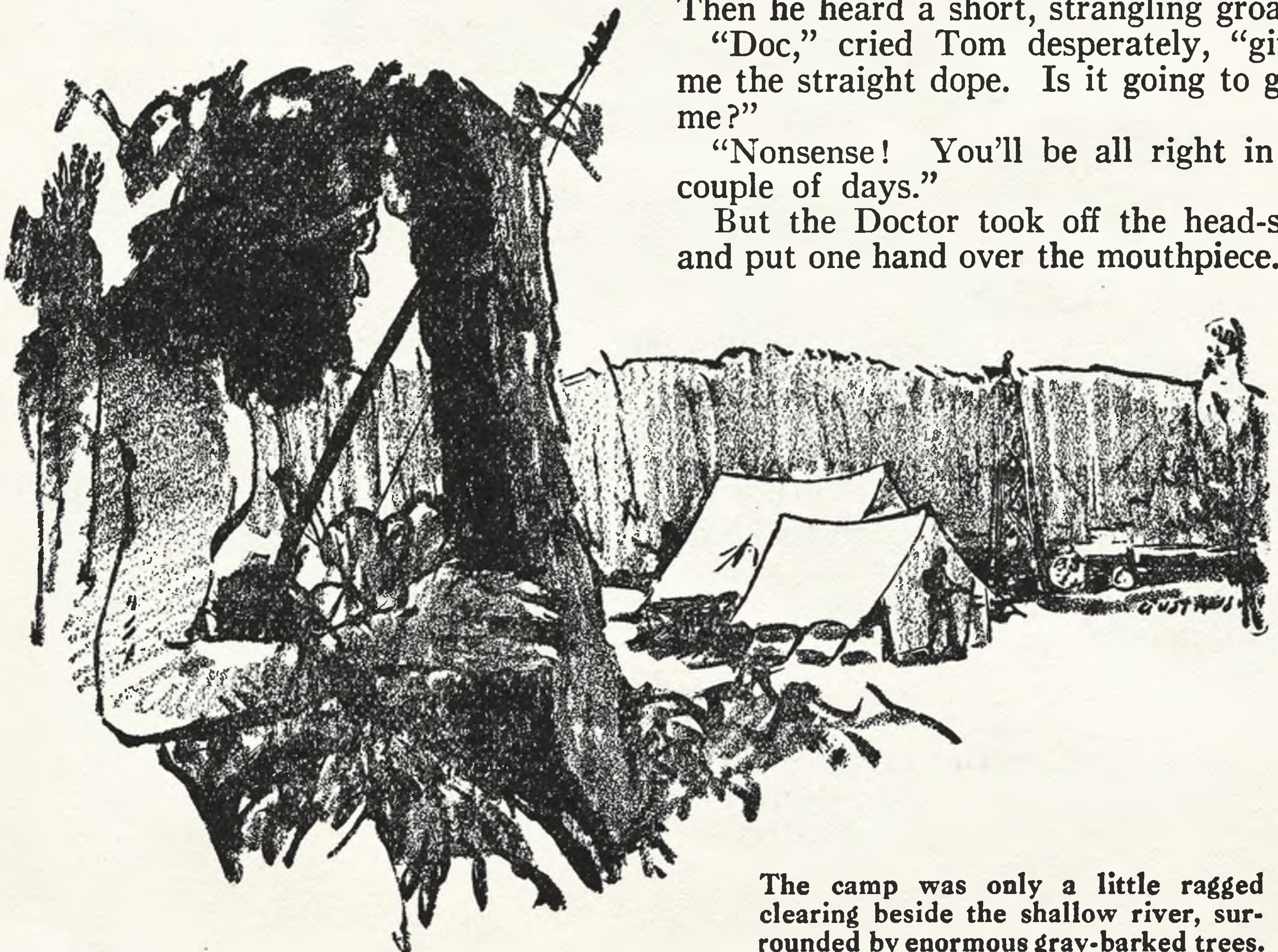
"Rub some permanganate crystals into the cut," said the Doctor reassuringly. "That will fix it. And don't use your arm any more than you have to."

There was a moment of silence. Through the low hum in the earphones, the Doctor could hear Tom breathing hard, as if he'd run a long way uphill. Then he heard a short, strangling groan.

"Doc," cried Tom desperately, "give me the straight dope. Is it going to get me?"

"Nonsense! You'll be all right in a couple of days."

But the Doctor took off the head-set and put one hand over the mouthpiece.



The camp was only a little ragged clearing beside the shallow river, surrounded by enormous gray-barked trees.

"He hasn't got a chance, Carroll," he said. "The poison's above the ligature. He may last until night, but not longer."

Just then the telephone rang. The Boss answered. It was a cable from the Chairman of the Board in New York. "*Spare no money or men,*" it said. "*Must teach Motilones lesson.*"

The Boss hung up, only to answer another call. Incessantly the telephone rang. The great Lake Oil was springing to action, pulling its far-flung wires. The air-line offered planes. Rival oil-companies offered assistance—even the English and the Dutch. The President of Venezuela telegraphed from Maracay. The Colombians radioed from Bogotá.

But Boss Carroll shook his head. He knew that all the troops and money and planes in the world were not enough. They were not enough to stop that slow, deliberate poison creeping up Tom Preston's arm.

For the first time in his life the Boss felt wholly helpless. Between telephone conversations, he would look to the Doctor, pleading with his eyes. But the Doctor only shook his head.

"I can't do anything, Carroll," he said. "There isn't a man in the world who knows about the Motilone poison."

Jim Bailey had been keeping very quiet, watching his radio instruments. But now he turned to the Boss.

"How about Mike Lenihan?" he asked. "He lived with the Motilones for a year. Maybe he knows something."

Boss Carroll's face froze hard.

"That beachcomber! Keep him out of this. He's a bum."

"You know *why* he's a bum. Claire took his dough and chucked him in the ditch. Just as I was telling you awhile back."

"I don't care," said the Boss obstinately. "He was a good geologist. I needed him bad, and he left me flat. I told him I'd have him arrested if he ever came on Lake Oil property."

JIM BAILEY tried hard to keep his temper.

"That's ancient history, Boss. Mike was a good friend of Tom's. Maybe he can do something. It won't hurt the company to let him try. You don't want to lose Tom too."

"Better let him try, Carroll," said the Doctor. "The Motilones have a cure for their poison. Perhaps he knows what it is."

"All right," said the Boss, yielding un-

graciously. "Go get him. Do you know where he lives?"

"Sure. In Milagro."

"Get him, then. But don't expect me to kiss him."

Jim Bailey picked up the telephone and talked for a long time in Spanish. Finally he hung up.

"I got a native friend of his," he said. "He'll be over."

Then followed one of those strange silences which come in the midst of crisis. No one spoke. Jim Bailey watched the glowing tubes of the radio, wondering whether to take up a head-set and talk to Tom. The Doctor stood looking at the floor, his hands twitching helplessly. Boss Carroll played with the telephone. He had done everything. There was nothing more to do until the Governor or Mike Lenihan arrived.

THEN a shadow passed across the open door, dimming a little the light in the room.

"May I come in?" asked an agreeable feminine voice.

The three men turned to look. Through the door stepped an extremely attractive girl of twenty-five. She wore a light, fluffy cotton dress. She carried a pink parasol. On her golden hair was a wide-brimmed straw hat. She smiled enchantingly. Her beauty would have made her welcome in any ordinary group of men. But the reaction in the radio shack was very different.

Boss Carroll sprang angrily to his feet.

"Get out of here, Claire," he shouted, his face turning red. "I told you to keep off the Lake compound, and I mean it. Get out before I throw you out."

A hard, calculating glitter appeared in the girl's blue eyes. Her smile faded.

"I know what's going on," she cried. "Tom Preston's dying. I've got a right to talk to him. He's my fiancé."

"Your fiancé!" shouted Boss Carroll. "Your sucker, you mean. Get out of here quick."

Jim Bailey put his hand over the radio mouthpiece so that no stray sound should penetrate to Rio Balsa.

"Don't let her talk to him, Boss," he warned. "She's after the bonus he got for capping Number 9. She'll tell him to make his well in her favor. He'll do it!"

"Why not?" cried the girl defiantly. "If he wants to, why not?"

"Because I won't let him," declared the Boss.

Rose Claire stamped her foot.



"I've got a right," she screamed. "No man ever played fair with *me*. Why shouldn't I? . . . Give me that phone!"

Jim Bailey jerked the head-set out of the panel. Boss Carroll took a step forward.

"Get out of here, Claire," he ordered. "You're a damned nuisance. You ruined Mike Lenihan, the best geologist in Venezuela. You ruined that English lawyer at the V. P. C. You pretty nearly ruined Tom Preston. Now you've heard he's dying, and you come sneaking around to pick his bones. Get out!"

He started to push her bodily out of the shack. Jim Bailey watched approvingly. Then he happened to look out.

"Stop it, Boss," he warned in a low voice. "Here's the Governor."

A BIG limousine had come to a silent stop before the shack; from it stepped the powerful figure of Governor Torres-Colima. He was six feet tall, with bushy black sideburns and a close-clipped black mustache. He wore a brown uniform and high boots. He strode into the radio shack, bowed to Claire and kissed her hand gallantly.

"The Señorita is looking her best this morning," he said with a sardonic smile. "Perhaps our notorious climate agrees with her."

The girl smiled back. But the Governor turned to Carroll without another word. Her character was well understood in Government circles.

"My men are ready, Señor Carroll," he said in Spanish. "They will start up the lake as soon as I give the word. But I should like to know the exact situation."

In rapid Spanish, Boss Carroll told the story of the Motilone attack. The Governor shook his head.

"This is more serious than I thought," he said. "Your man Preston will die. Nothing can save him. The other American is already dead. The Venezuelan foreman is dead. That leaves nothing but peons. The Motilones will attack again tonight. The peons will have no leader. They will not be able to resist effectively. And if they start downriver, they will be attacked in the launch."

"Can't you send the soldiers in an airplane?"

"Certainly," said the Governor, shrugging his shoulders. "But the plane will have to land at the mouth of the Rio de Oro. From there it is two days by boat to the camp. Your men will all be dead."

"Can't we do *something*?" cried Carroll desperately.

The Governor shrugged his shoulders again.

"I shall send the airplane and the soldiers. I shall do everything possible. But I warned you about the Motilones, señor. This is the dangerous season. The rivers are low, and the Indians come down from the mountains to gather alligator eggs on the sandbars. I told you that, and offered you soldiers, but you refused them."

Boss Carroll sat down weakly and covered his face with his hands. His air of efficient self-assurance had totally disappeared. The Governor stood silent, a look of sympathetic sorrow on his rugged face. Claire kept her eyes defiantly on the instrument-board, possessed by her single idea. Jim Bailey watched her closely, keeping the headset well out of reach.

"You won't get a word in, baby," he whispered loud enough for her to hear. "Not while I'm around."

A small crowd had gathered outside the radio shack. Lake employees, both American and Venezuelan, were standing in a silent semicircle, watching the door. Three Chinese from the cook-house jabbered together, looking up at the radio mast.

They all knew Tom Preston. They all had the same gruesome picture in their minds: the hot little clearing in the Rio Balsa; the tangled green of the jungle

pressing close; the mysterious Motilones, silent, invisible—waiting for darkness. And the poison creeping slowly toward the heart.

Suddenly a battered flivver skidded to a stop behind the Governor's car. A slender young man sprang out. He was an American, but his face was tanned as dark as a Venezuelan's. He was dressed like a simple peon, in khaki trousers and jacket. He pushed through the crowd and entered the shack.

"Here's Mike Lenihan," cried Jim.

MIKE stopped a yard inside the door. He clenched his thin hands into fists. He glared at Rose Claire.

"What in hell's *she* doing here?" he demanded angrily.

"She wants to talk to Tom," said Jim Bailey. "She's after his bonus."

"Just her style," snapped Mike. "Toss her out."

"He's my fiancé," said the girl defiantly. "I'm engaged to him."

"Engaged!" cried Mike bitterly. "Yeah! You were 'engaged' to me once. Remember? I had a bonus too."

Boss Carroll interrupted.

"Come on, Mike. For God's sake, stop scrapping. We've got to *do* something."

Once more he told the story of the Motilone attack. Mike listened attentively.

"Think of something, Mike," pleaded Carroll. "You lived with the Motilones. Can't you help? *Can't* you?"

Mike Lenihan's lips set hard in a thin line.

"Sure I can help," he said coldly. "I know just what to do. I can fix Tom's arm. I can make the Motilones leave the camp alone. *But I won't do it.*"

"*You won't do it?*" cried the Boss. "What the hell? Tom's a friend of yours. He's dying."

"No, I won't. Sure, Tom's a friend of mine. That's why I won't."

"For God's sake, why not? What's the idea?"

Mike turned a look of glittering, fanatical hatred on Claire.

"*That's* why I won't," he shouted loudly.

He pointed at the girl with a thin brown finger.

"I won't save Tom so she can get his bonus."

"Mike!" cried Carroll. "You've gone nuts."

Mike advanced upon him with a black frown.

"I've gone nuts, have I? You dumb fool! You dried-up old fossil! You were never in love with anybody but yourself. You don't know. But I fell for her myself. *I know!*"

Boss Carroll glared back.

"You didn't have to act like an idiot. What if she did get your money and give you the air? You didn't have to go nuts. You didn't have to chuck your job. You didn't have to sneak off in the bush and live with the damned Motilones. There are plenty of women."

Jim Bailey came over and put his arm around Mike's shoulder.

"Come on, Mike," he said. "Think it over. Tom's a good guy, and you're his friend. What if Claire does get his dough and throw him out? That's better than dying in the bush."

"No, it isn't," cried Mike. "I know how it feels. He's been building his life around her, way I did. He's deaf, dumb and blind, as I was. He'll come back here anxious to see her. She'll be nice until she gets his money. Then she'll give him the air. I know. It hurts. But the Motilone poison doesn't hurt. It just stops the pump when it gets there. Quick. *Like that!*"

He snapped his fingers loudly.

THE Governor was enjoying the scene hugely, but he was much too polite to show his amusement. He listened carefully to catch each English word.

"The Señorita Claire is very attractive," he said to Mike. "But I could have introduced the American gentleman to many attractive ladies."

Mike switched to fluent Spanish.

"It isn't the same, Your Excellency. I wanted a girl of my own people. I wanted a decent girl. I wanted to work for her, dream about her. I wanted a girl to take back to the States when I'd made enough money. I thought Claire was that kind."

The Governor shrugged his shoulders. He couldn't understand such narrowness. His own appreciation was extremely wide. But he had other persuasive resources.

"In that case, my friend," he said calmly, "let us forget Señor Preston for the moment. Let us think of the eight peons who are with him at Rio Balsa. They are simple men, without education. But they have sweethearts, no doubt, who really love them. It would not be right to allow them to be killed by the Motilones. Not all women are like the Señorita Claire."

Mike was silent. He seemed wavering.

"And," continued the Governor, "there is a practical consideration. A man who had rescued eight Venezuelans from death would not have to work for an oil company. He could get an excellent position with the Government."

Mike looked at the girl, who was standing defiantly to one side, apparently unabashed by this objective discussion of her character. He looked at Boss Carroll. Then his face showed that he had changed his mind.

"All right, Boss," he said. "Go into the battery-room. I want to talk to you alone."

Boss Carroll stepped into the little room which held the batteries and generator. With a hostile look at Claire, Mike followed and closed the door.

In a few moments he was out again. Very deliberately he went to the instrument board and adjusted a head-set over his ears.

"Connect me up, Jim," he said calmly. "I'm going to talk to Tom."

Jim plugged the head-set into the panel.

"What did you make the Boss promise, Mike?" he whispered.

"I'll tell you some time—maybe."

"All right. Go ahead and talk to Tom. You're connected."

THE room was very still. Boss Carroll, the Doctor and the Governor were watching Mike. Claire was pouting disagreeably, her eyes on the floor. Jim Bailey watched the radio instruments. A Venezuelan officer, the Governor's aide, tiptoed through the door, followed by three Lake employees from the general office.

Mike seemed to be collecting his thoughts. Finally he spoke.

"Hello, Tom," he said. "This is Mike Lenihan."

Tom answered quickly, a note of anxious relief in his voice.

"Hello, Mike," he said. "Your Motilone friends played hell with us last night."

"I know, Tom. You'd do the same if you were in their place. They were just defending their country. But never mind that. Listen. I think I can make them fix you up. There's only about five hundred Motilones in the Perijá. I know them all."

"You better get going, Mike. My whole shoulder feels dead. I can't move my arm."

"All right. Have you got a signaling whistle?"

"Sure."

"Go get it."

"It's right on my belt."

"Then listen. Have you heard anything since daylight?"

"I heard some funny whistling. Sort of like a bird, but different."

"Yeah. I know. That's the way the Motilones talk in the thick bush. They can cover a hell of a distance. Now listen. I'm going to teach you some of the language. Listen."

MIKE pursed his lips and whistled a series of high, birdlike notes, all on one pitch, of various lengths, irregularly spaced. They sounded rather like the Morse code, but they had a curious elusive rhythm, very weird and primitive.

Three times he whistled the call.

"Try it, Tom," he said. "Not with the whistle, just with your lips. Don't make much noise."

Tom tried the call. It was close, but not convincing.

"You got to do better than that," said Mike.

He whistled the call again. Tom tried again. The lesson proceeded in total silence except for the low hum from the radio tubes. No one dared speak or move. Two hundred miles away, under the white peaks of the Parijá, the lives of nine men depended upon those simple notes, their accuracy, their perfect imitation.

At last Tom caught the rhythm of the call. Mike made him repeat it many times, to fix it in his memory. Finally he was satisfied.

"That's good enough," he said.

"What does it mean?" asked Tom.

"It's my name, and a sort of a flag of truce. It says: 'Come and talk to your friend Mike.'"

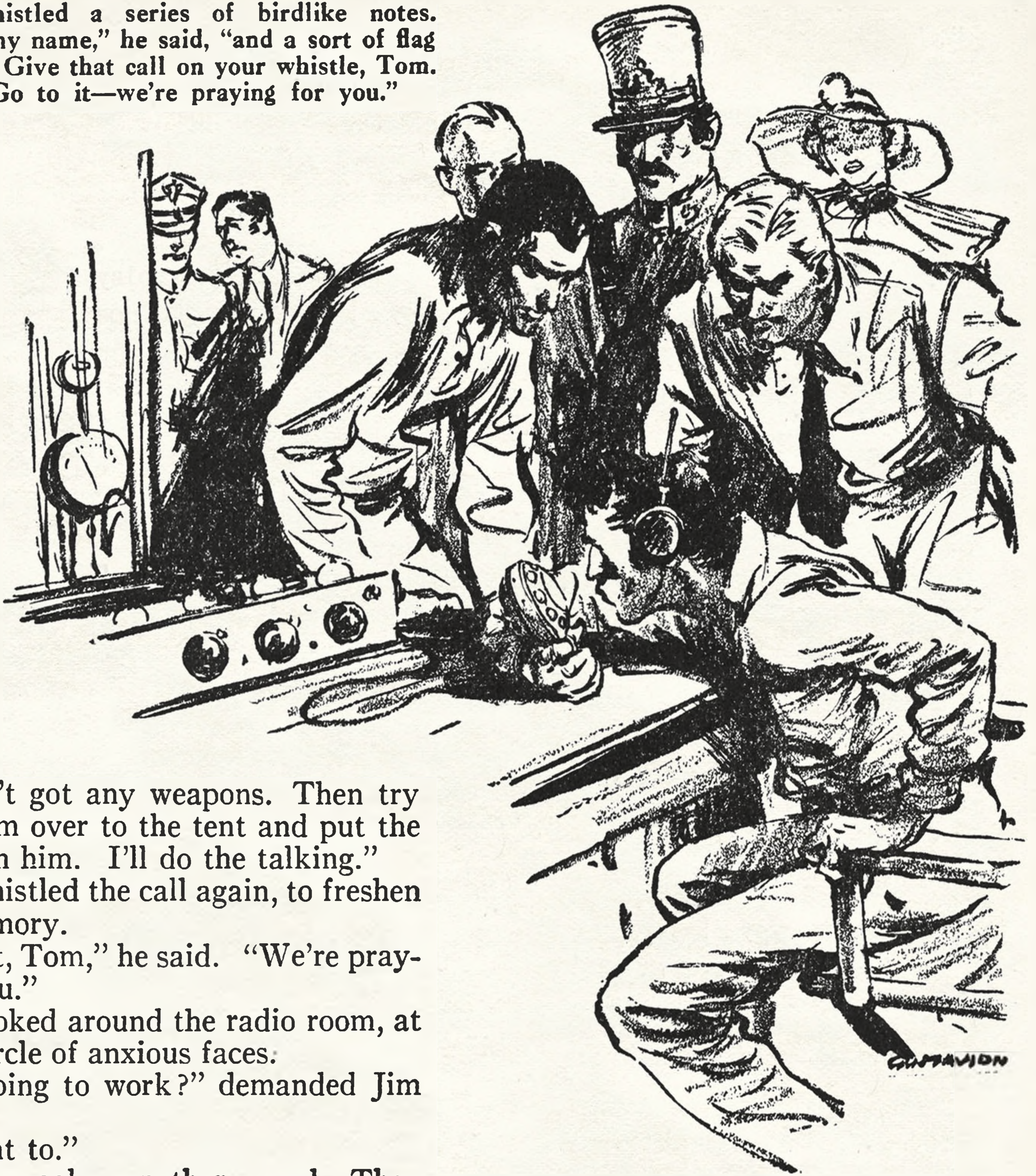
"What do you want me to do?" asked Tom.

"Listen," said Mike. "First you take the head-set and hang it up outside the tent. Cut a hole in the canvas, if the wire isn't long enough. Then get your natives out of sight. Then go out into the clearing and give that call on your whistle. Just as loud as you can. Keep it up until something happens."

"What do I do next?" asked Tom uneasily. "What if the Indians do come out of the bush? I can't talk to them."

"You won't have to. Only the chief will come. Hold your hands out, to show

Mike whistled a series of birdlike notes. "That's my name," he said, "and a sort of flag of truce. Give that call on your whistle, Tom. . . . Go to it—we're praying for you."



you haven't got any weapons. Then try and get him over to the tent and put the head-set on him. I'll do the talking."

Mike whistled the call again, to freshen Tom's memory.

"Go to it, Tom," he said. "We're praying for you."

Mike looked around the radio room, at the semicircle of anxious faces:

"Is it going to work?" demanded Jim Bailey.

"It ought to."

No one spoke another word. They all stood silent, their minds alive. They were all living for themselves that strange drama on the Rio Balsa: Tom Preston with his paralyzed shoulder and his little whistle, confronting the green jungle—its mysterious terrors and keen-eyed death.

The crowd outside had fallen silent too. Even the three Chinese had stopped their chatter.

ON the Rio Balsa the sun was climbing high and very hot. The mountain mists had burned away, and the peaks of the Perijá stood cold and white above their sea of green. The camp was only a little ragged clearing beside the shallow river, surrounded by enormous gray-barked trees, much taller than the derrick above the test-well. There were two white tents, one large and one small. A radio antenna slanted up from the smaller tent to a pole on top of the derrick. Bulky, rusty equipment was lying about—gasoline engines, a small tractor, piles of pipe and drill stem. Eight

Venezuelan laborers huddled in a nervous group between two stacks of gasoline drums. A heavy launch was grounded on the sandy shore.

Tom Preston came out of the smaller tent. He was a tall, powerful man of thirty-five in a khaki shirt and blue denim trousers. One arm was hanging limp. The hand was bandaged, swollen, and purple-red. First he hung the radio head-set on a nail on the tent-pole. Then he called to the natives, and herded them into the larger tent.

Walking very slowly, he went to the widest part of the clearing, where he could be seen from all sides. He hesitated a moment, staring apprehensively at the tangled green wall of the jungle. Then he put a small brass whistle to his lips, drew in his breath, and sounded the Motilone call which Mike had taught him from distant Maracaibo.

A startled parrot squawked in the bush. That was all. Tom waited. . . . He waited a long time—five minutes at least, and it

felt like an hour. Then from close behind the veil of green came an answering call. It was very short. Just four quick notes, evenly spaced.

Tom's heart was beating very hard, but he whistled the call again. His mind was a-crawl with nervous imagination. He thought he heard a bowstring twang. It was only a grass-stem snapping under foot. He held his legs rigid, to control their trembling. He felt his body sway, and he steadied himself by fixing his eyes on the trunk of a great tree on the edge of the jungle, surrounded by fissures of black shadow.

Suddenly a cold shiver ran down his spine. Beside the tree was standing a little brown man! His skin was perfectly matched to the dark background. He was only twenty yards away, but Tom would never have seen him if his eyes had not been attracted by a slight movement. With a hand which trembled horribly, he put the whistle to his lips and sounded the call again, but softly.

With great dignity the little Indian walked slowly out into the sunlight. He was about five feet tall, with spindly legs and powerful arms. He wore a woven loin-cloth of brown fiber. He carried a long wooden bow, and over his shoulder hung a quiver of reed arrows with barbed palm-wood points. They looked as if they were freshly varnished.

Tom shuddered again. That was the poison!

With a brief, ceremonious flourish, the Indian laid the bow on the ground and placed the arrows beside it. Then he advanced toward Tom. His face was broad and rather Mongolian. His hair was down to his bare shoulders and bound with a woven band. Four small yellow feathers stood up in front. The Indian came close to Tom and waited quietly, as if for him to make the next move.

Tom remembered Mike's instructions. One arm was helpless, but he held out the other hand. The Indian's face remained impassive, but a faint flicker of approval seemed to pass across it. He held out his own small, knotted hands, palms upward.

TOM waited a moment, then motioned toward the tent. He took a few steps in that direction and looked back. The little Indian was following close behind—with short, noiseless, flowing steps, like a cat on soft ground.

Tom took the head-set from the nail on the tent-pole.

"Here's your Indian, Mike," he said softly into the mouthpiece. "He doesn't seem a bit afraid."

"Fine," said Mike, from Maracaibo. "Get him to talk to me. He's expecting to. I'll whistle the call."

Cautiously, making no rapid motions, Tom raised the head-set and held one phone a few inches from the Indian's ear. Faintly he heard Mike whistle two hundred miles away. The Indian heard it too. He smiled slightly, but did not seem in the least surprised. He made no objection when Tom fitted the head-set awkwardly over his ears with one hand.

Tom's job was done. He stepped aside and watched the Indian—a strange, incongruous sight with the head-set over his feathered hair.

FOR a moment the Indian listened. Then his face lighted up with animated recognition. From his thin lips burst a flood of curious, singsong, humming speech—like guttural Chinese.

"Good Lord!" thought Tom. "Can Mike talk that stuff?"

Evidently Mike could, for it was a two-way conversation. The Indian would listen intently, glancing at Tom. Then he would hum and sing into the mouthpiece. Like all primitive men who live in a world of magic, he had no special respect or admiration for the radio. It was merely white man's magic. He had magic of his own.

Finally the Indian took off the head-set and gave it to Tom. He made a formal little gesture with his hands—probably a sign of farewell—and walked rapidly toward the jungle. Tom watched him closely. He saw him pick up his bow and arrows. And then, in a flash, he was gone. He melted into the forest background, and disappeared as quickly and completely as a shadow when the sun goes behind a cloud.

Tom fitted the head-set over his own ears.

"Mike," he cried eagerly, "did you have any luck?"

Mike's voice sounded very triumphant.

"I'll say I did. I know that Indian. He's the big chief. I'm solid with him. He says he wouldn't hurt a friend of mine for the world."

"What's he going to do?"

"He's going to fix your arm, feller," cried Mike joyfully. "He can do it, too. He's gone to get his medicine-kit. He'll give you some stuff to drink. He'll make you breathe some smoke. He'll

smear some paste on your arm. Just let him do his stuff, and you'll be all right. I've seen him cure worse wounds than yours."

"How long will it take?"

"Couple of days. When he thinks you're cured, he'll point to the launch. You can come down-river to the mouth of the Oro. A Government boat will be waiting. The Motilones won't attack you on the way. But keep your natives out of sight. They might get panicky and queer things."

"O. K., Mike. Will you call me up?"

"Jim says he'll get on your wave-length every hour on the hour. You can tell us when you start down-river."

"So long, Mike. I'll take off my shirt and get ready for the doctor. I'll tell you how it goes."

"So long."

"And Mike," added Tom quickly, "did Claire ask about me?"

There was a click in the phones, but no answer. The radio was dead. . . .

Four days later Jim Bailey went down to the Maracaibo waterfront. He walked along the beaten earth of the embankment beneath the coconut palms, among piles of bagged coffee, green bananas, pink fish from the lake. At the seaward end of the bulkhead a ship was preparing to sail for New York—the *Miranda*, of the Blue-Square Line. Her hatches were battened down. Her cranes were lashed for the voyage. Only the passenger gangplank connected her still with the shore.

"She must be waiting for a passenger," thought Jim, looking at his watch. "She was due to sail two hours ago."

HE caught sight of Mike Lenihan, who was sitting on a baggage-truck, swinging his feet and watching the ship. His appearance had changed for the better. He wore a spotless white linen suit. The bitter expression was gone from his eyes.

"How's the boy, Jim?" he cried cheerfully. "What's on your mind?"

"I'm waiting for Tom Preston," said Jim. "He's coming down the lake on a Government launch."

A shadow crossed Mike's face.

"When's he getting here?"

"He's due in half an hour, but I don't see the launch yet."

Mike looked quickly up the lake toward the distant peaks of the Sierra de Perijá. There was no launch in sight. He seemed relieved.

"How's he feeling?" he asked.

"Fine," said Jim. "Your Indian sure knew his stuff. But you heard all about that a couple days back."

"Yeah," said Mike. "It was in the bag."

Then he looked back over his shoulder. A broad smile appeared on his face. He hopped off the truck and faced the town.

"Hey," he cried gayly. "Look who's here!"

Jim turned to look. Walking rapidly toward the ship was Rose Claire, heading a procession of five native porters loaded down with suitcases and steamer trunks. Following at a distance was a Venezuelan policeman in a sugar-loaf hat.

"Well, well, well," cried Mike Lenihan, striding to meet her.

The girl flushed angrily. Her face was hard, and by no means beautiful now. She glared at Mike like a snake in a corner.

"Leaving us?" asked Mike innocently. "And taking all the pretties we gave you?"

She pushed on toward the ship. She spoke not a word.

WITH an expression of limitless satisfaction Mike watched her climb up the gangplank and disappear into the ship. The policeman waited at the shore end.

"What's the idea, *capitán*?" Jim asked him.

"*Expulsada*," said the policeman with a wink.

Jim turned to Mike.

"I see," he said approvingly. "You made the Boss get her deported."

"That's it," said Mike with a delighted smile. "It cost him plenty, I guess. The police grabbed her quick, so she didn't get a chance to leave any address. Or any letters for Tom. We'll have a month to bring him around."

"Nice work," applauded Jim.

"And say! The Governor gave me a swell job on the Subsoil Commission. I can thumb my nose at the black-list. I'm watching Boss Carroll now, not working for him."

Mike hesitated a moment.

"Of course," he continued with a rather guilty smile, "I'd have helped Tom anyway—for nothing. But it didn't do any harm to hold out a couple of minutes."

Jim's eyes were full of admiration.

"I'll say it didn't," he declared. "Mike, let's go and drink a couple of quick ones to the Motilones. You and Tom owe a lot to those little devils."



XIII

Conquistador

From the dawn of time, man's weapons have partnered his most exciting moments. By their aid he has won triumph—or death. In this, as in the other stories of the series, the reader shares in one of the most dramatic scenes in all history.

WHEN I walked into the study of my friend Martin Burnside, I was startled by the sight of a horribly repellent object reposing in solitary pride on his desk. It looked like the dried head of some ferocious animal, its teeth bared and eyes rolling.

"What the devil!" I stopped short.

Martin Burnside laughed, removed his spectacles and reached for his pipe.

"My dear fellow, this is one of the greatest triumphs of my life!" he said.

I grunted skeptically. His life was devoted to the collection of arms and armor, and research into their origins and history occupied his time, money and brains.

"What's this confounded thing got to do with weapons?" I exclaimed.

"That," he replied with ill-repressed exultation, "is a weapon. The weapon that conquered one of the richest empires on earth, a whole continent, half the world!"

ARMS and MEN

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Illustrated by John Clymer



"Why, it looks like an animal's head!" I rejoined. "Are you playing some joke, Martin? You can't be serious!"

"I can, and I am," he said, tamping down his pipe and striking a match. "This,"—and he puffed rapidly,—“is the very animal on which the fate of an empire hinged.”

"It looks like no animal I ever saw!" I examined it closely. "Why, it's a dried mummy, Martin! The eyes are set in—mother-of-pearl, shell and jade! But the teeth are the teeth of a horse."

"So taken and accepted." He chuckled. "Do you know anything much about the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards? By Cortés?"

I FROWNED. "Well, I read Prescott's book when I was a boy—no, I'm bound to say I don't remember very much. Where'd you get this thing? In Mexico?"

He nodded. "It was taken from a temple chamber in a mound near the ancient city of Tlascalala, and sent to me. The Mexican government attached no importance to it and let it go through; you know, they've a strict embargo on antiquities. It fits in with these old letters." He slapped a batch of vellum documents on the desk. "I got 'em down in Guatemala. They relate to the early history there, and the story of Pedro de Alvarado, who conquered Guatemala for himself, and died there."

I stared at the thing on the desk.

"But what is it?"

"Wait." Martin Burnside shoved the letters at me. "Take 'em. Reconstruct the yarn; read Prescott over again, especially in regard to Tlascalala. Let me briefly sketch the picture for you, after the landing of Cortés and his men:

"He had established a base of operations, but Mexico was far away. Before he could reach that city, across the mountains, he had to subdue Tlascalala. These people were terrific fighters; they numbered upward of a million, feared nothing, and occupied almost impregnable positions. Cortés had burned his ships;

everything was uncertain behind him. Unless he could get a grip on Mexico City, he was a lost man.

"So he set out from his base with four hundred men, fifteen horses and seven of his cannon, for Tlascalala. He got into the Tlascalalan territories. Alvarado, his chosen lieutenant and friend, was with him. They had some stiff fighting, but kept going, while the main Tlascalalan army was gathering against them. There's the situation—you can reconstruct the rest. It's worth while."

"But this thing?" I touched the mummified head on the table. "It can't be the head of a horse—it's set in a regular snarl of ferocity—"

Martin Burnside chuckled again, and gestured at the letters.

"There's your story. It's outside the pages of Prescott in many ways; but as regards this animal—Prescott backs it up explicitly and absolutely. This animal, and moonlight. . . . A combination that conquered an empire! For remember, with the Tlascalalan fighting-men back of him later on, Cortés won all Mexico. And without them, he'd have been smashed utterly and driven back into the sea. Go on with your own story."

This animal, and moonlight? It looked fantastic, beyond all history and fact. I dipped into the crabbed old documents dubiously, then into Prescott, then back again into this queer, bloody, dramatic and incredible story of Moonlight in Mexico, under the hill of Tzompak.

THE hill, thus named, was crowned by a ruined temple, surrounded by the tents of Spaniards, who had seized this rocky eminence of the high uplands. It was bitterly cold here; the white men, fresh from tropical valleys, suffered terribly. On this sharp September morning, the thin, dark commander now donning his armor was shaken by fever.

"You're in no shape to ride, Hernando," said Alvarado, he of the golden hair and beard, and the stark blue eyes—a cavalier of the old Gothic blood. "Remain here. Let me take out the foraging party."

"No, it's my work; the camp remains under you, Pedro." Cortés shivered, and a groan escaped him. "What will come after this lull? Those naked savages die by the score under our arquebuses, before our cannon, yet fear us not."

"They fear our horses, at least!" And Alvarado laughed.

Cortés nodded moodily.

"Yes. Two of the horses, seven of the men, died; I had the bodies buried secretly during the night. Every horse is wounded. Nearly every one of the men is wounded. Do you wonder that they're rebellious? A spy reports that the chief Tlascalalan general is gathering forces of incredible number down in the plain, yonder. I've got to bring in provisions. More, I've got to take a look at the back-trail, without letting our men suspect it."

Alvarado's brows went up. "Not retreat?"

"Not aloud." Cortés rose, resumed his task. "Most of these heathen still think us gods—and gods don't run; but—by the saints, we may have to draw back! Well, I'll be off. Keep your eyes open, and the guns loaded."

He went out, swung into the saddle and was gone with thirteen cavaliers, all of them iron men of noble blood.

ALVARADO strode off into the camp, greeted Fray Olmedo blithely, moved among the men with hearty word and cheery jest. They loved him, these men. They loved his free, frank, impulsive speech, the hot chivalry of his heart, the greatness of his deeds. Even the enemy loved him, revered him from afar, trembled before his golden hair and beard—Tonatieh, they called him—the Sun. For they worshiped the sun, and to them all these whites with fire-breathing weapons were come from the sun-god; but this great bluff captain with the golden hair was the very child of the sun indeed.

Alvarado came to the entrenchments, hastily thrown up; he passed the artillery, the cumbersome little bronze cannon mounted on heavy wheels, and so reached the outpost below the hill. The sentinel saluted him. The other men jumped up from their work.

"At ease, at ease, comrades," Alvarado said genially. "Anything stirring?"

"Nothing but some women down there. They've shown no fear of us. They even came close enough to call out and grimace like cats."

Alvarado looked out at a few women who were at work gathering corn. Below the hill were fields of maize, that stretched away and narrowed to a pass beyond, which in turn gave access to a great valley. Baskets on their backs, these women were gathering ripe corn from the fields.

"Indeed!" Laughing, eager, Alvarado beckoned two of the men. "Fetch your crossbows and trail along after me."

Here's sport. Don't fire unless I give the word."

Leaping the barrier, sunny hair aflame in the light, he went striding down the trail, too impulsive to think of possible ambushade.

There was something of the boy in this great-thewed, laughing cavalier, who fairly radiated vitality and uproarious humor. In those days all folk were attracted to him, friend and foe alike. The

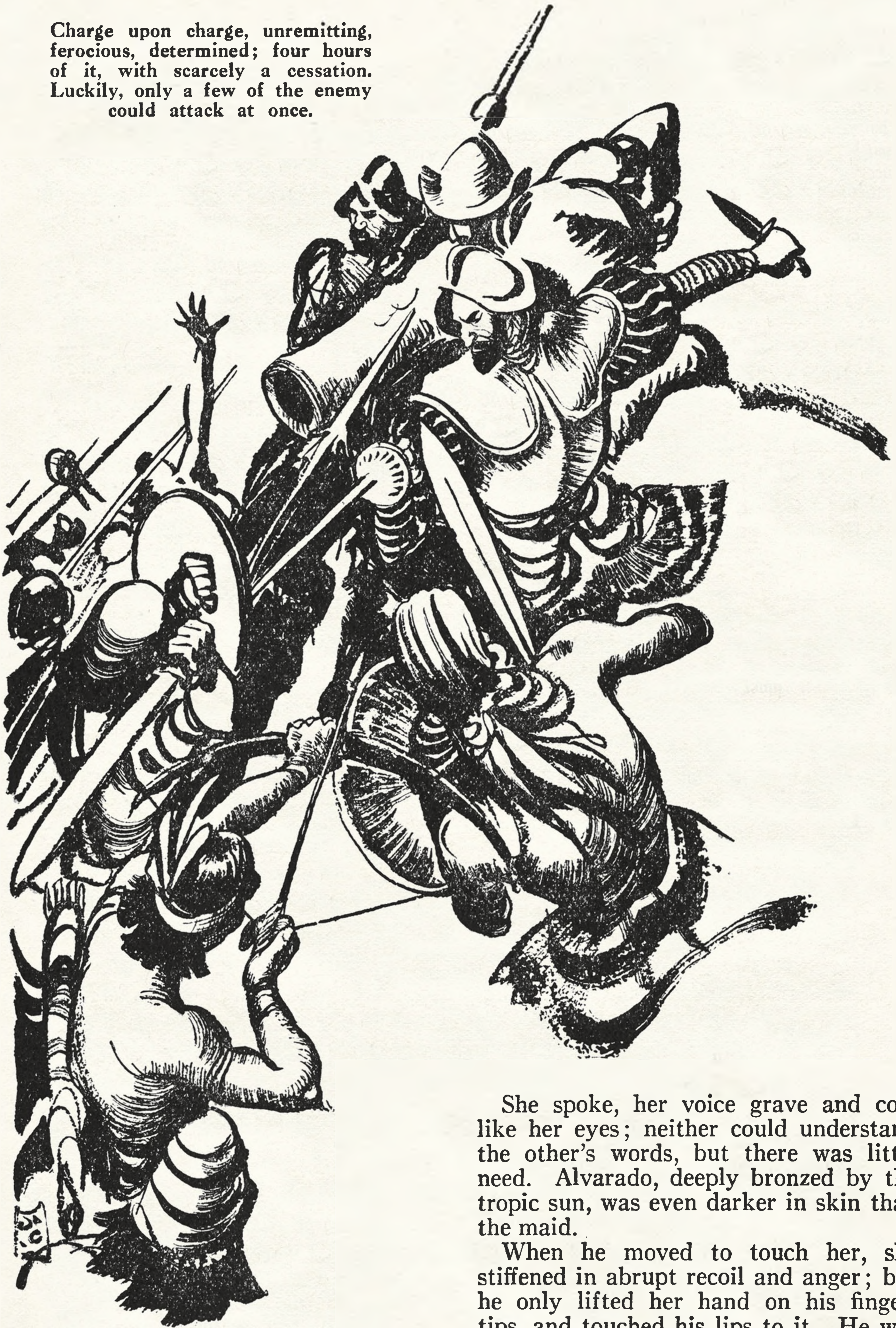
women, in their white cotton garments, stared as he approached them. Two sank down on their faces before him, trembling. Two others shrank back, clutching at knives, as though to protect the fifth of the party. She, a girl, stood unfearing, giving him look for look in curious questioning. Something in her manner changed Alvarado instantly from boisterous play to swift courtesy.

"*Por Dios!* Señorita, I kiss your hands and feet," he exclaimed, and bowed to her, knowing his words past her comprehension. "What a regal beauty you are! Gold and feathered robes would become you better than cotton. Upon the word of a Viejo Cristiano, a *caballero*



The spear fell not. Harsh voices cried out in amazement as the Indians held up Alvarado's arm with the bracelet. They knew that crest!

Charge upon charge, unremitting, ferocious, determined; four hours of it, with scarcely a cessation. Luckily, only a few of the enemy could attack at once.



whose blood goes back to the Goths, you have the very face and carriage of a queen!"

At his tone, his winning gaze, his quick charm, her eyes warmed and softened a little responsively. She was very lovely, indeed, very delicate and proud.

She spoke, her voice grave and cool like her eyes; neither could understand the other's words, but there was little need. Alvarado, deeply bronzed by the tropic sun, was even darker in skin than the maid.

When he moved to touch her, she stiffened in abrupt recoil and anger; but he only lifted her hand on his fingertips, and touched his lips to it. He was no fool; he had swiftly appraised all five of these women.

"A girl who gathers corn in the field, who works for her family, eh!" he exclaimed shrewdly. "And these others moved to protect you, not themselves. Ha, fair hands, uncalloused palms! They go with proud eyes and poised head. I

have it, I have it! You're some princess at the very least."

Princess? He knew the Aztec term, and voiced it. She broke into a smile as she looked into his eyes.

"Tonatieh!" she responded. Alvarado, of course, knew that he was so named, knew she must have recognized him. He could well guess the reason for her presence here.

"Princess in very truth," he observed. "Curiosity? No, no. You came here to spy upon us, to keep an eye on our camp, to take back reports of us. You, to venture where none of your warriors dare go. Ha! What a woman you are!"

HIS manner, his tone, his eyes all spoke clearly enough his honest admiration. The girl colored slightly, then, relaxing, she burst into a low laughing speech that charmed Alvarado. A princess, at least, accompanied by two women who served her, and two peasants to act as camouflage; a girl who came to play man's part, assuage her own curiosity, bring in a report on the strangers.

Friendship, liking, mutual admiration, quick passionate impulses—why not? Cortés was desperately anxious to win the friendship of these Tlascalans if possible. Pedro de Alvarado was playing no traitor's role. He kissed the dark, slim fingers again, then took from his throat a little ivory cross that he wore on a silver chain. He put it about the girl's neck, half laughing, half serious. She fingered the ivory with curiosity, and hesitated. Then, from beneath her white cotton sleeves, she took a bracelet of thin gold oddly twisted in the shape of a heron.

Gift for gift. Alvarado, whose sinewy wrist was as large as her arm, clasped the thing about his wrist, pulled his sleeve over it. One of the women exclaimed in quick warning. All five of them drew away. Alvarado looked up to see two natives coming, accompanied by a few slaves—envoys, Indians who had come with the army and had been sent to Tlascala. Now they were returning—peace or war, which?

The women vanished, forgotten. Alvarado met the envoys, went back to camp with them. Their frightful news was not long in spreading. It greeted Cortés and the other twelve cavaliers when they rode back, later in the day, with spoil of provisions.

"The Spaniards may pass on to Tlascala, there to serve as sacrifices to the gods," said Xicotencatl, chief general and

practically head of the state. "If they stay in camp, I'll come to visit them tomorrow."

The point was that Xicotencatl had gathered five battalions of ten thousand men each—the pick of the whole Tlascalan army—to exterminate the invaders, and was waiting in the plain beyond the pass.

"The devil of it is," said Alvarado, "they're not afraid of the cannon and guns! They die with the greatest courage imaginable. They only fear the horses. If we had two hundred instead of thirteen, we'd conquer the whole country. These heathen never saw horses, never use any beast of burden. What will you do about tomorrow, Hernando?"

"Hit them first," said Cortés gloomily. "March out—make our men think I'm quite confident of the outcome. The envoys say that only half these gathering forces belong to Tlascala itself; the rest are allies. And there's bad blood between this fellow Xicotencatl and the other leaders."

"Use the cavaliers first?"

"No. As reserve. Can't have any more horses killed; I'll take command of them myself. You'll command the column, for the day."

"Thanks," said Alvarado ironically. "Tell whoever takes my horse, to look out for his wounded off flank."

He did not mention the affair of the women. That mattered little now, under the weight of this tremendous news; but the bracelet remained above his wrist, the eyes of the girl lingered with him, even in death. For Alvarado, like all the rest, looked only for death on the morrow.

"Afraid?" said stout old Bernal Diaz. "Yes, we're men, we fear death; but by the nails of Christ, we'll not run from it!"

So Fray Olmedo confessed the entire army that night, and had little sleep.

IN the sunlit morning they marched out, found no enemies in the pass, and so came to the plain, a mile distant. It opened before them, a lush expanse six miles square; the sight of it staggered them. Cortés swallowed hard.

"More like a hundred and fifty thousand than fifty thousand," he muttered.

So it seemed. The Indian array was dense, serried, filling the whole expanse, each battalion under its own standard, bearing the armorial emblems of the leaders, and above all the great golden eagle of the Tlascalan republic. A sea of



"Tonight," said the envoy, "your camp is to be attacked. The priests say that you have no power when the sun is at rest. She hopes to save you—"

glittering figures, of glinting arms, of fantastic helmets, shimmering feather-ropes and golden corselets.

Cortés swung his horse and faced the column. He pointed to the banner above them, bearing the Cross, spoke curtly and ringingly with words of courage.

"Use the point of your swords, not the edge," he concluded. "Artillery, crossbows, arquebus men, remember the orders to fire by ranks and maintain an unremitting fire. And above all, hold your ranks! Once broken, we're lost. Keep the ranks, and today we conquer Mexico!"

His orders crackled. The artillery drew aside to slight rising ground. Cortés and his cavaliers remained in the rear; Alvarado marched forth the column. From the sea of men before them arose a roar like the thunderous roar of surf on the coast. For an instant the sun was darkened, as a hail of arrows and stones filled the air. Coolly, Alvarado marched on, issued the orders, halted the lines in formation.

Arquebus and crossbow began the hail of death. The cannon burst in with belching voice. In those massed ranks ahead, not a shot could miss. A frightful silence fell upon the Indian host, broken only by screams. The front ranks melted away into windrows of heaving death. The slaughter was appalling.

Yet, as Alvarado had said, these Indians feared no cannon or arquebus. The shaken, reeling battalions formed up afresh. Alvarado, who had one of the friendly Indians beside him, pointed to

the banner opposite. Its device was oddly familiar.

"What does it signify?" he shouted.

"A heron on a rock, Tonatieh!" replied the Indian. "The device of Xicotencatl!"

A heron! Alvarado started. Then everything was swept away, as the dying masses of Indians rolled down into that intolerable rain of death. They surged forward, wave upon wave, the earth quivering to their tread. Bolt and ball thinned their ranks, but others pressed on across the dead bodies, on and on, ever closer, rolling up and over in a tremendous, irresistible human wave.

The Spanish line was broken. The front was smashed in. That human sea lifted and burst and swept everything away in a mad confusion of fighting shapes. Only the cannon maintained the steady roar of fire from the flank.

Heavily mailed against light weapons, the Spaniards had advantage enough, even at this fell worst. Alvarado, thrusting adroitly, sword and dagger in full play, moved untouched and unhurt, until a copper-tipped spear slashed his neck. A dying man gripped his leg. Next moment he was down, and the surging tide of men passed over him. He was held fast, spread-eagled, while a chief with jeweled and feathered animal-helm lifted to strike spear into throat.

The spear fell not. Harsh voices cried out in amazement. The Indians held up the arm with the bracelet; they recognized it, they knew that crest! In this instant of respite Alvarado tore free,

rolled over and gained his feet, seized two Indians and smashed their heads together. A surge of his men bore down to the rescue. He found his sword and plunged headlong into the fray anew.

The bracelet had saved his life.

NOW Cortés swung in with the cavaliers. The artillery cut fresh swaths through this human corn. The one awful moment of broken lines and smashed formation was past. Frantic with despair, the Spaniards slew by point and edge. To further aid them, terrible cries arose from the Tlascalan ranks. One of the immense battalions, whose commander was at bitter enmity with Xicotencatl, was marching from the field; another followed.

Upon this the Indian ranks shattered and withdrew, the wave fell back sullenly, giving the reeling Spaniards time to reform ranks about their dead. Not a man but had new wounds, the horses were slashed and ripped; but there was no rest. Powder to be brought up, guns to be swabbed, wounds bandaged.

Then the clamor of trumpets and conch shells rose anew. The wave came rolling back, up and over the heaps of dead—rolling on to break and shred before cannon and arquebus and sword-point. Xicotencatl, although deserted by nearly half his force, rushed the others on grimly to the death-grapple.

Charge upon charge, unremitting, ferocious, determined; four hours of it, with scarcely a cessation. Luckily, the Spanish force was so small that only a few of the enemy could reach it at once; and those who reached it, died. When finally the waves broke back and drew on no more, the exhausted men dropped where they stood. There was no flight; the Tlascalan ranks flooded away in good order and retired.

Cortés and a few others fell swiftly to work, loading the dead on artillery caissons for secret burial, loading the wounded atop the dead, and retreating thankfully to the hill of Tzompak. No pause even to plunder the golden trinkets from the corpses—eloquent fact!

Back to man the defenses and to lick fast-stiffening wounds. Alvarado, mindful of the strange happening amid that field of blood, sought out the two natives whom Cortés was promptly sending back to Tlascala with new overtures of peace. He described the girl.

“Seek such a woman,” he said, “in the family of Xicotencatl. If you can find

her, say that Tonatieh salutes her. That’s all.”

They went their ways.

The next day passed, and the next. The cornfields stretching below the camp to the pass remained empty. No word came back from the envoys. The men, looking upon the scanty powder supply, the little remaining shot, began to murmur anew at Cortés. Their eyes and their hearts were turned longingly to the back trail, to the lowlands where conquest was so easy and women were so kind.

The heart and eyes of Alvarado, however, had turned elsewhere. . . .

Natives came and went; there was no exact state of war. Foraging parties brought in prisoners, whom Cortés released with gifts. He wanted peace, wanted it most desperately, but the non-return of his envoys was alarming.

“Don Pedro!” In late afternoon a grinning Castilian appeared at Alvarado’s tent. “There’s a ragged fellow at the lower outpost, asking for you; at least, we think so. All we can get out of him is *Tonatieh*, which must be yourself.”

Alvarado’s heart leaped. He hurried through the camp, and on the way picked up one of the lower-country natives who accompanied the column as interpreters.

At the outpost waited a Tlascalan in dirty cotton robe, unarmed. He showed Alvarado a tiny silver chain; it was that from the cross given the girl. The interpreter listened a while to his message,



“You’re some princess, at the very least,” said Alvarado.



then turned to Alvarado with broken, halting Spanish.

"Lord Tonatieh, this man says that if you will come to meet him and one other person tonight, an hour past sunset, in those lower cornfields, you will be taken to a place where there is much gold. Beware of a trap! He says you must come alone—"

"Who is the other person?" demanded Alvarado quickly.

"The daughter of Xicotencatl."

The daughter! Alvarado remembered her proud, lovely eyes, her slender beauty, her brave hauteur. A trap? Not likely. The little chain proved it. He laughed eagerly.

"An hour past sunset. Tell him I'll come—alone."

Blab to Cortés? Not much. No others had heard the message; the interpreter

"Lord Tonatieh, if you will come to meet this person tonight, an hour past sunset, you will be taken to a place where there is much gold."

J. CLYMER

was ordered to keep silent. Alvarado, gay and quick-hearted as a boy, thought of his love tryst with kindling pulses. Leading him to gold, was she? Devil take the gold!

THE sun fell; the meager evening meal was done, the cold night descended. Bivouac fires twinkled through the camp. The moon was approaching the full, but it would not rise for another two hours. Men groaned under rude surgery; Cortés thanked his God that these Indians had strict rules against night fighting. Any attack this night would have found him helpless. . . .

A cloak wrapped about his armor, Alvarado passed the outposts and descended the trail toward the cornfields that narrowed to the pass beyond. He alone, of all that battered army, carried gay heart and eager hopes this night. Of his wounds, he made light.

Two figures in the starlight; and, at a distance, a third, whom at first Alvarado disregarded.

She met him, hand to hand, eye to eye, and the touch of her thrilled him with flames. Her voice, though he could not understand her words, was music ineffable; he was in love, he felt that her spirit responded to his, that she repaid his ardent desire. Then, calling softly, she brought up the waiting third figure. Alvarado recognized him as one of the envoys sent to Tlascala, who spoke Spanish.

"You!" he exclaimed. "Oh! To interpret? She brought you?"

"Yes, Lord Tonatieh. She desires to take you to a place where there is much gold, but it is some miles away."

"Plague take the gold!" and Alvarado laughed joyously. "What's her name?"

The other told him, repeated it; he blinked at the Aztec syllables, and then caught at part of the name.

"Luisa! Doña Luisa—that's enough!" he exclaimed.

"She means it honestly, Lord Tonatieh," said the envoy. "I must warn you; tonight your camp is to be attacked and destroyed. Her father has picked ten thousand of the best warriors, vowed to death. The priests say that you and your companions have no power when the sun is at rest. The attack comes in an hour. She hopes to save you—"

Alvarado, before this intelligence, was for a moment absolutely stupefied. He was jerked abruptly from passion to duty; yet stronger than passion, was the

love in his heart. She had tried to save him—this thought chimed in him like a brazen bell. He lifted her hand, bent his head to touch his lips to her fingers.

"Tell her," he said to the envoy, while he looked into her proud eyes under the star-glow, "that I care nothing for gold, and everything for her. Tell her that this attack is no news; that her gods have deserted her people, that the Christian god has warned us of the attack. Tell her that, when Tlascala makes peace with us, I shall claim her as my wife—that she, too, must become a Christian! Go on, fool, tell her all I have said, on your life!"

The ringing timbre of his voice, backed by his sharp, stern anxiety and haste to be gone, had its own effect. The hapless envoy translated. The girl cried out quickly, imploringly.

"She begs that you will go, Lord Tonatieh, with her—"

"Not with her, but to my own people," said Alvarado. "But we shall meet again; I shall send for her, shall claim her as my wife! Farewell."

For one quick moment he held her close, touched his lips to her forehead, then he turned and strode away.

No hesitation now; the moment of decision had come. The impulsive moment! Back in camp, he burst into the tent of Cortés and wakened that weary, fever-ridden man from fitful slumber.

"Up, Hernan! Listen to my story," he said abruptly. "The crisis comes. Xicotencatl attacks in an hour—the last desperate effort to crush us."

"Good God!" exclaimed Cortés. "Is this true? How do you know?"

ALVARADO told him, standing straight and smiling. Told Cortés everything, told him of the promise he had made this girl in the starlight.

"And I mean it," he concluded earnestly. "It will further your course and cause, Hernan. Marry some of these Tlascalan princesses to some of us, and you have their whole power behind you—"

"But tonight, in front of us," Cortés interrupted dryly. "Do you know what it means, Pedro? The army's in no shape to stand attack. It's impossible!"

Desperation edged his voice. Alvarado laughed and sat down.

"Listen," he said softly. "Crisis, I said; meet it as such! You forget. There's one thing these infidels fear.

Make use of it! And moonlight. You know the effect of moonlight. They don't. They never fight at night. This is a final heroic effort to smash us. Well—"

He spoke softly, quickly, hotly. Cortés listened, then pursed his lips.

"*Dios!* If it fails—"

"What, Hernan?" Alvarado clapped him on the shoulder. "Such a word, from you?" And his laugh rang through the tent, a trumpet-peal to courage.

THE full September moon lifted above the rimming eastern peaks, flooding the hill of Tzompak, the temple at its crest, the works of the Spaniards, the tents, with its stealing ruddy radiance. All was quiet here in the camp. No one stirred. The exhausted men slept.

The moon-glow crept on and on. Now the wide fields of maize, rustling in the cold night wind, standing full shoulder-high, became all lit and kindled. But this maize rustled to more than wind; the moonlight struck upon more than dangling corn-tassels. Something strange and shapeless appeared above the maize, moving forward steadily, as though a dark wave were rolling on over the tall growths. A wave indeed; a sea of heads, stretching to right and left, struck now and again with a gleam of reflected glints from weapons of copper or obsidian.

Steadily, endlessly, that sea of heads moved on, flowing for the hill of Tzompak to make sudden surprise assault upon the sleeping camp. Now it came to the edge of the maize-fields and darkened into columns of men; ahead of them broke the rising ground with the camp outposts just beyond.

"*Santiago!*"

The great shout leaped forth in unison from all Spanish throats. Sudden that battle-cry pealed out, and the Spaniards followed it, bursting from their lines and hurling themselves toward the oncoming sea. The columns halted, astounded; and then, spreading out to right and left, charging down at full gallop, appeared the mailed horsemen and their accoutred steeds, with saddle-cloths and caparisons flaring out like wings.

Thirteen of them, no more; but those thirteen were as demons from the nether world. The uncertain moonlight rendered them gigantic, magnifying horse and man into huge proportions, expanding their numbers threefold. As these unearthly apparitions burst upon them, the

Indian columns wavered, halted, broke. A thin flight of arrows whistled—then the Spaniards had struck. The horsemen had struck.

In wild and utter panic, without another blow, the terrified Indians turned and fled. The infantry could not pursue for sheer weariness, but the cavaliers formed and charged through those serried but unresistant ranks, riding them down, striking home with lance and edge, while the horses lashed out and sent forth piercing neighs that finished the stark terror of the Tlascalans.

They fled, and they were slain, without a blow. They were slain, until arms were too weary to lift blade, until the trampled maize was all littered with corpses and black in the moonlight. On and on and through the pass to the great plain beyond ebbed the panic-struck wave, and was gone. The last effort of Tlascalala had ended. The thirteen had broken and smashed the ten thousand, had conquered the Indian Republic—and with it, Mexico and half a continent.

For now the white men were welcomed in Tlascalala, not as conquerors, but as allies against Montezuma and his empire, bitterly hated by these mountain warriors. The proud city of the hills turned from war to feasting, from funerals to marriage celebrations, and half a dozen of the noblest girls of the city were baptized and wedded to the chief officers of Cortés.

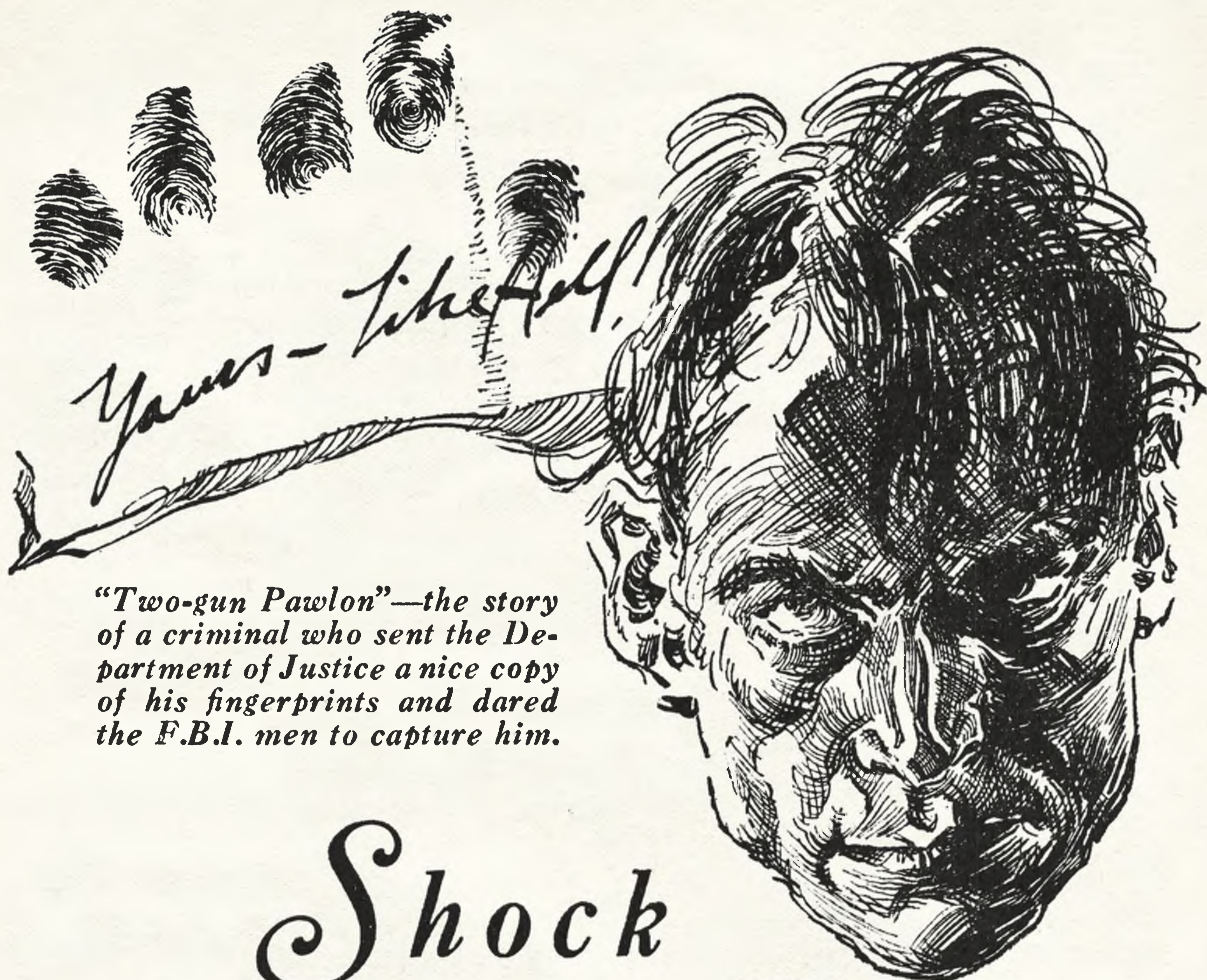
"AND if you have any doubts in the matter," concluded Martin Burnside, when we were discussing the affair later, "you'll find the posterity of Alvarado and Doña Luisa married into the noblest families of Spain, and duly recorded."

"I don't give a hang for anybody's posterity," I said testily. "But what about this horse's head?"

"Alvarado's own horse," Martin rejoined. "In Camargo's 'History of Tlascalala,' which Prescott quotes, you can read how the horse died, and how the city gave the animal a magnificent burial—and here's the visible, ocular proof of it. This horse, on that wild moonlight night under the hill of Tzompak, was one of the great and decisive weapons of history. Do you doubt it?"

I looked at the grinning, mummified, horrible thing there on the desk, and shook my head. I no longer doubted anything Martin Burnside said.

Another colorful story in this widely discussed series will appear in the next, the March, issue. Be sure to read it.



"Two-gun Pawlon"—the story of a criminal who sent the Department of Justice a nice copy of his fingerprints and dared the F.B.I. men to capture him.

Shock Troops of Justice

By ROBERT R. MILL

"LETTER for you-all, Mistah Duke." And Special Agent James Ashby, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, smiled as he accepted the envelope handed him by the colored messenger. He glanced at the postmark.

"Packton, eh? That's strange. Who could be writing me from there?"

The colored boy, his teeth shining like pearls set in dark velvet, suggested:

"Reckon you is going to find the name when you opens the letter."

The F.B.I. man laughed, and the messenger joined in the mirth.

"Excellent advice, John," Ashby admitted. "Strange I didn't think of it before." He tore open the envelope. "What would we do around here without you, John?"

The colored boy chuckled. He knew this man; he liked him. He knew the feeling was returned. He also was well

aware that Duke Ashby's good nature made possible liberties which other agents would not permit. . . . With the active curiosity of his race, John glanced at the sheet of paper in Ashby's hands.

"You big bum, Ashby!"

The salutation, written in purple ink, seemed to leap up at him.

"Fan my brow!" cried the startled boy.

"Get out of here," barked his usually tolerant friend, "or I'll fan you somewhere else."

The messenger departed hastily, muttering to himself:

"Um-m-m. Sure is trouble. Got another letter just like that one for the Director. That means more trouble. . . . Keep away from John, trouble. Don't send *him* no letters like that. No, suh! I wants no truck with that man. Deeds over my full share to Mistah Duke."

Duke Ashby apparently thought his own hands were full, for there was a deep



Pawlon licked his lips as he thought of the scene being enacted in that room across the street.

frown on his face as he read the letter for the second time:

I am serving notice on you that I pay my debts. You got Melio, and you had the judge throw the book at him. O. K., funny-paper heroes!

The judge will get his first. That ape of an assistant United States attorney comes next. Dorothy Fairhaven thought she had it tough when we pulled the snatch, but she aint seen nothing yet. You guys aint the only ones who can turn on the heat.

That brings us down to you, you big four-flusher. Come out and get me. I'll rub you out like I would a comma that was placed wrong. If there is any justice, I'll get a medal for doing it.

You claim to be the Feds' heavy hitter. Prove it. I say you are yellow. To show the world how yellow you are, I have sent a copy of this letter to that damn' speech-making director of yours, and to the newspapers. And just so you can't pass this off as a crank letter, here is some of the stuff you are so heavy for.

*Yours—Like Hell!
Two-Gun Pawlon.*

And laugh this off, you monkey!

Accompanying the letter there appeared a set of fingerprints.

Just as a matter of form, Ashby pressed a button and had the prints taken to an identification clerk. The messenger was not gone long. The prints were those of Two-gun Pawlon, murderer, kidnaper, fugitive and present Public Enemy No. 1.

The messenger was back again.

"Director craves to see you-all right away, Mistah Duke."

"Isn't that nice," murmured Special Agent Ashby.

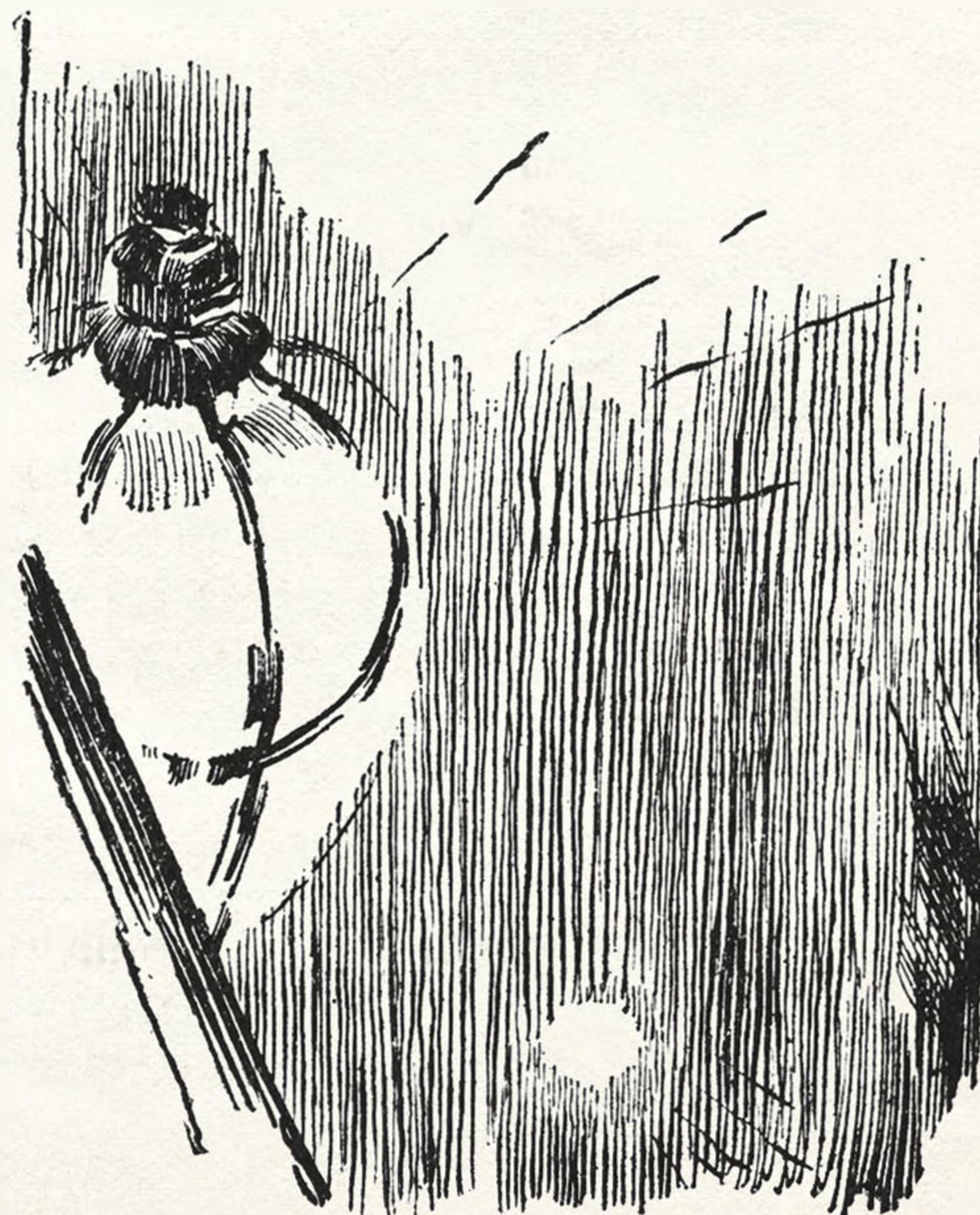
FORCEFUL, handsome, and faultlessly groomed, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation sat at his desk, with a flag on the wall serving as a frame for his well-knit figure, and went into effective action without a single wasted motion.

State lines meant nothing to him. His territory was the United States of America. A map hanging on the wall outlined that territory in bold relief. He glanced at it as he worked.

Colored pins, each representing an agent, were stuck in the map as those agents were instructed over the long-distance telephone to guard the judge who had sentenced Melio, the henchman of Two-gun Pawlon.

Other pins went into the map at a point a good three hundred miles away, mute reminders of the men just instructed to safeguard the prosecutor. There were even more pins inserted at a point, again

Illustrated by Austin Briggs



separated from the other by many miles, where at this very moment agents were starting a vigilant watch about the home of Dorothy Fairhaven.

Even then the Director was not satisfied. He spoke to a subordinate:

"I want a list of the witnesses for the prosecution in the Fairhaven case. Also the jurors."

The names appeared as if by magic. More telephone-calls. More pins moved on the map. More tight-lipped agents, prepared to guard with their own lives those persons whom the underworld menaced.

Two-gun Pawlon had not threatened these last—not yet. They would be in grave danger later. Balked of his announced prey, Two-gun's disordered mind would cause him to strike at them. He was desperate. His challenge, instead of reflecting courage, screamed aloud the fact that it was the dying theatrical gesture of a man who knew his cause was lost. But now, and right up to the minute he died, he was a deadly menace that threatened everything that came into his path. The hopelessness of it all only added to the menace. And in his own way, Two-gun was clever.

THE man at the desk admitted that. But there was nothing vainglorious about it when he vowed to himself that he would best Two-gun Pawlon. It was an impersonal promise. Many things entered into it:

This breath-taking organization, formerly a mere political football, which he had transformed into a law-enforcement agency that won the applause of every law-abiding citizen. The great laboratory of crime, unequalled elsewhere in the world. Trained technicians of all kinds, constantly at work compounding bad medicine for the rats of gangland. Never resting upon their laurels, but keeping always one, two or even three jumps ahead of the criminal. Field men, the pick of the manhood of the country, who took up their tasks with the zeal and courage of fanatics.

A slight smile crossed the face of the Director. Only a fool would attempt to cope with all this—or a madman. Yes, most of the Two-gun Pawlons were recruited from those two classes. They didn't last long. But in order to terminate their short careers, real men, men the nation could ill afford to lose, were sacrificed. The smile vanished from the face of the man at the desk. That was

the hard part of all this. If the world only knew how much easier it would be to go out and do what his men were doing, than to sit chained to this desk while he ordered them to do it!

HE aroused himself from his reverie as a girl entered the office.

"Mr. Ashby is waiting, sir."

"Bring him in, please," said the Director. "And ask Mr. Sherman if he will join us."

The Director and Special Agent Ashby waited until Carl Sherman, head of the laboratory, appeared. He wore a white smock. His keen eyes twinkled behind thick glasses. He would have been at home in any great institute devoted to scientific research, but hopelessly out of place in a precinct police-station. The man-hunter—he had that quality—was subordinated to the scientist.

"Get Pawlon." The Director was speaking to Special Agent Ashby. "Get him as quickly as you can."

Carl Sherman sat peering at a paste-board card.

"Get him in such a manner that the world will know he is a cowardly rat instead of a hero."

"Yes sir," said Duke Ashby.

The official manner of the Director disappeared as he leaned over the desk.

"I want him revealed as a cowardly rat for two reasons: First, there is the publicity. The law-enforcement agency that ignores publicity is headed for the rocks. Publicity can make or break you. This was a slap in the face."

The light of the idealist gleamed in the eyes of the man at the desk.

"But more than that, we owe it to the youth of America. If history notices us at all, it will be because we have succeeded in stripping the false glamour from these rats and in revealing them for what they are." A wave of affection for the quiet, efficient, even deadly young man sitting before him swept over the Director. "I know you won't let us down, Duke."

A lump was forming in Duke Ashby's throat.

"I'll try not to, sir," he said.

There was a silence that lasted for several minutes.

"There will be more letters," declared the Director. "The success of the first one makes that a certainty. But I doubt if they will help us any. They have probably been written and given to confederates to mail in various parts of

the country. We will check them all, as a matter of routine, but I don't want you to handle them."

Carl Sherman looked up from the card. In his eyes there was mirrored the respect one master craftsman feels for another whose magic equals, or even exceeds his own. He nodded once, then resumed his study of the card.

"There will be routine searches in all known underworld hide-outs. Keep out of them, unless the trail gets warm. Then rush there at once. This challenge was issued to you personally; I want you in at the kill."

Again Carl Sherman nodded.

"I would prefer," the Director continued, "that Two-gun Pawlon came to grief as the direct result of your own efforts. It is a large order. But there must be some loose link in the chain that will make it possible. It is up to us to find it."

Carl Sherman put the card aside.

"Her name is Clara Markens." He spoke with the dry tone of a statistician dealing with figures. "She is known as Clair Martell. The underworld calls her the Orchid. She belongs to Two-gun Pawlon."

He tapped the pasteboard card.

"Find the Orchid, and you will find Pawlon. She has followed him, from the Ritz to Atlanta. The greater his triumph, or the worse his plight, the more certain he will be to have her with him. Remember, she is not the gun-girl of tradition. She has the sort of beauty that drives men mad. I saw her once. I was a special agent in—"

He made a gesture of negation.

"Let that pass. Her soul must be as hideous as her body is beautiful, for she is dangerous as a cobra. Only one man is immune from her menace."

He paused. Then: "That man is Pawlon. Remember that, Duke."

DUKE ASHBY'S eyes were veiled. His finely fashioned hands rested upon the desk. He studied a picture Carl Sherman placed before him.

"Quite a beauty," he admitted. He turned to the Director. "If there is nothing else, sir, I'll get started and try to pick an orchid."

A shadow crossed Carl Sherman's face. He loved the tall, thin man as a brother; he admired his courage and ability. Carl Sherman was open, literal and exact; Duke Ashby, outwardly blasé, was temperamental as a prima donna. He hid his

feelings behind a mask of flippancy or indifference. To the end of their days, these two men would be very close. But always there would be the slight, intangible barrier caused by the difference in their natures.

The Director smiled at Ashby's statement. It disturbed Carl Sherman. He added a final word of warning:

"Some orchids bring death to the man who inhales their fragrance."

Duke Ashby's laugh floated back to them from the outer corridor.

ALMOST every man retains certain memories of his boyhood, mind-pictures that form at times of stress. One of these pictures was before the eyes of Duke Ashby as he hurried to Crow City by airplane.

As a boy of ten he had visited the farm of an uncle. His cousin, who was about his own age, had been given a stick of dynamite, warned of the careful manner in which it was to be handled, and then instructed to take it to men who were working in a distant field.

Once away from the house, the cousin had tossed the dynamite in the air, caught it expertly, and looked at his companion with an expression that seemed to say: "What a brave boy I am!"

Not to be outdone, Ashby had seized the explosive from his cousin. He had tossed it a little higher. Then he had walked a short distance ahead of where it would fall, faced away from it, and made the catch behind his back. . . . It had seemed very brave at the time. Now he knew it for what it was, vainglorious folly.

Apparently he had not outgrown the trait. His cheeks grew red again as he recalled the scene in the office of the Director that morning.

The machinery of the Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, had been working; and the Orchid had been found. The Director was frankly elated when he announced that fact to Ashby. Even Carl Sherman had betrayed his excitement by the rapid fluttering of his eyes behind the heavy glasses.

"Fortune, a youngster on probation, spotted her in Crow City," the Director explained. "He followed her to where she lives, made sure she was settled for some time, and then left long enough to call for help. She has been under constant surveillance since that time, but our men have made no effort to learn if Pawlon is in the building. That can come later."

Then, motivated by much the same desire that had prompted him to catch the dynamite behind his back, Duke Ashby had voiced his plea:

"I'll get there at once, sir. Will you please issue orders to the agent-in-charge that I am to play this alone, and in my own way? After all, sir, Pawlon dumped this thing in my lap."

The Director stiffened. His manner became official.

"This is not a one-man organization, Mr. Ashby."

The words stung Duke Ashby like a lash.

"The publicity this case has received," the Director continued, "makes it advisable for you to be in at the finish. Therefore, I am ordering you to Crow City for the good of the service, not for your own glory."

The Director toyed with a bit of paper.

"Mr. Sherman will go with you. He will be in charge. You will obey him implicitly. That is all."

That was why Carl Sherman was sitting across the aisle of the cabin plane. He had spoken only a few words during the long flight. Now and again he peered down at the scenery. Most of the time he was engrossed with a set of paste-board squares in his hands—*modus operandi* cards, upon which was recorded all that the law-enforcement officer had been able to learn regarding Two-gun Pawlon and the members of his band.

Duke Ashby studied the expressions that crossed Carl Sherman's face. For the most part, he wore a worried frown. Once he smiled faintly. Then he laughed aloud. But soon the worried frown reappeared.

Ashby respected this man. He was really fond of him. But he still smarted under that rebuke, and right at this moment he almost longed to throttle his companion.

The airplane lost altitude, banked sharply and rolled to an easy landing. The pilot glanced at the clock on the instrument-board, checked it against his wrist-watch, and smiled.

"Not bad, Duke."

"Not bad," the Special Agent admitted.

The pilot opened the door of the plane.

"Good hunting," he murmured.

CARTER, the agent-in-charge of the field office in Crow City, waved them to chairs in his private office.

"Where did Fortune pick her up?" asked Carl Sherman.



The Orchid

"In the post office," Carter explained. "I stationed him there because he is a new man, and while I felt the post office should be covered, I regarded it as extremely unlikely that the woman would appear there."

He paused. There was a worried frown on Carl Sherman's face.

"I don't like it," continued the agent-in-charge. "Not discounting Fortune's ability,—he did a clever bit of work,—it was too easy."

"Much too easy," Carl Sherman admitted.

"And that means?" Carter asked the question.

Sherman, apparently, was devoting all his attention to a spot on the sleeve of his handsome suit of tweed.

"It might mean that Two-gun Pawlon wants us to find the lady."

"Exactly," the agent-in-charge agreed.

The flush returned to Duke Ashby's face. He bit his lip angrily. So this was a trap! He, in his desire to be in at the finish, would have blundered into it. He was honest enough to admit his own shortcomings. His own discomfiture gave way to a warm glow of affection for these men. They came to their work, aloof, impersonal and exact. Personalities, theirs or others, mattered not at all. They were solving a problem. Nothing else counted. What scorn they must feel for attempts to turn these things to personal glory!

"I—I—" Duke Ashby began.

A smile of understanding played over the face of Carl Sherman. His hand closed over the hand of Duke Ashby.

"Forget it," came the command. "Don't you think we all went through what you are experiencing?"

A wistful smile crossed his face.

"It is human to want the world to know about our accomplishments. In most walks of life the resulting fame aids a man toward his goal. In ours, it spells ruination. So, as we grow older, we substitute the service for ourselves. We don't lose our vanity entirely, for down in our hearts we know that the glory the service receives is ours."

Duke Ashby felt very humble.

"I think I understand now, Carl."

"I know you do," came the quiet answer. "And that practically doubles your value to the service. Furthermore, the good of the service demands that you play an important part in this. So go to your hotel, and we will call you in plenty of time."

Duke Ashby fought back the protests that were almost spoken.

"Very well, Carl," he replied.

When he was gone, Sherman said:

"Fortune is a likely youngster. I remember him from the school. Is he in the office now?"

"Yes," said Carter.

"Send him in, please. I have a job for him."

SPECIAL AGENT RALPH FORTUNE dressed for the job ahead with care: A dark suit, a dark shirt; no white linen to show. Cap with a long peak, to be pulled down over his face.

His heart beat rapidly, and the wine of action coursed through his veins. He was going to work with Carl Sherman, who had asked for him. It was a tough, dangerous job. Sherman said there would be no glory in it. That was a laugh. He was working with Sherman, wasn't he? That was glory enough. And if they did their work rapidly and well, it might be possible for Duke Ashby to land Two-gun Pawlon. That would show the world you couldn't write threatening letters to a special agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. If the world knew that, it would be quite enough. What if the public didn't know the various cogs in the wheels? The Director did. So did the men in the service. That was what counted.

Special Agent Fortune hummed a tune as he hastened to a rendezvous with Carl Sherman. . . .

Special Agent Luther Bennett practiced walking. He walked with slow

hesitant steps. Agent-in-charge Carter sat at his desk criticizing the performance.

"Good enough," he said at last.

Both men chuckled.

"Better get a little rest," Carter advised.

"Right," said Bennett.

TWO-GUN Pawlon sat alone in a darkened room on the second floor of a rooming-house, which stood alone in a large lot. It was a moonlight night, and a two-family detached house on the opposite corner of the street was plainly visible. Pawlon watched a lighted window on the second floor of that house with interest.

Behind that drawn shade, Clair Martell, known to the underworld as the Orchid, was preparing to retire for the night. The drawing of the shade had signaled that fact, and also that all was well.

Pawlon licked his cruel lips with greedy anticipation as he thought of the scene that was being enacted in that room just across the street. She was his, all his. God, how he wanted her. But that would be a fool play right now. And you have to be smart; that is, if you are going to play a game like this—and get away with it.

She had everything, this twist. Looked like a million dollars. None of those Broadway babies could touch her. Smart as a steel trap. More guts than any guy in the mob. Willing to go to hell for a guy—if she loved him. Level-headed, too. Melio, before he departed for Alcatraz, had made the crack that she would cut your throat and then curse you for getting blood on the carpet. Maybe she would—if you weren't her man. He wanted her that way. She was like those one-man dogs. What do you call them? Airedales? Yes, that was it.

Say, that was a good one. He would pull that one on her some time after this mess was over. He would run his hand through her silken-soft hair. He would pull back the neck of her dress, and pretend he was going to bite the glistening white skin of her shoulder. Then he would call her his Airedale. She would get a kick out of that.

It was tough to have to pull her in on this racket. But she hadn't squawked. She could take it. Without her, there wouldn't be a Chinaman's chance. And he had to get even with those damn' Feds. They'd got Melio; worse than that, they

were right after *him*. And even worse than that, everybody seemed to think they were God-a'mighty.

Well, this would put them in their place. It would show them up for what they were—just saps. After this, people wouldn't be so quick to run to them for this, that and the other thing. A lot of guys would learn which side their bread was buttered on. They had forgotten it lately, what with the Feds grandstanding all over the country. This would set them to thinking again.

That was what won any game—thinking. Take this deal, now. Just plain thinking had put him where he would be sitting on top of the world. Any damn' fool knows that when a guy is on the lam, the easiest way to connect up with him is to spot his moll. That frog dick had put his finger on it when he said, "*Churchey da femme*," or something like that. And these dumb so-and so's had thought they were clever as hell when they spotted Clair!

Just as if he hadn't put her there for them to spot. It was to laugh. And it was to laugh, the way they went about keeping an eye on her. That misbeguiled so-and-so who kept walking by the house! Always carrying a package, and pretending he had heavy business. They probably had spotted her room by this time. That was swell.

Their next move would be to bring on that clown Ashby. Then they would settle down to serious business. Knowing cops, it was a safe bet they would play a waiting game, hoping she would go to him, or that he would communicate with her. Swell chance!

AFTER a time, they would close in on the girl. They would surround the house first. They would take it easy and cautious. Let them. He had thought of everything.

The first floor was occupied by right people, but people the Feds and the city bulls had nothing against, so they could afford to stick around and play ignorant after the blow-up was over. God knows they had been slipped enough jack to go through with that.

The minute one of those smart Feds showed up at either the front or the back door, an alarm sounded in the girl's room. The door would be opened for them, but not right away. And they would find it tough going to batter it down if they tried to open it before then. Anyway, there would be plenty of time for the girl

to duck downstairs and beat it through a tunnel in the basement. That led to a vacant garage around the corner. That part of the basement belonged to the second floor. It was partitioned off from the other. That would give the bunch on the first floor an alibi.

After they were in the house, the Feds would go to Clair's room. They would go easy on opening the door, taking care to stand away behind the wall when it swung open. That was all right, for nothing would happen—then.

IT was a cinch that they would enter the room, next. It was a double cinch that that glory-hogging Ashby would be up in front. And then things would happen—swell things.

The minute they stepped on a certain board, a Tommy-gun would strut its stuff. It didn't matter much who was up in front, because the Tommy would swing around and let out a good dose of lead all over the room. Melio's brother had fixed it that way. He was a bear on machinery. He should be. He had four years at it in that damn' reform school.

When the shooting started, the so-and-so's outside would come charging in. Let them! They would be welcome to what they found. They would have to carry it away in a basket, if he knew anything about a Tommy-gun.

And while all this was happening, he would slip around to the vacant garage. He had a car parked there. He and Clair would make off in it, putting some good miles between them and those so-and-so's before they got organized and went to work.

After that?

Well, a lot of guys would stop cheering and begin laughing. They would learn that a guy like Two-gun Pawlon kept his word, and wasn't a guy to fool with. That Tommy-gun would blast the crowns right off their so-and-so heads. Things would get back to normal. And when things are normal, a guy can get a break.

Yeah, it was all to the good. He had covered everything.

Two-gun peered through the window, and surveyed the darkened street for any signs of activity. There were no parked cars, no shadowy forms lurking in points of shelter. But better play it safe. . . .

It was midnight when Pawlon left his room and made a leisurely inspection of the neighborhood. There was nothing to excite his suspicion. He returned to the

room, undressed and dropped upon the bed. The pillow was placed so he had a view of the street and the house in which the Orchid also slept.

The gangster, however, slept fitfully. Every hour or so he awoke, and made sure nothing had happened to disturb the tranquil scene. Shortly before dawn he dropped off into sound slumber.

CARL SHERMAN and Special Agent Fortune sat in a car parked about a block below the two houses. Dawn was less than an hour away. The faces of the two men were drawn and haggard. Fortune quivered with excitement. Sherman, outwardly, was cold as ice.

All his life Fortune would remember this night. Talk about thrills! This had made the movies look like Sunday-school stuff. Death had rubbed their very elbows constantly as they worked, quickly and efficiently. Each thing they had done had been part of a carefully conceived plan. The Director and the man sitting beside him had been the authors of that plan. The slightest slip at any stage of the game would have ruined it all. There had been no slip—so far. That knowledge caused a warm glow to steal over Fortune. He had done the part assigned to him. He had done it well.

He knew that because, with the major part of their work done, and as they took their places in the parked car, Carl Sherman had said:

“Good going, youngster! You belong with us.”

Fortune hadn't answered. What could you say to something like that? It just made you feel warm all over, made you willing to walk right into a machine-gun for the man who said it.

Now the climax of the game was close at hand. Soon, along this quiet street, if these men had guessed right—and they were as confident as if they were staging a pageant—things would happen, fast!

Special Agent Bennett would roll dice with death. Special Agent Ashby, as the finale began, would walk alone into something in which he should have all the support the service could give him.

But there was no other way. It wasn't a grandstand play. It was a carefully designed plan. It must do more than bring about the capture of a criminal. That capture must be made by the man to whom Two-gun Pawlon had issued a direct challenge. The capture must be made in a manner designed to strip the



Pawlon knew him instantly. This was Ashby!



criminal of the last vestige of glory. He must be revealed as something for the world to laugh at and to scorn. All the men of the service who fitted into this pattern were just pawns, used to make the world safe for decent people. . . .

Down the street, something was happening. A shrill voice sounded, and a shadowy form darted forward.

Carl Sherman pressed the starter of the car.

"Steady, youngster," he said. . . .

Two-gun Pawlon awoke with a start. Instinctively he glanced at the window across the street. He rubbed his eyes and shook his head in disbelief. The vision persisted. He sprang from the

Ashby spoke: "Throw up your hands, Pawlon!"

bed and drew on his trousers. He slipped into his coat, patting the pocket on each side suggestively.

Great clouds of black smoke were billowing from the windows of the room in which the Orchid slept. The fire, apparently, had been spotted by a few stray passers-by, but they stood about in a daze, obviously at a loss what to do. There was no sign whatever of life in the house, and the door remained ominously closed.

Pawlon bolted from his room. He was driven by conflicting emotions. He loved the woman whose life was in peril; that is, he felt for her the closest approach to love of which his twisted nature was capable. But that feeling alone was not sufficient to send him into danger.

He was thinking of her as a priceless asset, one of the few things that remained to him, and something that he needed desperately, when he half-fell down the stairs and ran along the walk that led from the house to the street.

Down the sidewalk walked a blind man with faltering steps. In his hand was a cane, with which he tapped the walk ahead of him. He twisted his head uncertainly, as he apparently attempted to sense what was causing the excitement and confusion among the persons now arriving on the scene.

Two-gun Pawlon brushed by him. Another uncertain step put the blind man directly in his path. The two men collided. Pawlon reeled. The blind man fell to his knees. The gangster hastily checked the impulse to reach for one of his guns, and struck out blindly at this obstacle.

The blow caught the blind man full in the face. He whimpered; then cried out:

"He struck me—struck a blind man!"

The spectators—there were quite a few of them now—halted their rush toward the smoking building to watch this more throbbing drama. A murmur of disapproval went up. It gained in volume. Cries of scorn and hate came from the throats of men.

PAWLON turned on his heel. To hell with 'em! He was going on to save the Orchid.

A tall, thin young man stood squarely in his path. He was hatless. His hands were empty. There was a slight smile of derision on his rather handsome face. He appeared to be completely at ease, but every muscle in his body was tense and straining to the breaking-point.

Pawlon knew him, even before the man spoke. This was Ashby! The empty hands of the special agent were an invitation, and the hands of the gangster darted toward his own pockets.

The glances of the two men met in a silent duel. A cowardly killer saw revealed the soul of a crusader who would kill for a righteous cause, and who, even in his killing, would live true to a code. Pawlon must make the first attempt to shoot. Quixotic! Foolish! But backed by deadly purpose, and supported by lightning-like ability on the draw.

FEAR and awe halted the progress of Pawlon's hands. He was whipped even before Duke Ashby spoke:

"Throw up your hands, Pawlon! I'm only looking for an excuse to kill you!"

His voice was louder, and he turned toward the crowd:

"You're quite a tough guy against a helpless blind man, aren't you, Pawlon?"

Pawlon's knees sagged. This was the end. Ashby stood over him, calmly going through his pockets.

"Save the girl!" the gangster begged.

"Shut up!" ordered Duke Ashby.

Fire apparatus clanged its way to the house, and firemen entered. They attempted to gain admission to the room where the smoke was thickest, and were forced back. They sniffed the air, and broke into excited comment. A man in civilian clothes appeared beside them, threw open his coat for a moment, and began an explanation. Grins appeared on the faces of the firemen. They lost interest in their work.

The policemen who appeared on the scene were met by a similar young man. They too began to grin, and were unusually good-natured as they forced the crowd back.

Young men with cameras, and other young men with cards in the bands of their hats, appeared, apparently from nowhere. They worked quietly and efficiently, these young men. Even before they had fought their way to the group in the densest part of the crowd, they knew that Two-gun Pawlon had been captured, and that his final act of freedom had been to strike a blind man.

The vanguard of the reporters were just in time to see a blind man guided into an automobile. The car pulled away.

"Was that the blind man Pawlon struck?" they called.

A special agent on the running-board smiled faintly.

"Ask the crowd," he directed.

The reporters did. The crowd was emphatic in its answer. It was.

Then the news-men charged toward new material. They saw Ashby and his prisoner a short distance away. They rushed toward them. A second car appeared. The two men entered it, and the car pulled away, a siren screaming.

"Was that Ashby?" yelled the reporters.

A special agent sitting beside the driver nodded.

That was enough. It was plenty to cause great presses to roar and strain as they ground out extras. It was sufficient to place a capacity load on wires that carried to every part of the world. And in the car that bore Ashby and Pawlon away, Special Agent Fortune, sitting beside Carl Sherman, the driver, shivered with the joy and excitement.

It had worked!

CARL SHERMAN sat at a telephone in the field office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice. A bell tinkled. He picked up the instrument and replied, to a carefully worded query:

"Yes, Director. Everything went off fine.

"It was a trap, of course. Fortune and I entered the house. We had no trouble putting the occupants of the first floor out of the way. A little trouble getting the girl, but we made it. Splendid youngster, Fortune.

"The girl's room was nicely arranged. If she pressed a button, pressure on a floor board operated a Thompson sub-machine gun on a swivel. We went to work on her right away. She talked a little. Told us of a tunnel leading to a vacant garage at the rear. That came in handy to remove our prisoners.

"We brought them to the field office, and went to work on them again. The girl refused to say a word about Pawlon. Rather admired her, sir. But we were certain he was in the neighborhood, so we took your advice about drawing him to us, instead of going after him.

"We placed the smoke-pots in the girl's room, and timed them for shortly after daybreak. Pawlon came out to get the girl. Bennett did a splendid job as a blind man, and Pawlon took a wicked jab at him.

"Ashby took Pawlon without firing a shot. They fought it out with their eyes.

Another of Robert Mill's lively and authentic stories will appear in our next issue.

It was rather magnificent, sir. For sheer nerve—"

Ashby entered the room and walked forward, his hands extended. Sherman handed him the telephone.

"Ashby speaking, sir. This makes me feel like a skunk. Every other man on the case did more than I did."

The full, vibrant voice of the man at the desk in Washington carried over the wire:

"It was for the good of the service, Duke. You all did your parts. It so happened that yours called for the lime-light."

There was the sound of a great commotion from the street below the office. Carl Sherman threw open the window. Then he advanced and took the telephone from Duke Ashby.

"They are taking Pawlon across the street to arraign him, sir. Fortune has him. He is as thrilled as a boy with his first pony." He held the telephone toward the open window. "Perhaps you can hear part of it, sir."

The roar of the crowd gained in volume as Fortune appeared with his prisoner. Voices of men and women, harsh with hate and scorn, carried up to the office. Clear above the babel of noise, there came the shrill cry of an urchin:

*"Two-gun Pawlon! Yah—yah—yah!
Hit—a—blind—man! Yah—yah—yah!"*

The crowd caught up the refrain.

"Hit a blind man! Yah—yah—yah!"

The full fury of the hymn of hate subsided as the door of the courthouse across the street closed upon Fortune and Two-gun Pawlon!

Again the voice of the urchin sounded:

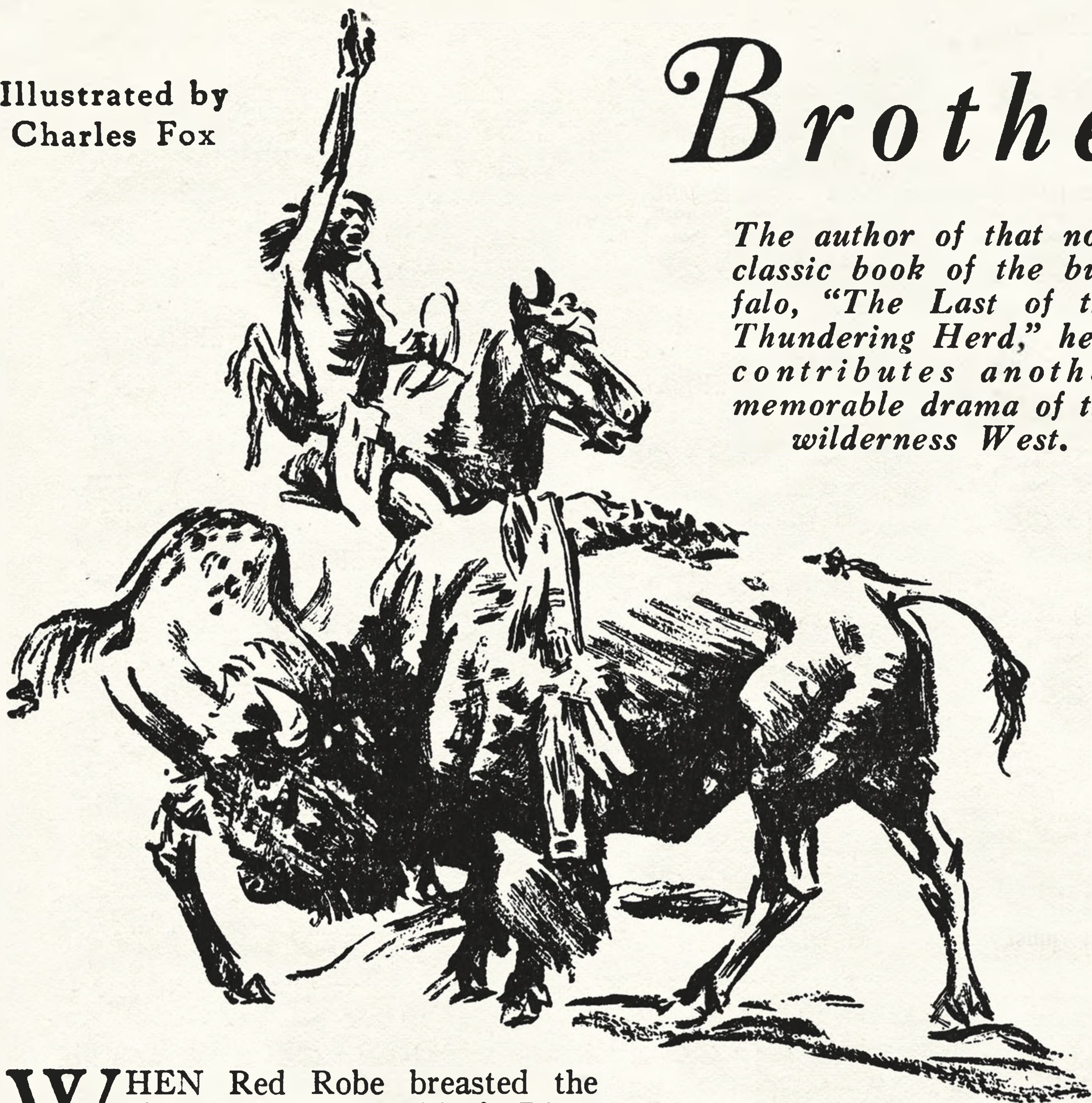
"T'ree cheers for de G-men!"

The voices of men, women and children blended in the resulting roar. There was suspicious moisture upon the faces of the men who had thronged into the office.

THE voice of the Director came over the wire. Sherman held the receiver away from his ear, and the words were plainly audible to the little group. The head of the greatest law-enforcement agency in the world spoke with simple dignity:

"Gentlemen, they are not cheering us. They are hailing the fact that law and order is once more back in the saddle. This case marks an epoch in the history of our country. All that we did is more than justified; for the gunman, as a hero, is gone for all time."

Illustrated by
Charles Fox



Brother

The author of that now classic book of the buffalo, "The Last of the Thundering Herd," here contributes another memorable drama of the wilderness West.

WHEN Red Robe breasted the divide between the Knife River and the Missouri, there was no visible element of danger in the scene before him. And yet as he reached the summit, the buffalo bull halted abruptly, his ponderous head came up, and his horns flashed in the sunlight. Ripples ran the length of his crested neck; his tail arched and the plume at its tip tossed impatiently. With dilated nostrils he sorted the air-currents in search of a key to the warning that came over the wires of heredity and instinct, a call which he felt but could not comprehend.

Youth, impatience and curiosity had placed the bull in the vanguard of the migrating bison host. Great lungs, a strong heart and muscles of steel had carried him to the summit far in the lead of the herd. Then—the warning borne on the prairie wind. With eyes of limited vision but with nostrils nearly as keen as those of the gray buffalo-wolves slinking from his path, he searched out the scene before him and sorted the scents carried on the breeze.

Ahead were rainbow hills and buttes and crimson-crested peaks painted and streaked with layers of barren, varicolored clay; but nowhere did he see the

fluttering of a feathered headdress against the sky, as he often had seen it, or the glitter of refracted sunlight play on flashing steel or on the bronze of painted flesh.

On either side and far below was a tangle of aimless cañons and valleys, but no smoke climbed from lodge-fires where the lowlands were green with timber and buffalo grass, and no milk-white dust rose from hurrying hoofs on beds of alkali. The source of his sense of danger could not lie in the immediate foreground or near at hand; yet the warning came again, stronger than before; and a deep rumble, as if in answer to a challenge, trembled from the giant breast.

Swinging side to the wind, his eyes flashing now, and vying in their sparkle with the sunlight on his horns, he drew the air into his lungs in great gusts, expelling it in blasts that flattened the grass at his feet. Turning his gaze to the south and west, perhaps he saw the hazy blue of Kildeer Mountain, and above it a slanting column of smoke broken into dots and dashes, climbing into the air, to unite and float away in a gray streamer against the sky.

of the Red Robe

By BIGELOW NEAL

Swinging his head to the northwest, his vision was strong enough to reach the twin peaks of Saddle Butte and another broken column twisting snakelike toward the heavens. This, then, was the source of the warning; for while the bison could not tell a signal fire from a prairie fire, the unmistakable scent of burning sage spoke eloquently of danger ahead.

But the mind of the buffalo was sluggish; his memory not of the best. When the first waves of the herd breasted the divide and swept by him on either hand, he forgot the threat that lay ahead. The look of suspicion and fear faded from his eyes. Again they were mild and soft, and he was plodding slowly on, a unit in a multitude sweeping forward over the face of the land, a bellowing, roaring, limitless sea of brown.

Red Robe, *Sa-hu-gich Na-pah-tu*, to use the name given him by the red men, had one thing not in common with the others of the herd. Where, aside from the long hairs of their manes and tails and leg fringes, others of his kind were brown, he alone was as red as the scoria draping the buttes about him. White buffaloes occurred occasionally, and black were not unknown; but red seemed rarest of all, and the oddity of color set him aside from the others of the bison host. Once seen, he must be remembered; and the great hide with its glossy red hair offered a prize to the hunter either red or white.

So far, fate had been kind; Red Robe was four years old, and although he had survived many narrow escapes, he carried no scar of bullet or arrow or lance. Even so, his existence was not unknown; nor was his approach unheralded. Could he have read and could he have comprehended the language of the "talking smoke," he would have known that in plodding steadily on toward the far-away prairies of Saskatchewan, he was keeping a rendezvous with a resourceful foe.

THROUGHOUT the long hot hours of the afternoon the herd did not pause. They moved with gradually increasing

speed; for the region they traversed, except for an occasional spring, was waterless. The choking dust from countless thousands of hoofs, together with the blistering heat of the sun and a journey that led uphill and down over heat-scorched clay and boulders, drove the buffaloes wild with thirst; and the scent of water from the Missouri ahead hurried them forward with no pause for grazing or for rest.

AT last the herd reached the foot of the bluff bordering the river. A race across a level plain ended in a plunge down into timber, and a battle with trees and vines. About him Red Robe heard the snapping and popping of breaking brush. Under the weight of thirst-crazed bodies willows cracked like rifle-shots; elms shivered under the charge—even the cottonwoods trembled while murmurs of protest passed in ripples through their leaves. Then the herd was out of the timber and sliding down the steep bank to a sandbar. For a moment Red Robe was under the flood, and then he was on the surface striking out for the northern shore. Giant suck-holes tugged at the legs of the bull, but he had the strength of youth, and he fought away from them with little trouble. Once he struck shallow water at the point of a bar and paused to rest, but not for long, for quicksands trembled beneath his feet. Plunging on, he fought his way through the turmoil of threshing water and buffaloes, until at last the shadows of trees loomed ahead, and he scrambled up the bank for another tussle with sand willows, and vines in the heavy timber.

Finally, tired from the long march and the terrific struggle with the river, he reached the outer edge of the timber and the sloping ground that led up to the level of the bottomlands. There, where the grass grew tall and thick, he lay down, and after a period of contented chewing at his cud, his eyelids grew heavy and his head swung around against his side. Fainter and fainter grew the roar of the herd still streaming down the

southern bluff. The sound of the threshing waters lulled. . . . Then, Red Robe became aware of another sound faint and far away: the rhythmic throb of drums. But the buffalo had forgotten the warning of the afternoon, and he was very tired. His eyes closed, and he was asleep.

A MILE upstream on bottomlands in the crook of the river's elbow, lay the hunting camp of the Arikara. Under the last of twilight a great circle of lodges, lighted from fires both within and without, glowed like conical paper lanterns. Thence came the throbbing of drums.

Not far from the larger camp was another and smaller circle of lodges. This was in the timber, where the river ice had plowed out a clearing among the trees. Here, called by runners from tribe to tribe, and by smoke-signals from peak to peak, were gathered the members of the society of the "Red Robe." Like the "Dead Grass" society, famous in chronicles of the West, the society of the Red Robe was an intertribal fraternal organization stretching out, through its membership, to include the warrior-elite of many nations.

In that smaller circle under the cottonwoods were not only the cream of the fighting men in the Arikara nation, but Sioux, Gros Ventres, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Pawnees and Crows, representatives of nearly every tribe in the Northwest, men who had passed the searching tests of the Sun Dance and of prairie warfare that were prerequisite to membership in an order which only the bravest of the brave might join.

Here in the center of the camp a circle of forked posts supported horizontal poles, and against these poles leaned rows of freshly cut trees, their drying foliage rustling and whispering in every breeze that moved through the timber. A bright fire burned within; and at one end was a semicircle of buffalo robes and brightly colored blankets forming seats for those warriors who by extraordinary feats of endurance and bravery had won their way to prestige in the order.

Kah-wah-tsu, the Arikara, presided. He was a tall man, with long smooth muscles that bespoke endurance. As he entered and took his seat, the firelight, striking his back, played upon the welter scars of the Sun Dance. He wore a breech-cloth and seatless trousers trimmed with buckskin. A breast plate of beadwork and porcupine quills, a red scarf that hung from his shoulder, and paints

of various colors, constituted his clothing above his waist. (It was a similar scarf, only black, that played a part in the mythical tale of the Custer-Reno fight, in which Sitting Bull is supposed to have covered the face of Colonel Custer to prevent its mutilation.) In the society of the Red Robe, the last act of initiation which brought the candidate to full-fledged membership, and which entitled him forever to the protection of the order, was the dropping of the scarf across his shoulder, and the utterance of the magic words: "I call him brother!"

One half of the face of Kah-wah-tsu was painted black, the other yellow. There were white circles around his eyes, and checks of various colors on his forehead. Above, the crest of a porcupine headdress glittered in the firelight; and a cluster of eagle feathers, each proclaiming a vanquished enemy, rose from the back of his head-dress to wave and nod at each turn of the warrior's head.

On the right of Kah-wah-tsu sat Hawk-flies-high, of the Hidatsa, and on his left, Thunder Bird of the Ogalalla Sioux. Before them were long lines of warriors sitting in front of a background of painted and beaded women. Kah-wah-tsu rose to speak.

"My friends," he began, using the commonest form of address among the red men, "three times the prairies have been covered with snow, and three times the ice has gone from the Smoky Water since the will of the Great-Mysterious-One caused the red buffalo calf to be born in the Sacred Hills."

WITH the last reference to the Black Hills, the chieftain paused for the interpreters.

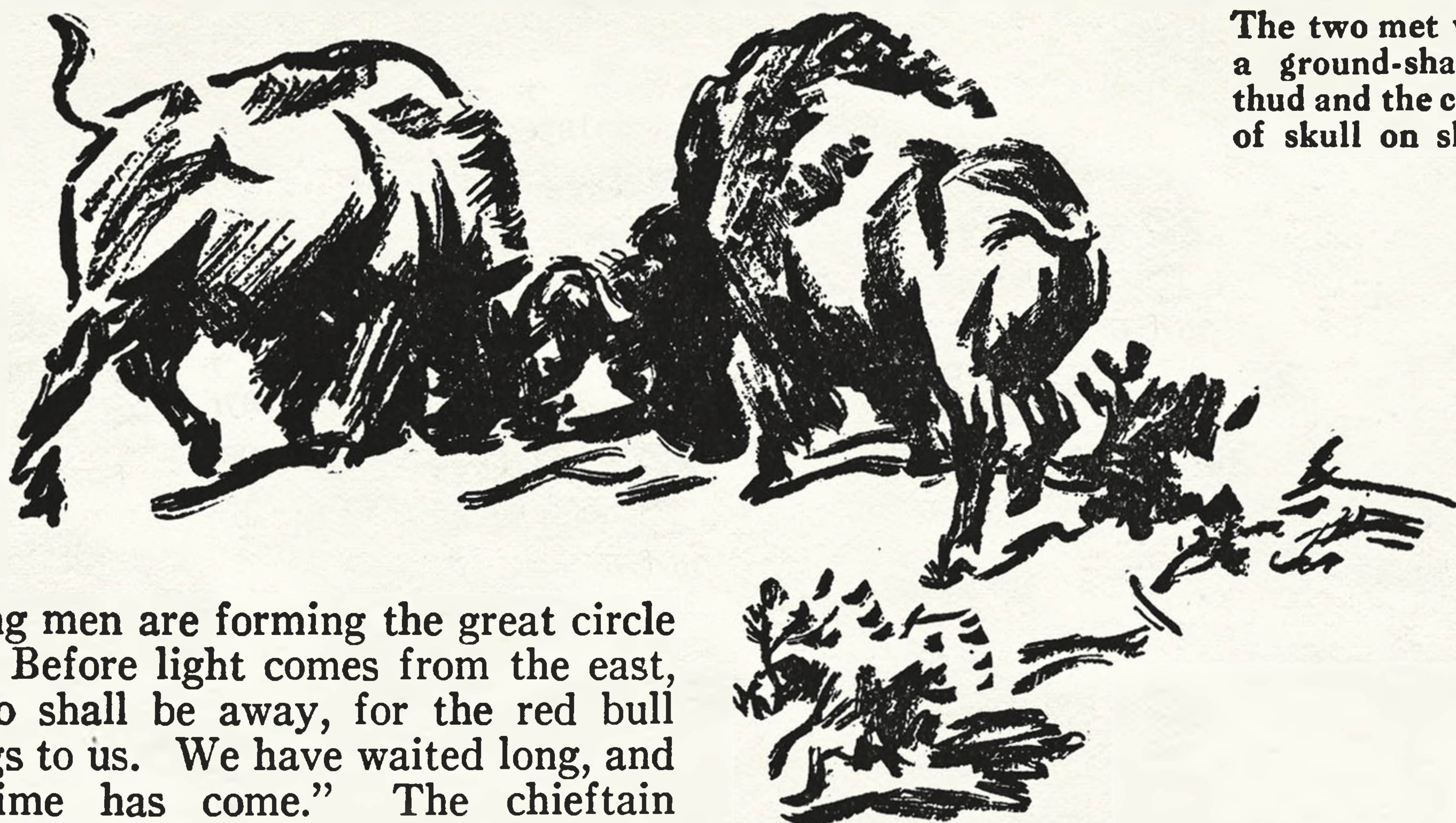
"All this time we have waited for the red head and robe to become full grown, that we might have them with us when we meet, as an everlasting symbol of our order."

Again his voice died away and like echoes came the words in many languages.

"Today the talking smoke has told us that the time has come. Tonight the red bull crossed the Smoky Water. He is sleeping now near the river."

No sign came from the assembled warriors, but a series of harsh cries ran around the ranks of the squaws; and out of courtesy, Kah-wah-tsu waited until the cheering died away.

"Tomorrow the Arikara, the Hidatsa and the Mandans will gather their summer's supply of meat. Their hunters and



The two met with a ground-shaking thud and the crack of skull on skull.

fighting men are forming the great circle now. Before light comes from the east, we too shall be away, for the red bull belongs to us. We have waited long, and the time has come." The chieftain nodded. The air was filled with the murmur of drums. The hunting dance was on.

RED ROBE opened his eyes as dawn was breaking over the valley of the Missouri. Gray owls flapped their way toward the timber to roost in the cottonwoods, and prairie chickens whirred out from the trees to search for grasshoppers on the open prairie. Bands of white-tailed deer came in from the bottomlands, and scattered groups of elk grazed out from the edge of the brush.

The buffalo swung his head from its resting-place against his side and gazed out across the flats. He saw nothing of danger—only a jack-rabbit making a bed for the day, a doe and a fawn beyond the rabbit, and countless thousands of sleeping bison dotting the plain as far as the eye could see.

Then a sound drifted down from the hills, a series of faint cries moving rapidly from west to east.

The rabbit sat bolt upright. The doe turned and leaped from sight among the trees. A magpie cried a warning, and thousands of curlew took the air to circle above the backs of the bison. But for the time nothing happened, and the golden glow of sunrise spread above the peaceful valley.

Red Robe got to his feet. He stretched his great body until his back bowed down and his tail curled. He dropped his head and stripped the dried fruit of a rose-bush; he moved a little way and filled his mouth with tender grass; then he lifted his head and listened again. A new sound trembled on the morning air.

Far out among the bison another bull heard the cries from the hills. He was the lord of the herd. In his ponderous

bulk lay an authority that never had been successfully questioned. He took exception to the cries, and a deep rumble gathered in his breast. It burst on the morning air in a challenge to all, a fearsome roar, carrying dread to the hearts of younger bulls.

Red Robe heard the challenge. He had listened to the same call ever since he was a calf. Many times he too had trembled at the menace in the savage voice. But now, for some reason, it angered him. The fear was forgotten. Throwing up his head, he answered the hateful cry. The roar which burst from his throat was an acceptance of the gage of battle.

Hearing the answer to his challenge, the old bull set in motion nearly a ton and a quarter of fighting bone and muscle. He came slowly at first, pausing frequently to rake the sod and throw clouds of dust above his back. Dropping his shaggy head and twisting it from side to side, he rolled his eyes, now red-rimmed with anger—and roar after roar shook the air.

BEFORE this angry mountain of flesh a lane opened in the ranks of the grazing buffaloes, a lane that led to Red Robe standing broadside to the rising sun, and giving back roar for roar. Three hundred yards, two hundred, one hundred, separated the bulls. The older was gathering his muscles for the charge. Still the younger, glittering like a thing of fire as the sunlight struck his crimson coat, stood his ground. Finding that bluff would not put his younger antagonist to flight, the shaggy monster roared again. Never had he failed to vanquish an enemy, and his confidence in himself was absolute. And now, as he threw one last

cloud of dust across his back, as he lowered his head and gauged the range of his opponent, a new sound came from far out on the prairie.

It began in a moan. It rose rapidly in volume and tone, to a high-pitched quavering cry, and burst on the morning air in a wild piercing shriek. It was the hunting-cry of the Arikara, setting in motion hundreds of painted warriors, and acting on the bison leader like a detonating cap on a charge of dynamite. On the instant he was in motion. Unmindful of this new threat closing in from all directions, of death riding on the points of arrows and lances and spurting from the red mouths of buffalo guns, the old buffalo was on an errand of death of his own.

DOWN the lane of buffaloes he came, his shaggy bulk shaking the ground. Behind him a wall of dust rose from the prairie. On either side curious bison gave ground in sudden panic. Only ahead nothing happened. There the younger bull waited the assault, waited until it was too late to gather speed, until he was swept from his feet and rolled over and over across the prairie, apparently vanquished in the first round of conflict.

Struggling to his feet, Red Robe reeled dizzily. In that moment he was helpless. But the finishing assault did not come. Instead the old champion thought it time to announce his success to the world at large. He was spending time in a roaring song of victory that should have been devoted to insuring success. In that moment, too, the nature of Red Robe changed. Anger swelled within his breast until it burned like fire. His eyes turned red. But his was an anger the more dangerous because silent. He wasted no time in roaring; and just as the ranks of the Indian hunters burst on the front and flanks of the bison herd, Red Robe launched a counter-attack.

Springing into action so suddenly that it caught the older bull off his guard, Red Robe came on like a thunderbolt. For the five hundred pounds he lacked in weight, he made up in the ferocity and speed of his assault. The champion swung into line and leaped ahead. They met with a ground-shaking thud and the crack of skull on skull. Shaken from hoof to hump and end to end, dazed by the terrific impact of their meeting, both fighters stood as they met, horns crossed, eyes flaming red with hate.

Pandemonium reigned about them. From back in the hills, from valleys and washouts and coulees, from every clump of brush, and from behind every knoll, painted men on painted ponies streamed to the attack. The air was rent with the hunting cries of the Arikara. The earth shook under their charge. The air reeled under the bellowing of frightened buffaloes. In their mad attempt to escape, the spectacle of the battle between the monsters was forgotten. In blind fear they ran and counter-ran. Bulls roared in anger; cows called loudly for their young; calves bleated terror-stricken as they ran aimlessly under the plunging bodies of the herd. But Red Robe and the warrior leader of the bison host paid no attention. Theirs had become a hatred transcending fear, blotting out all save the primal instinct to kill.

The time of spectacular charges was past. They fought at close quarters now. Ripping, thrusting, slashing, they were like ponderous creatures of some prehistoric age moving in a rolling cloud of dust of their own creation. The older bull knew the science of bison warfare. He had the advantage of weight. Red Robe understood little of the cruel art. He used his head as a battering ram, and the needle-like points of his horns seldom came into play. But he had youth, and he was game. His spirit, at least, was unconquerable.

SEEING what he thought was an opening, he put all his strength into an attempt at the giant chest of his antagonist. Red Robe had learned that blow from the playful battles of calfhood. Once under an opponent's nose, the enemy could be lifted and swept from his feet. But the champion merely dropped his head, and the shock of Red Robe's assault spent itself again on the giant skull. Then the old bull gave ground, his head swung a bit to the side as if unable to withstand the strain. Red Robe had fallen into a trap. The great head came back as if shot from a catapult. The blow was intended for the throat, but it missed by a narrow margin. The champion's horn caught the young bull squarely on the jaw. Red Robe had learned something too. He would not be caught that way again. As he clinched with his opponent, one of the deadly horns before his eyes was red and dripping, and he felt the warmth of his own blood streaming from his face. But there were rivers of blood

in his great body, and the heart that drove it through his veins was young and strong.

Again they were sparring. Horns clicked and clashed; bulging foreheads chafed and thudded as each tried to get away with safety and to return with a fatal blow. They were totally unmindful of the terrific scene about them. Their eyes, blinded by blood and hate, saw nothing of the Arikara tribesmen as they burst on the flanks of the herd, nothing of the arrows that whirred above their heads, nothing of smoke from buffalo guns, nothing of red-tipped lances darting in and out, nothing of war-clubs that rose and fell, and nothing of the huddled forms thickening about them. With the roar of their blood and pounding hearts in their ears, they heard not the savage cries of exultation, the answering screams of creatures in pain, the thunder of hoofs, the dull reports of guns and the ceaseless crashing of stone-tipped clubs. They saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing. Like the painted warriors about them, they were creatures of a single purpose and of one overwhelming desire—to kill.

Again and again the great heads came together. At times the shocks were so terrific that it brought them to their knees, to remain glaring into each other's eyes, too dazed from the impact to continue. Their hoofs tore the sod from the prairie; they could scarcely see each other through the dust.

Red Robe was taking terrible punishment. The skill of the greater antagonist told. As they fought over untrodden grass, specks of blood glistened like garnets on green blades, and fighting across a patch of alkali, they left red roses blooming and growing on the pure white surface. Still the champion failed to deliver the decisive blow, and Red Robe was unable to find an opening.

THE noise of the hunt died out. The swirling clouds of dust drifted from the plain. Now the noncombatants of the painted host came onto the field, a long column of wagons, ponies and travois. Lodges sprang up. Already the sun flashed on butcher knives, skinning, dressing and quartering the meat of the slain buffaloes. Far to the north, those that had escaped were streaming over the bluffs.

A new ring formed around the fighting bulls. War-bonnets streamed in the wind. Painted horses, gayly decorated



with red cloth and ribbons, pranced and tossed their heads along the line. The sun shone on weapons yet red with the blood of the bison, on vermilion-tipped feathers, waving in the breeze; on gleaming knives and lances and fluttering blankets in red and yellow.

BUT neither of the fighting monsters saw or cared. If death awaited both victor and vanquished at the hands of the Arikara, they knew nothing of it. They were oblivious of their surroundings, to time and to the fact that they were staging the spectacle of a lifetime for the Indians. . . . And now it was evident that the battle was entering its last stages, for their tongues hung out, and billows of froth streamed and burst and spattered from their nostrils. Both panted for breath.

As the heat of the sun grew greater, the old bull seemed to realize that he was weakening more rapidly than his antagonist. At all events, he initiated the final tremendous effort. Again and again he charged. He followed each charge with a series of close-quarter thrusts that covered Red Robe with wounds. Driven mad by the pain, the younger bull returned each charge, cutting, thrusting as he never had before.

The hitherto undefeated champion was bleeding too; cuts appeared along his neck and shoulders, and a long red line

BROTHER OF THE RED ROBE

along his side showed how nearly he also had come to receiving a deadly wound.

Red Robe stepped into a gopher hole. It threw him off balance. The champion saw and came on. He caught the young bull full in the side, rolling him end over end. A sigh ran along the ranks of warrior spectators; but not yet did Red Robe admit defeat. He staggered to his feet, to receive a second assault. Again he turned over, but the very speed of his fall brought him upright. A cheer burst from the Indians as he lunged ahead. No one admired bravery more than they, they who worshiped gameness in either man or beast.

For the last time the bison warriors came together. This time Red Robe's aim was true. He caught the champion low on the nose, and the old bull's neck could not stand the strain. It buckled, and he was lifted from his feet. Red Robe delivered a terrific blow behind the shoulder, followed it with another and another. The champion struggled to his knees, but that was his last effort. The tremendous exertion, the heat and his age completed their work. His eyes glazed; his head dropped; he rolled to his side and lay still.

An arrow whizzed through the air. Hundreds of warriors longed to drink from the blood of the brave. In that way they might gain the dauntless courage of the bull.

Red women were crowding ahead with long knives. They too would eat of the flesh and drink of the blood of the hero. Other arrows came, but the Indians could not shoot effectively without hitting one another. An Indian leveled a buffalo gun, and it seemed that Red Robe was doomed.

But a warrior chieftain leaped abruptly from the line. It was Kah-wah-tsu, forcing his warhorse to the side of the dazed and staggering buffalo. He held one arm high in the air, and a red scarf fluttered from his hand. It fell across the neck of the buffalo, and the warrior with the rifle heard the voice and the magic words of Kah-wah-tsu:

"*Ta-du-na-e-gu E-na-ne!*" (I call him brother!)

The circle opened. No lance nor knife nor gun threatened, as Red Robe, still obeying the call of instinct, moved slowly toward the north. He too was a member of the society of the Red Robe. The way to Saskatchewan was open.

Another fine story by Bigelow Neal will appear in an early issue.

A man has to fight to stay honest, even at sea, as this dramatic story shows.

By RICHARD

THE dingy copper screen in the rear window of young Eli Ryles' office framed a view of the *Loretta*. The squat, ugly little steamer lay moored at the coal-pier across the deep, mountain-cupped harbor of St. Thomas.

"Look at her!" murmured Mr. Ryles sorrowfully. He pointed with a thin white finger, and then with a cambric handkerchief delicately patted the quick perspiration of the tropics from his forehead. "I am forced to send some fine young man like you to sea in command of a rusted, dangerous old craft like that, with the lives of her crew on your shoulders."

In spite of his youth, his voice was paternal, as had been the voice of his father, shrewd founder of the Ryles Caribbean fleet.

John Quinton, first officer of Mr. Ryles' *Imogene*, looked hungrily at the ship. His uniform cap was clutched with tensivity in a moist hand. At twenty-four he knew the island trade, from the Virgins down to Trinidad, every port, every agent, every cargo, every port officer, the rocks, the winds and the currents.

The shipowner sighed.

"I am too poor to scrap her," he confessed in his soft confidential voice. "Nobody knows how bad she is, fortunately, not even the underwriters. You could pull the rivets out of her plates with your fingers."

He shook his head. "If I had a little spare cash, I could replace her. The black sheep in my flock—that ship."

"I'd try to make her pay her way, sir," Quinton assured him.

Eli Ryles frowned slightly; then eyed this brown-faced, hard-jawed young man with a keen sidelong glance.

"That ship haunts me, Quinton," he said. "I dream that she has sunk on some clear bright morning when the northeast trades are light and no sea is kicking up, so that all her crew get away safely in the boats. What a relief that is! No lives lost! And then I awake—and lie awake worrying for fear that under the lash of a gale some black night, she'll go down with all hands."

Shakedown Cruise

HOWELLS WATKINS

The mate's face lengthened. "I suppose you must scrap her, then," he said reluctantly.

Eli Ryles frowned more darkly.

"You don't understand!" His voice was sharp.

John Quinton looked hard at him, realized that he was staring, and looked hastily back at the ship.

"It would take only a touch on the coral—a brush against a ledge—to do it," Ryles said slowly. "A bright young man like you doubtless knows a score of spots with less water than the chart shows. No blame could possibly attach to an officer for such a—a mishap where the chart gives him a fathom under her keel. Could it?"

Startled, quite against his will, Quinton's brown eyes turned and were held by Eli Ryles' small black ones. His face reddened.

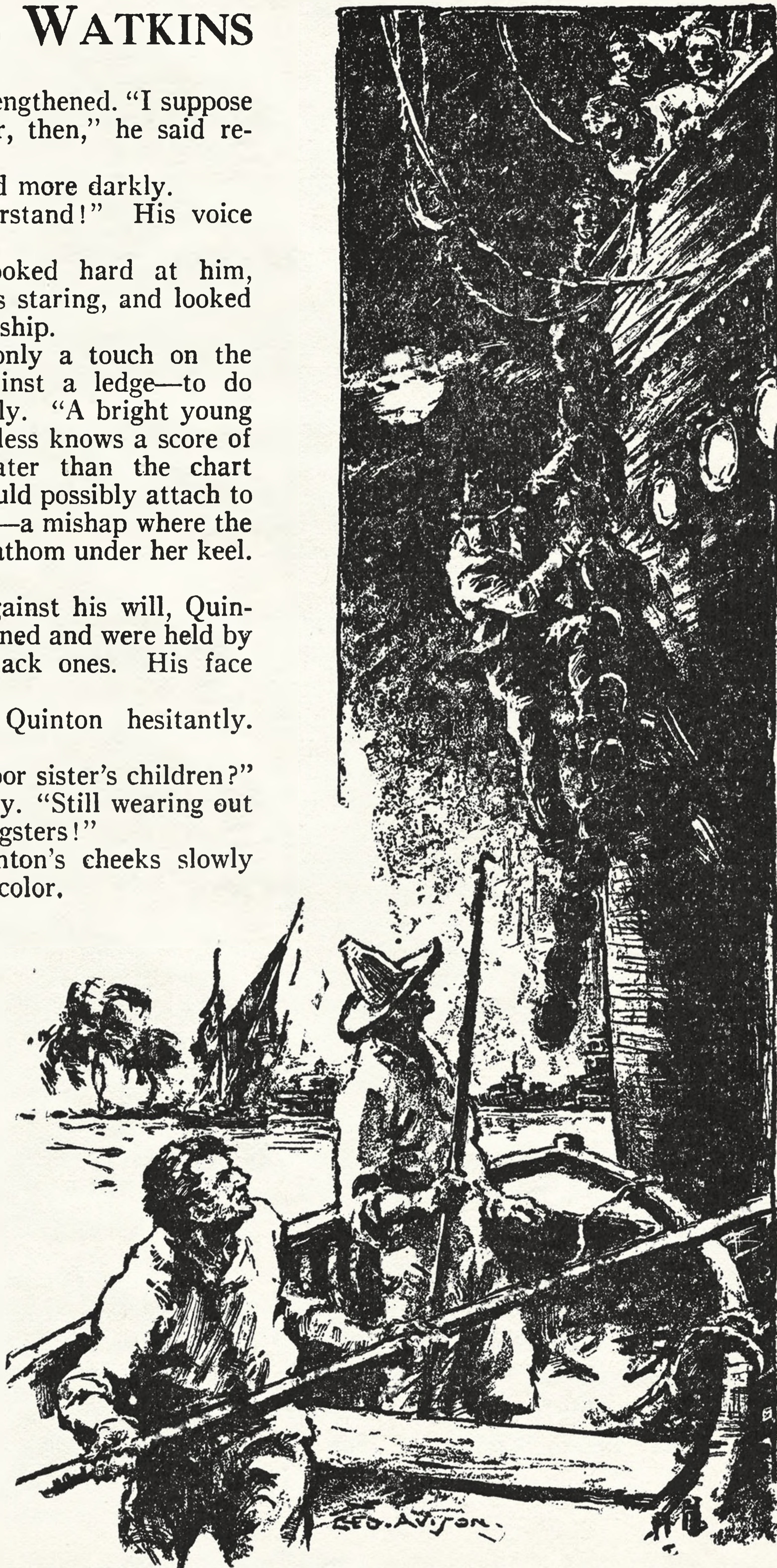
"No sir," said Quinton hesitantly. "No blame."

"How are your poor sister's children?" Ryles asked abruptly. "Still wearing out shoes? These youngsters!"

"They're—" Quinton's cheeks slowly lost their brilliant color.

Illustrated by
George Avison

Body and soul craved to leave this accursed ship. Eli Ryles flung himself over and clattered down the rusty side.



The shipowner jerked a finger abruptly in the direction of the street outside his front window, where the life of the Virgin Islands, white, brown and black, flowed languidly. A coatless, unshaven youngish man, tall, cadaverous, with his blue shirt stained with sweat, was slouching past, eyes fixed dully on nothing whatever.

"There's a fellow, Quinton, an ex-shipmate of yours, who never lost a ship—and who'll never have another," Ryles declared. "Bob Sutherland was a good enough seaman; but he didn't get along with his owners—and of course owners are a clannish lot. They take each other's opinion of a man—naturally enough."

John Quinton nodded jerkily and swallowed but did not speak. A couple of vertical lines cut down his forehead; his eyes for a moment became bleak—and hard.

"No resolution—Sutherland," Eli Ryles said. "Not dependable. Practically on the beach now—and he'll stay there the rest of his life. I can never use him again. These islands are a bad place for a failure. Life, Quinton, life!"

His tight lips curled in a sudden smile. "But there's another side, Quinton!" he said. "Take a man like Captain Underwell, your commander. He lost a ship for me, but I don't hold it against him. It wasn't his fault. I gave him a better one. You know the *Imogene's* no rusty old hulk. Underwell's respected; he has a good life; he's getting fat."

He stopped abruptly and stood up. His thin, light hand dropped on John Quinton's shoulder.

"You'll take out the *Loretta* tomorrow morning, Captain Quinton!" he said with brisk decision. He crossed the office and came back with a bottle and two glasses. It was St. Croix rum—the best in the island.

"Here's to resolution!" Eli Ryles said. "It saves men's lives—and makes men's fortunes. If the *Loretta* never reaches Martinique, it will not mar your fortune!"

"Resolution!" John Quinton said strongly, and downed his drink.

THAT evening, not long after darkness had dropped down from high Signal Hill above the town, young Eli Ryles, as was his custom since his father had left him in complete command of the shipping firm, drove his creaking old car around the sweep of the bay to the coal-

pier where the *Loretta* lay. The place was swathed in a gloom as black as the mound of coal that awaited the maw of hungry ships. He stood by the string-piece and gazed long at the formless bulk of his ship, wondering if he had been too cautious in not cutting down the order to fill her bunkers. It saddened him, the thought of all that good coal paid for with good money, going down to lie uselessly on the sea bottom.

"Too bad!" he murmured. "But no great gain without small loss." He smiled, and closed one eye. "The people of the islands will find I'm a shrewder man than my father."

SUDDENLY a match flared in the night not twenty feet from him. It drove all thought of coal from his mind, for the flickering light showed him that the man puffing at the pipe was ex-Captain Robert Sutherland.

Ryles stood entirely still and motionless, hoping to be spared a disagreeable interview. But Sutherland, with that slow, aimless pace that was becoming habitual, approached the shipowner.

"D'you think she'll make Fort-de-France, Mr. Ryles?" the ex-captain asked in his hollow voice.

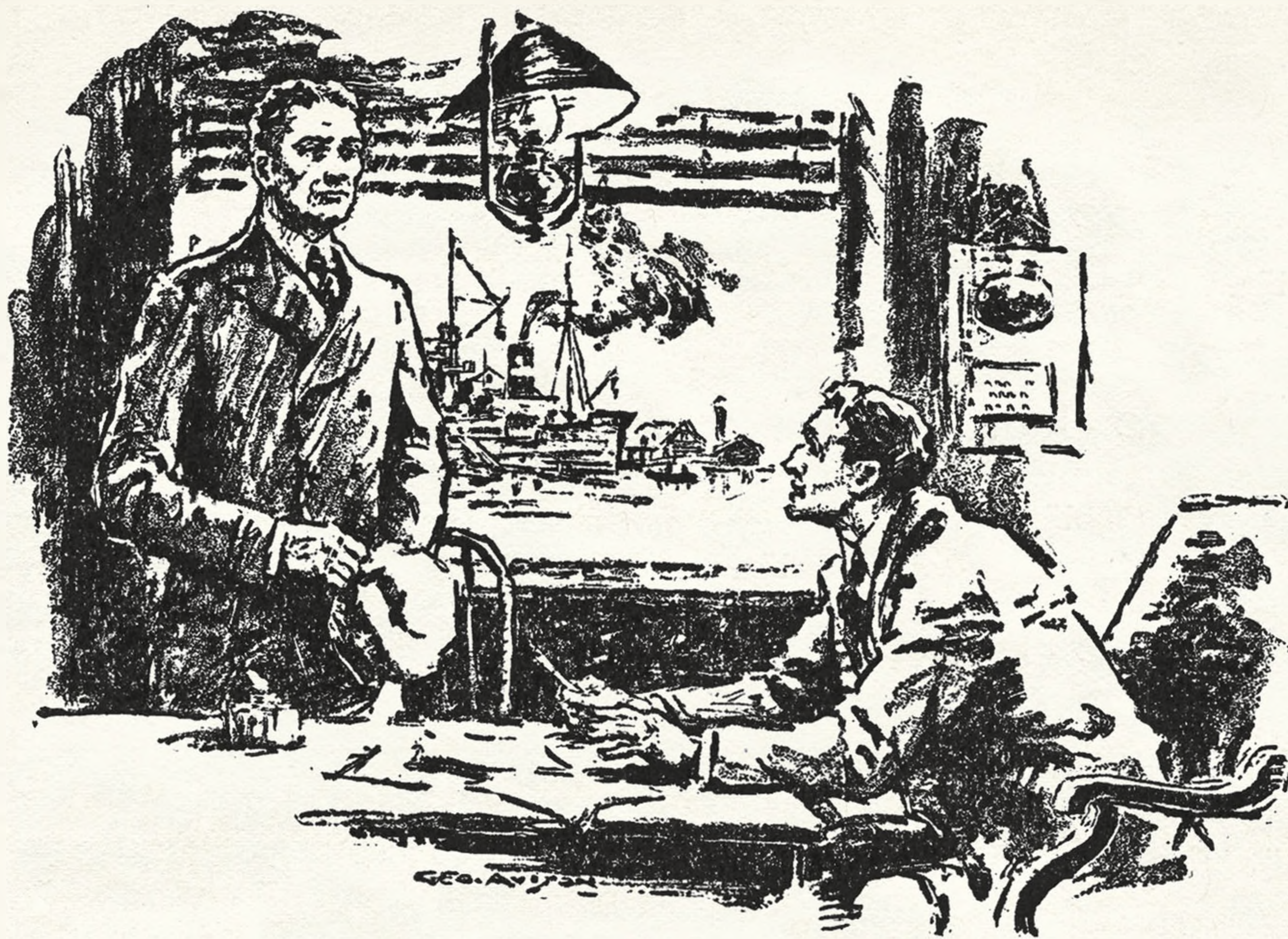
"What do you—" Ryles began coldly.

"My ship always made port—and a fat lot of good it did me!" said Sutherland.

In the darkness Sutherland's newly lit pipe glowed with sudden brightness. Then his bony hand had Ryles by the throat. Tightening fingers cut off Ryles's cry; then a knock on the head set his brain to exploding. Colors, lights, flared brilliantly and puffed out. . . .

The five senses of Eli Ryles resented unceasing affronts. Gradually Eli Ryles became aware of this. He realized that his head ached damnably. His body was shaking yet abominably constricted. A greasy stench filled his nostrils. His mouth was dry and horrible. His eyes blinked and strained in irrevocable and utter blackness. And his ears were afflicted by an unsteady rumbling like the growl of distant thunder.

It was this last, this unceasing sound, that told him abruptly that he was on a ship. And that realization was startling enough to jerk him upright. His head bumped against something. He groaned, put his fingers to his eyes, and felt, against his elbows, the contact of something solid. His hands thrust out; he touched wood—rough wood—stuff like packing-cases.



"It would take only a touch on coral—a brush against a ledge—to do it," Ryles said slowly.

The feel of that wood somehow set his brain to working. He remembered Bob Sutherland and the pressure on his throat—the blow on the head.

"What did he do to me?" he whispered. "I'm on a ship—what ship?"

He knew—the *Loretta*! He started up—and again his head knocked against wood above him. The stench of oily bilge-water registered in his brain. He listened; heard the swash of it as the ship rolled. That water was close below him.

"I'm in the hold—deep in the lower hold—stowed down among her cargo!" he realized. "And Quinton's going to sink her! Sutherland guessed—the wily devil!"

Fear, like a wave of water rushed over his head, engulfed him then. He shrieked, shrill, throat-ripping cries. They drowned in his ears for just a moment the uncertain rumbling of the old engine. But he realized with horrible certainty that those screams could do nothing more. Deep down in the lower hold!

"Sutherland knew! He knew!" Ryles shrieked. "He knew that she was to sink! It's cold, planned murder!"

Breathlessness silenced him, and somehow brought him back to sanity and a great fear. He listened with taut body. The *Loretta* was grinding along with only a slight roll. Perhaps she was just leaving port or in the lee of an island. Perhaps Quinton, up there on the bridge, was even now edging her over toward Fredrik Knoll or Scorpion Rock. He would

want to get this job done soon, and there were many hazards around St. Thomas. And the moment she touched—drowning in a coffin already fitted to him!

"I'll get out—out on deck—in the air!" Ryles gasped prayerfully. He braced his back against the packing-case above him and heaved upward with all his might. It was like trying to budge a house. He tried the sides—but there was no give to this stuff—no give at all. Exhausted, with sweat streaming from him, he stopped; listened again for that fatal crunch and the rush of smothering water. But it did not come. Not yet! Not yet!

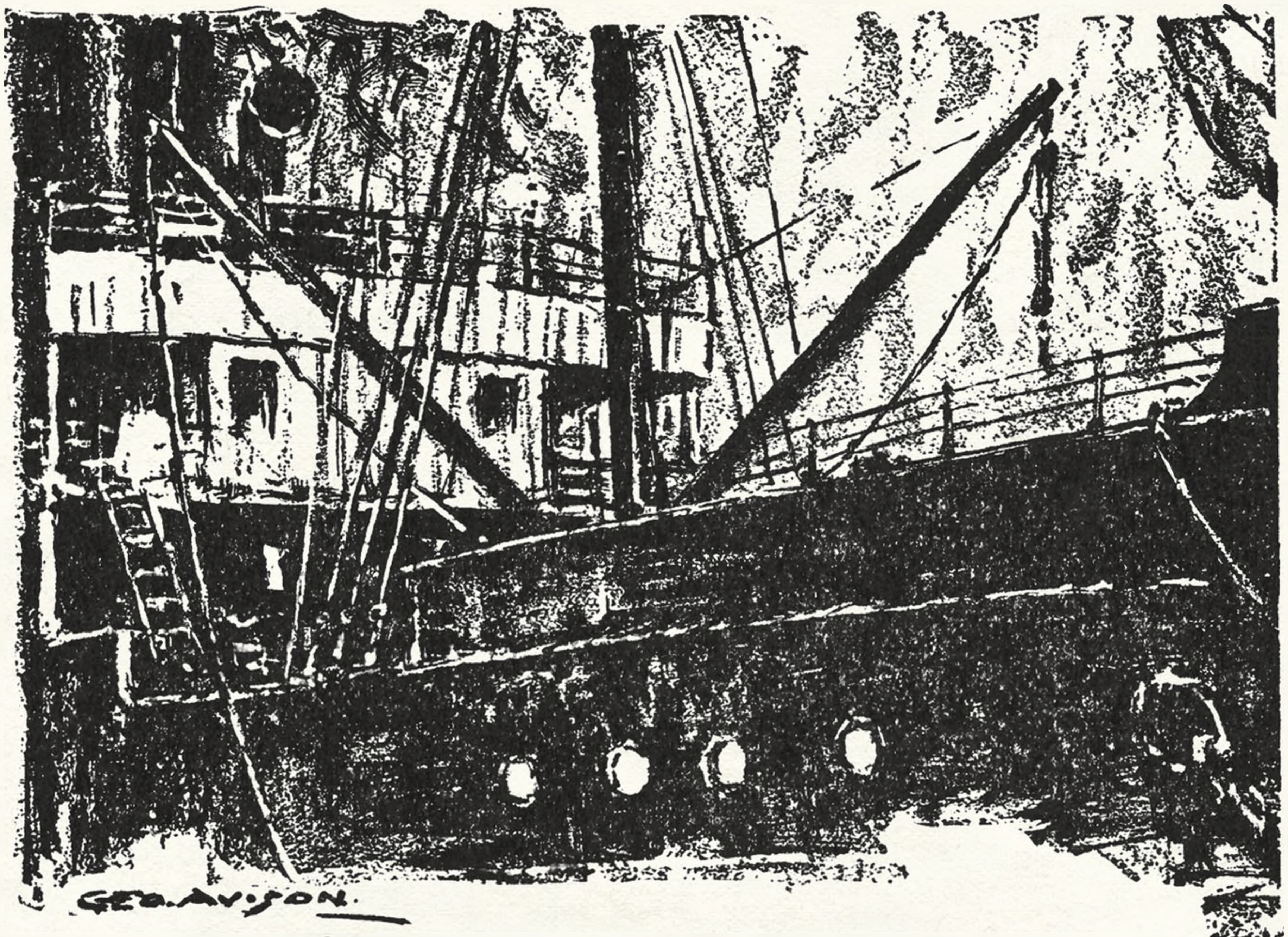
He strained frantically; listened, shrieked, strained again.

He grew light-headed, but not light-headed enough to escape this nightmare. When? When? The engine rumbled ruthlessly on and on. Not yet! When?

CONSCIOUSNESS came back to Eli Ryles. He had not realized that consciousness had left him. But time had passed, many hours. His trembling hand touched a short, dry stubble on his chin.

That hellish rumble had ceased; something clattered instead. His eyes blinked painfully in a sudden yellow glare.

Fire? No! Just electric light pouring through a narrow slit above. And that clanking, hissing thing was a winch. They were working cargo. He tried to cry out—but cold fear stopped him. Suppose Sutherland lurked somewhere in the



"My ship always made port—and a fat lot of good it did me!" said Sutherland. Then his bony hand had Ryles by the throat.

hold above, waited to assure his vengeance? Would not a devil like that stow away to witness the hideous fulfillment of his plan?

The big case that formed one side of his prison was suddenly wrenched away amidst a jabber of French—the crude patois of Martinique. Like a weasel he shot out, past the freight-handlers, dodging and twisting in frantic fear as arms stretched out to seize him. He flung himself at the iron rungs that led to the deck.

The pursuing stevedores screamed with laughter, like jeering fiends watching a new soul writhe in hell.

Ryles flew up the ladder, out of the brilliance of the cargo cluster, with the fear of Sutherland chilling his sweat-drenched back. There was darkness farther aft; and to that he fled.

The sight of a Jacob's ladder dangling over the quarter, with a couple of shore boats waiting patiently below, changed his course. Body and soul craved to leave this accursed ship. He flung himself over and clattered desperately down the rusty side.

WITH two shots of cognac warming his cold stomach, and time cooling his hot brain, Eli Ryles ventured back across the *savane*, as far as the jetty. He stared out over the black water of Fort-de-France harbor at the *Loretta*, still working cargo.

"Mr. Ryles!" exclaimed a voice.

Captain John Quinton was at his elbow. With polite haste Quinton shifted his wide eyes from the disheveled clothes of the shipowner.

"Sorry, sir," said Quinton. "It startled me, seeing you here in Martinique. Beat me down on the mail-boat, I see."

"Yes—mail-boat," Ryles muttered.

Quinton gazed at his feet. "I arrived safely, Mr. Ryles," he reported in a level voice. "I— You see, for some reason Sutherland radioed me from St. Thomas that I had a stowaway hidden below. Uh—knowing how you felt about risking human life, of course, I—I arrived safely. Sorry, sir, but—after this I'm always arriving safely. There's always danger to human life—when a ship sinks."

"Of course." Ryles raised a trembling hand to his head. "Of course you got here safely. God, yes, Quinton. I'm no— So Sutherland sent you a radio, did he? Said there was a stowaway? But—"

"What, sir?"

"Nothing." With his thin white hands Eli Ryles clutched weakly at the other man's arm. "Quinton, the *Loretta's* going to the ship-breakers," he said shakily. "She isn't safe. I'm no murderer—never was, Quinton. You know that. I'm young, Quinton, I guess I wanted to be smarter than my father, who took years to build up this fleet."

Quinton nodded gloomily. "She ought to be scrapped, sir," he conceded.



"Don't look so downhearted, Captain; I'll give you the *Imogene*," Ryles said.

"The *Imogene*!" Quinton exclaimed.

"Yes; I can't trust that fat swine Underwell. He lost a ship for me—might easily have lost men, too."

He swallowed. "And Quinton, I've been thinking—about Sutherland. I can't have the man breaking up—going on the beach at St. Thomas. Tell him I'll see he gets something—mate, say, out of Norfolk in the Atlantic trade with a connection of mine—if he— Tell him, will you?"

John Quinton told Sutherland. He told him on the *Loretta* an hour later that night as a big mail-boat alive with lights and music slid out of Fort-de-France

harbor bound north—with Eli Ryles on board.

"He had me headed for the same hold he dropped you down, Bob," Captain Quinton said, his stern young face grimly set. "That's why I got desperate enough to call on you to help me shanghai him. Resolution! That's the stuff! A man's got to fight to stay honest and off the beach, hasn't he?"

"He has," Sutherland agreed fervently. He rubbed one shoe and then the other carefully against the back of his trouser-legs and adjusted his threadbare tie. "Ryles will never wreck another ship—or another shipmaster. Not a bad young man—but he needed a shakedown cruise."

Two chairs and the proudly polished cuspidor were part of the barrage that started the battle. After that it grew terrible.

Hell on

ONE minute, Hogan's Alley slept tranquilly in the sun; the next it was alive, vocal, its littered length filled with excited darkies, all headed one way.

Flushed from his detective agency's disordered depths by the confusion, the dark and gangling Columbus Collins hailed a passing disturber of the peace: "Hey, Half-po'tion! What all de rook-us about?"

"Unloadin' a wrestler down at de railroad—"

"Unloadin' *what*?"

"'Seafood' Watson, de colored wrestlin'-boy. He jest come in on de mixed-train. Unloaded him at de stock-pens by mistake. Gwine take him up to Horizontal Smathers' place for de big official welcome now, sort of smooth him down. Everybody be dar!"

"Everybody but me, you means. I got business."

"*You* got business?" Everybody knew Columbus hadn't had a case in a month.

"Yeah. Gittin' three hundred dollars away from Bugwine Breck."

"Three hundred— *Huh?* From *Bugwine?*" Imagination balked at the combination: Mr. Collins' five-foot assistant had been chronically broke, since birth.

"Reward-money he git from de Government—for fallin' over a gang of crooks while he was gallopin' hisself from a ghost in a haunted house," an employer threw disgusted light on the affluence of an aide.

"*Dawg gawn!* Whar he now?"

"Aint know; aint seen de shrimp since de Government paid him. Off ridin' a flyin'-jinnny somewhars till he's busted again, I reckon."

"Tell him you craves him, is I see him," Half-portion hurried on. "Got to git on now to de big welcome Horizontal's fixin' to throw for Seafood."

"Is you see Bugwine," valedictoried Mr. Collins grimly, "tell him is he aint back here by mornin' I busts him down to his right size wid a plank when I *is* see him!"

But through all the succeeding emptiness of Baptist Hill, brought about by its huge civic turnout to honor the advent of a wrestler who had been tem-

porarily retired from circulation by the Law, in an adjoining county, there was no sign of the missing Mr. Breck: only rumors that he had been seen here and there on the Hill, optimistically if futilely followed by a pack of insurance, radio, and used-car salesmen, while he stubbornly transacted some mysterious business of his own.

Reducing Bugwine to his right size increased in desirability but remained remote. Until there came the morning—and swift developments. As Mr. Collins sat sourly in his agency, grimly fingering a loose table-leg against a new-rich assistant's return, there was the sound of ample feet without, followed by a discreet knock at the door.

"Come in!" called Columbus crossly, only to be surprised into instant affability—for upon his threshold stood the second-richest darky on Baptist Hill. "Well, if it aint old Horizontal Smathers hisself!" burst hopefully from Columbus. "Come in and take de load off your hindlegs, Horizontal! Set!"

BUT the balky and belligerent-appearing Mr. Smathers looked about him first. "Nobody else in here wid you?" he demanded nervously.

"Naw—dat what I got dis table-leg handy, about. Why?"

"Becaze I craves a piece of detectin' did. Extra confidential. And de crippin' done quiet afterwards."

"Cripple who?" The bloodhound in Mr. Collins sniffed a case.

"Burglar business," Horizontal's mysteriousness increased.

"Smells 'em out whar others jest sniffs about! A crook wid every case! Even de innocent cain't escape when Bug—uh—when *us* takes de trail!" sales-talk started.

"*Shhhhh!*" worried Mr. Smathers.

"Done shushed. Who gits burgled? How-come?"

"I is." Horizontal's face darkened further. "Right durin' de big welcome I was pullin' off in my place yesterday for Seafood Watson, de wrestlin'-boy, I finds out dey is a polecat in de house—"

"A—*huh?*" Involuntarily Mr. Collins dodged.

Shrimps

By
ARTHUR
K. AKERS

Illustrated by
Everett Lowry

"Teaches you to take up
wid *my* wife, shrimp!"
And the berserk wrestler
flung Bugwine hideously
against a wall.



"In human form," supplemented Mr. Smathers. "Meanin' dey's fifty bucks gone out of my vest, when de welcome dies down."

Columbus broke for his agency's ancient bear-trap handcuffs. "What size bills—fives or tens? Hear me bayin' on de trail already!" speech surrounded him.

"Wasn't bills: dey was gold money—"

"Gold? Government aint let nobody has no gold money. How'd you lose what you aint got?"

"*Dat's* what I been all-time shushin' you about!" exploded the client irritably. "I kept myself back five of dem ten-dollar goldpieces when dey called 'em in—jest in case de Democrats was wrong. Now some ape done steal 'em out of my vest durin' de party! And I cain't call de cops about it widout cotchin' my own pants in a trap; so I calls you. Boy, git dat burglar!"

Mr. Collins blinked in Opportunity's face: here was revenge *without* music! *Bugwine* had plenty of money—why not hang this crime on him? At a fee to himself, and as a lesson to Mr. Breck! A claim that *Bugwine* had changed gold into greenbacks would easily hold water, too, with a client who was already regretting that he had not done just that sooner, himself.

"Done cotched him. How much de fee for me?" inspiration started into execu-

tion. The humbling of Mr. Breck was as good as begun!

"Ten bucks to you—after you finds him. But pays for results only: first come, first served."

"What you mean, 'first come, first served'? Wid my system, you cain't lose."

"Den leaves you to find out, if you's so good. But case is C. O. D.—I aint pay for no water-hauls!" Mr. Smathers sharply closed the deal and the door.

WITH a case again on his agency's calendar, the demand for *Bugwine* Breck's return rose to its peak. Otherwise, Columbus would have to go to work; for he couldn't frame a boy who wasn't even there.

"Got to go and look up de louse, to hang it on him!" concluded Mr. Collins savagely. And his hunt was on.

But less than an hour later he was halted in his tracks, by a blockade of a swarming Strawberry Street sidewalk. Before a long-vacant store now milled and gaped an admiring and eager throng, while from its members burst such intriguing exclamations as: "*Aint* dat de class!" "Boy, look at dat cuspidor, too! Aint got 'em no bigger'n and brighter in de *post office!*" "Yeah, but look at dat *gal!*"

Which last catapulted Mr. Collins into the thick of things: this connoisseur in

women started elbowing onlookers aside, until he had worked his way forward to a choice position squarely before the window, looked in—and was suddenly and seemingly seized with all the symptoms of having been shot at sunrise; for behind that window, the focal point of all this gaping admiration, was—Bugwine Breck!

YET what a Bugwine! No longer a stove-hued under-dog in overalls and twin left shoes, was *this!* Resplendent against the background of his new Tuxedo shone his huge tin detective's star. Bright tan shoes adorned his feet, and his feet adorned a desk. While beside it— The crowd shrank back in awe at the apoplexy visibly threatening Columbus as he saw. For at the elegant elbow of this new Bugwine Breck sat a secretary—a caramel-colored and stunning-looking secretary, taking dictation from a Mr. Breck who only yesterday could himself neither read nor write!

With the battle-howl of an affronted wolf, Mr. Collins bowled spectators over in his lunge for the door. Like the Assyrian of old he bore down on his one-time serf.

"Runt, what de hell!" burst hoarsely from him as the startled secretary fled in fright. "Lookin' everywhar in de pool-parlors for you, wid a case us is got. And here you sets like a beetle in de milk! Shrimp, shuck dat waiter's suit—git back in dem overalls! Start sniffin' for clues! Also, gimme dem three hundred bucks before *dey* finish what drappin' you on your head when you was little, *started!*"

After all, you couldn't frame an assistant without at least getting him back on the home-grounds first!

But Bugwine's backbone seemingly drew new stiffness from his shirt-front. "Take all dat fuss out of here!" he shrilled. "I aint got no three hundred bucks—now, nohow."

"Aint got 'em! Aint *got* 'em?" howled Mr. Collins hideously above the crash of his own applecart being upset.

"Naw. You's lookin' *at* 'em now. Done spent all dat money openin' up dis here new Bugwine Breck Detectin' Agency here: wid clues and class and stenog'pher and everything. Got me a case already—"

"Done got you somethin' else you gwine to need directly too," Columbus was doing more looking than listening—at Mr. Breck's new Tuxedo.

"What dat?"

"Black suit—to be buried in when I gits done wid you now! Aint think you gwine compete wid *me*, is you? You what couldn't find a cow in a telephone booth!"

"Always gits my man—" essayed Bugwine in a defensive mumble. To meet:

"Yeah . . . by fallin' over him—and de reward for him—like you done, tryin' to outrun dat ha'nt de other night! And *another* thing: Whar you git dat gal workin' for you? What your wife say to a looker like *her* in here wid you, huh?"

"Geranium all swelled up about bein' married to a *business*-man now—and she aint say nothin', except 'Charge it,'" boasted this new Mr. Breck. "Stenog'pher's name' Roxana—"

"Roxana who?"

"Aint know—and aint care. Now, beat it! I got to git bayin' on a case, wid a new bear-trap for handcuffin' de crook wid, instead of old rusty one like you uses."

"Case? *You* got a case?" Mr. Collins struggled with this further evidence of an ex-worm's turning.

"Burglary-case," expanded Bugwine. "Somebody done stole a whole mess of money off of Horizontal Smathers, and he—"

Columbus' yelp interrupted Bugwine. "*Money?*" he gurgled. "Off *Horizontal?* You mean—you mean,"—he fought for air and words,—"*you* is got *my* case?"

"*Your* case?" It was Mr. Breck's turn to stagger.

"For findin' out who burgled fifty bucks in gold off of Horizontal while he was pullin' de welcome to Seafood Watson?" Mr. Collins probed further while a cold sweat sprang out on him.

"Sure!" Mr. Breck's eyes widened. "How *you* know so much about it? 'First come, first served,' in de pay-off, is all Mist' Smathers tell me: he pays whoever solve de case *first*—"

NEW symptoms in his former employer halted him—as of a detective choking to death on some fresh confirmation of a feared fact. For Columbus saw all now! The crafty Horizontal had let out the same case, at one fee, to both sleuths—making it not a case but a race, with the ten-dollar fee going to the first detective under the wire with the crook. And the other detective none other than the lowly Bugwine, his own assistant, gone competitive! Ten

dollars for the winner and nothing for the loser—save the long, loud laughter of Baptist Hill at his discomfiture. Guffaws that Mr. Collins could already hear barbed and sharpened for him if he lost to this shrimp in whose face his own feet had worn a path for years. Now Columbus *had* to win. But how?

"Shrimp!" He whirled savagely on this dusky ant in his ointment. "You done bought it wid dem three hundred bucks: now you gwine *git* it!"

"Git what?"

"Git run so ragged you got to carry your money in your mouth. *From now on!*"

But again in the outer air, the loud Columbus fell prey to new gnawings. To the mental was added the physical—for, like an army, Mr. Collins traveled on his stomach. The beckoning sign of Bees'-Knees Thompson's barbecue-stand did the rest.

ENTERING the eating-place a moment later, he gazed arrogantly about, gasped, and barely in time downed an impulse to shin up the stovepipe—for feeding audibly at a corner table bulked something bordering so closely on the zoölogical that it made a boy's hair lift. The missing link? Instantly the startled Columbus made up his mind: either *it* talked or *he* ran! For upon the feeder's huge shoulders sat a neckless head. Small eyes peered out piglike from a dusky face that broadened steadily from temples to jowl, while the length of arms indicated a common height above sea-level for knees and knuckles when their owner stood erect—if stand erect he indeed did!

But, barely in time to save reason, Proprietor Bees'-Knees introduced the amenities and the feeder with, "Mist' Collins, meet yourself Mist' Seafood Watson, de big wrestlin'-boy."

"*Grrwuff*," acknowledged the guest suspiciously as he fed on.

But it was enough! A warm glow of relief flooded Columbus as his mind went back to the previous day's broadcast by Half-portion. So this was the great Seafood! "Tells me dey sho flung a wide welcome for you up at Horizontal's place yesterday," he chattered nervously.

"Kind of," grunted that honor-guest morosely. And the sound of his soup again filled the stand.

"Mist' Watson aint talk much, account he's so damn' sore," said the hovering Bees'-Knees helpfully.

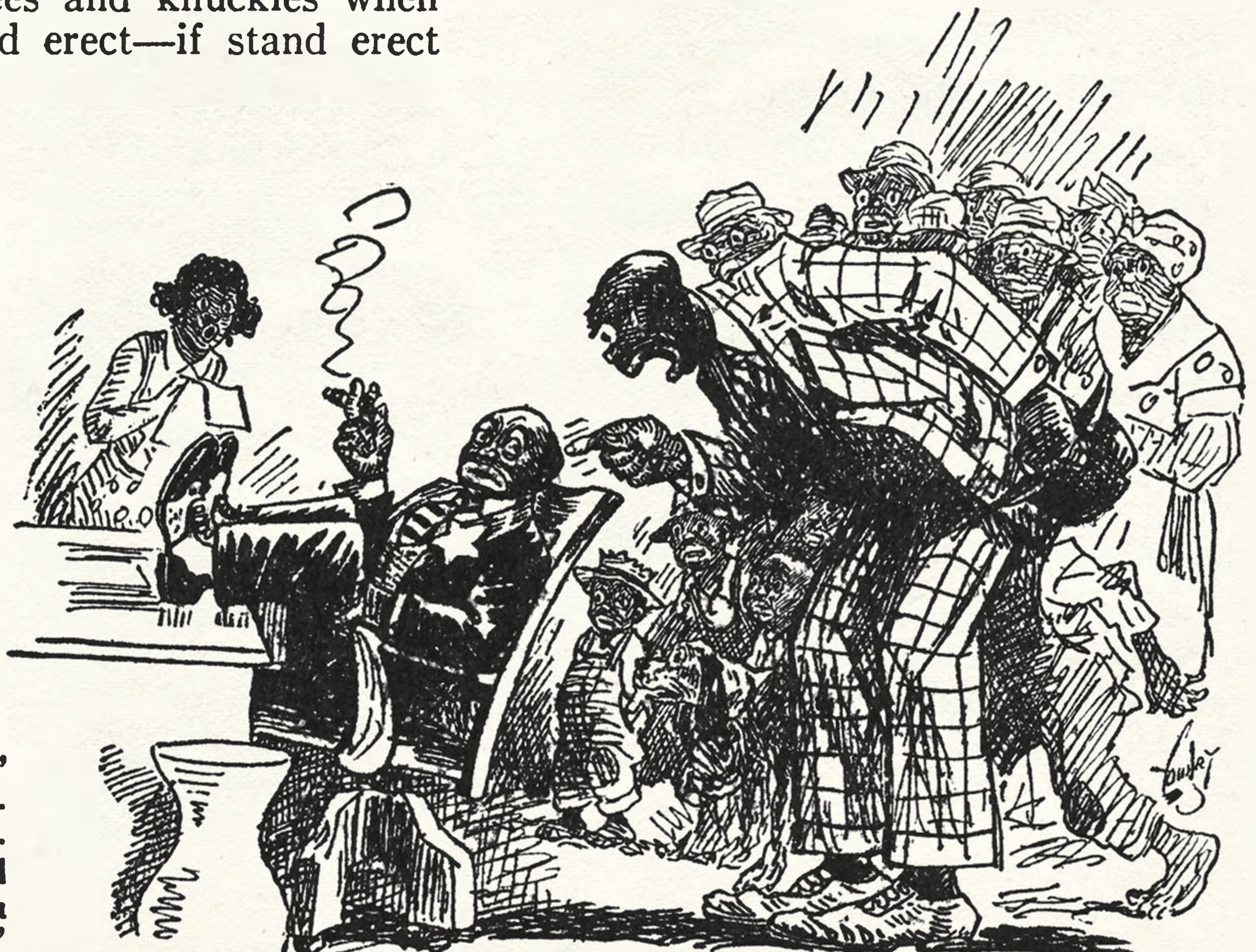
"I hear he *is* been in de jail-house, over in York," sympathized Columbus tactfully. "Dat make anybody sore."

"Jail-house aint what pester him—it's his wife," his host went deeper into detail.

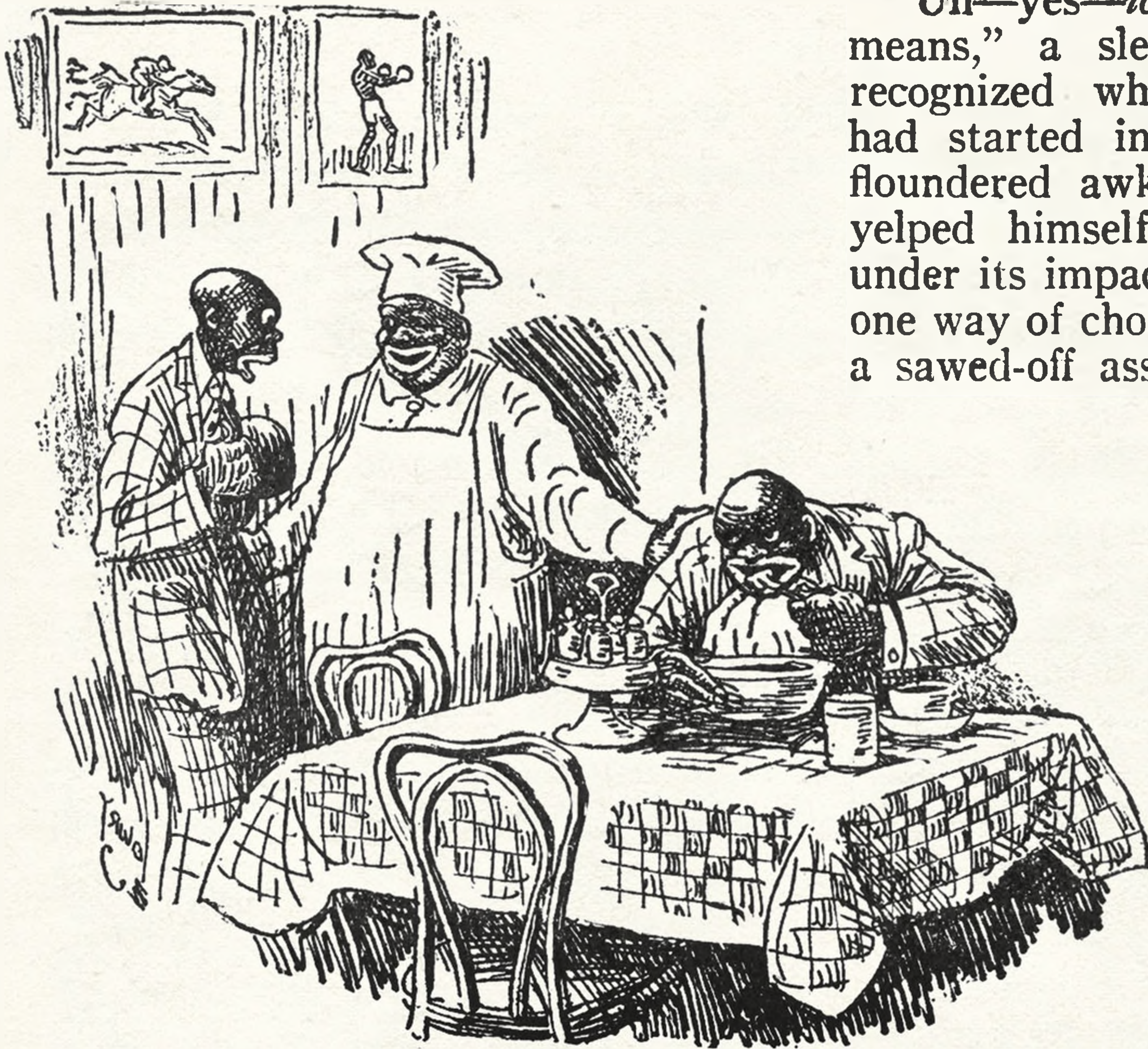
"Wifes *is* worse, heap of times." Nobody Seafood's size would find Mr. Collins disagreeing with him on any topic!

Mr. Watson stirred in the throes of preparing to make a statement. Then it came: "Mine run out on me while I was locked up in de jail-house!" A greenish light of jealousy crept into piglike eyes as their owner brooded upon domestic wrongs.

"He think maybe she done run off wid another boy wearin' good clothes, while he was locked up and couldn't help his-



"Runt, what de hell!" burst from Columbus. "Lookin' everywhar for you—and here you sets like a beetle in de milk!"



"Uh—yes—*idea* about shrimps, I means," a sleuth who now suddenly recognized what association of ideas had started in him a moment before, floundered awkwardly: he had all but yelped himself out of a business-deal under its impact. There was more than one way of choking a cat—or of framing a sawed-off assistant gone competitive!

"Mist' Watson aint talk much, account he's so damn' sore," said Bees'-Knees. "I hear he *is* been in de jail-house," sympathized Columbus tactfully.

self," Mr. Thompson continued informative as he wiped off the table-top. "He been in here about a hour now, buildin' hisself up wid eatin'-vittles, in case he was to come across de boy what done him dirt, and need his strength."

Columbus thought shudderingly of the fate of the masculine third party to any triangle containing Mr. Seafood Watson. Then, without warning, "Craves shrimps!" the bereft husband seemed roused from his wrongs by the sudden sight of the bared bottom of his soup-bowl. "Hell on shrimps: dat's how-come dey calls me 'Seafood'."

"Shrimps comin' right up!" Bees'-Knees acceded and accelerated.

SIMULTANEOUSLY, in the mind of Columbus Collins something stirred that he could not yet place. Something promising—

"Whar at your wife run to?" he continued agreeably, while he sought the significance of this mental stirring in him.

"Aint know."

"What her name?"

"High-yaller gal, named Roxana—"

"*Roxana!*" An exclamation turned into a yelp before Columbus could catch it.

"What bit you?" rumbled Mr. Watson, in astonishment.

"Shrimp!" hiccoughed Mr. Collins.

"Shrimp? *Dey* aint bite nobody!" Suspicion entered heavily, and stayed.

"Says shrimps is my meat," growled Mr. Watson, increasingly perplexed.

"*And* shrimp I is fixin' to feed you!" Mr. Collins' mystifying joy mounted.

"Meanin'—" A leg of the table loosened as the mighty Seafood merely leaned upon it in his interest.

"Meanin', how much would it be worth to you to find dat Roxana gal *and* de boy what she is took up wid too?"

Mr. Watson increased his resemblance to the Rockies by half-rising. Then, wordlessly, he thrust into his pocket a hand curiously small for his bulk. He pulled forth a fistful of greenery, which he spread clumsily on the table before him.

"Six—seven bucks," he completed its count. "All de paper money I got."

"And I gits dis, if I show you whar your wife and dat other boy is?" in the mouth of Mr. Collins a new deal went craftily forward. This seven, added to Horizontal's ten, would make seventeen—

"Her and him both; yeah." A redness of little eyes replaced now the greenish aura of jealousy Columbus had noticed earlier about this dusky Hercules. "Lead me to 'em, and stand back—and you's made seven bucks easy!"

"Den, big boy, kiss your seven bucks good-by!" burst full-throatedly from one into whose hands a shrimp had fallen. For was not Bugwine a shrimp in stature if not in genus? And were not shrimps confessedly this behemoth hus-

band's meat? It was perfect! Already Mr. Collins could see the coming crash of a servitor turned competitor, the lesson he would learn at the small but spring-steel hands of the giant Seafood—after which again the full future field of detecting would be left to Columbus. For what chance indeed, would Mr. Breck have from a hospital cot, of solving the Smathers—or any other mystery—soon?

"Kisses nothin', till you delivers," objected Mr. Watson ominously. "Whar is dey?"

"Remember I aint crave de runt killed—jest crippled," qualified Mr. Collins hastily. "Boy aint bright in de brains, or he wouldn't never took up wid de good-lookin' wife of a boy as big as you is, nohow. So you leaves him so he can crawl around on top of de ground again along about August, aint you?"

"Which August?"

"Which August?" Columbus buckled at the implication.

"Means," menaced the mammoth, "when I finds a boy wid *my* wife I generally scatters him around copious. Takes a right smart while sometimes to find all of him again. Whar at he? Lead on to de mop-up!"

Above an evidently overplayed hand, Columbus thought fast. This behemoth was all engine and no brakes! In seeking mayhem, he was about to get murder—which was more than even the competitive situation called for, as yet. Hence a new need to gain time—on two counts: to give an outraged husband a chance to cool, if possible; and to bait Bugwine back into his upstart agency where Seafood could come upon sleuth and secretary together as promised.

And again inspiration rallied; again shrimps were the answer! "All right—jest as soon as I makes sure he's in dar for you," he dissembled hurriedly. "Meantime, git yourself built for battle.—Bees'-Knees, slip Mist' Seafood some more shrimp; keep him from weakenin' while he's waitin'."

"Hell on shrimps!" echoed Mr. Watson's acquiescent feeding-cry, as Mr. Collins slid swiftly from the stand.

WITH finding Mr. Breck his next objective, Columbus shuffled through Hogan's Alley. All that he had to do now was to get Bugwine into his agency with the comely Roxana at his side.

Following which happy solution to the problem of competition, Columbus would

yet find a way to go forward over the bleeding form and wrecked agency of Mr. Breck to the fee of Mr. Smathers. All a smart sleuth needed was time and room: two things he was about to acquire for himself along with and through Mr. Watson's seven dollars.

JOYFUL at this outlook, Columbus turned into Strawberry Street—and saw Lady Luck had moved right into his alley! For along the opposite sidewalk at a gait which cried aloud that a right foot long accustomed to left shoes couldn't change over so suddenly now, limped the still-Tuxedoed Mr. Breck.

"Well, dawgged if it aint Detective Breck hisself!" affably—even jovially—came Columbus' honeyed greeting as he crossed over to him. "What you lookin' built so close to de ground about, short boy?"

"Feets hollerin' at me so loud I cain't hear de clues," Bugwine glanced down ruefully at his flame-colored and -feeling footgear.

"Dat how-come I is gwine to help you out some," purred Mr. Collins.

"*You help me out?*" Mr. Breck's anguished eyes bulged in new suspicion.

"Yeah—soon as I 'tends to a little business up at Bees'-Knees' place. Den I be back at your agency and split a clue wid you. Dat way, us'll *both* make somethin', instead of one hoggin' de whole of Horizontal's ten bucks. Us'll gang him."

Anybody who got Bugwine off his feet, right now, was a benefactor who was not to be turned down! "Waits in my new place for you den, wid my—my secretary," he made it unanimous as he played into his ex-employer's hands. "And craves action, copious."

"Dat's de stuff!" applauded a Columbus who only by an effort could keep himself from frisking joyously about. "You wait in dar till I gits back, and, boy, you aint gwine see nothin' else *but* action! Wid horns and hoofs throwed in."

"Suits me. All time hog for action!" Bugwine was not going to be underestimated by his old oppressor now.

With his normal shuffle speeded to a mild gallop, Columbus Collins hustled darkly for Bees'-Knees' barbecue-stand. Justice was fixing not only to prevail but to cloud up and rain all over a runt who had dared to open in opposition and in his very face, as it were, by competing in the same case!

In which new exhilaration of the spirit, a tall detective shortly flung wide Bees'-Knees' door, and found everything within there still just right. "All set! Let's go!" he clarioned to the world at large and Mr. Watson in particular.

"You done found Roxana?" The mammoth scooped a final shrimp into his maw, and rose, prepared for revenge.

"And how! Her and de boy she's took up wid too," Mr. Collins further prepared his ground with gusto. "Says step on it!"

"Practically dar now." Seafood got himself in motion.

"Remember, cripple him—not kill him," cautioned Mr. Collins as with difficulty he kept up with a husband *en route* to assert himself.

"Slacks up on him every once in a while, see is he still livin'," promised Mr. Watson grimly.

"Learns dat louse to compete wid *me!*" muttered Columbus under labored breath as they hastened toward the cracking-down by Seafood Watson.

"Dey generally has to rebuild de house too, when I comes up on a boy I aint like dis way," the hurrying Mr. Watson recalled an overlooked detail of his operations.

Then they were in Strawberry Street, nearing its well-named "Fish Alley" sector and the block containing Bugwine's new establishment, a block that slept deserted now. "You better stay back till I goes ahead and sniffs out de land," Mr. Collins halted the expedition precautionarily. "See is dey both in."

But such reconnoitering only revealed perfection. Lady Luck was still right with Columbus. Not only was Bugwine in his agency, but with his shoes happily off and on his desk top, his bare feet all but purring aloud in their relief. More, he was leaning against the chair of the comely Roxana as she typed, in a way that even a husband less large and jealous than Seafood might easily have misunderstood.

"Pssstt!" hissed Columbus' summons.

AT a lumbering gallop came Mr. Watson, to look, to see—all! As he looked, Mr. Collins perceived aghast that he was swelling, growing! Big as he had been, he was bigger now. Ugly as he had been, he was reverting to the African equivalent of Cro-Magnon now. Then, shedding his coat, with one leap he was in the doorway, and through the crowded confines of the room rang the

awful jungle-cry of an outraged mate come upon the despoiler of his hut.

Wild and instant screams from the startled Roxana indicated that she had heard it before—and knew full well the worst. Her "Run, Mist' Breck, run! . . . *He gwine kill you, sho!*" pierced the eardrums of Bugwine as he whirled first in fright, saw the onrushing Seafood, and turned frantically to flee, only to find architectural errors in his way: the place had been built without any back door! The roaring Mr. Watson was now between him and the front one, while the evidently experienced Roxana already occupied the only perch aloft, the top of a teetering cabinet that could hold no more.

SEAFOOD'S bellow filled the room like a liner's siren. Ratlike, cornered, the gibbering Bugwine bared his teeth and squeaked as his giant adversary closed in on him. Then hands, small but like steel in strength, clutched him with a mighty grip about each ankle—and shrieking, a small sleuth soared aloft.

"Teaches you to take up wid *my* wife, shrimp!" the berserk wrestler flung him hideously against a wall.

"Hires her—aint take up wid her!" Instantly on his feet, the terror-struck Mr. Breck tore down the stove, fell over its pipe, and crashed a table in his frenzied flight.

Two chairs and the proudly polished cuspidor were in the answering barrage laid down by Mr. Watson. By an eyelash the caterwauling Bugwine dodged the furniture, but the cuspidor full in his vest slowed him and laid him low. But again as Seafood lunged, he was up. Without escape, without hope, he shot head-first beneath his desk—just as his roaring adversary lifted it from the floor to look beneath it.

After which, it grew terrible. . . .

Outside the battlefield, even the hardened Columbus hid his eyes from what was happening. The mammoth was all over Bugwine, and Bugwine was all over the mammoth! But there could be but one end, and that right soon.

Along the sidewalk, unconscious as yet of all he was nearing, came Client Smathers. But what mattered Horizontal now, agonized Columbus. This was too much, for seven dollars! Some way of stopping Seafood, short of lilies on Bugwine's low-necked vest, had to be devised at once. But what? And how? While as Mr. Collins thus writhed and

There rose the triumphant treble of Bugwine: "Tells you I always gits my man! And your money too—on de floor dar!"



impotently gnawed his nails, the roar of battle went on within: clamor of Seafood, crash of furniture, clouds of soot and dust from the dislodged stovepipe, squalls of Bugwine and shrieks of Roxana—all combined to obscure the outline of events. But still no doubt obscured the outcome: Bugwine had been framed not wisely but too well.

Then suddenly a startling development came—an incredible lull and silence in the bedlam—followed by a sharp new sound, as of metallic rain on a wooden roof.

Daring at last to look, Columbus saw that which at first perplexed, and then set his eyes to protruding like china doorknobs in the dark. For within things were no longer the same. The mighty Seafood stood frog-eyed and horror-stricken on the floor, the fight and starch suddenly all shot out of him, a Seafood seemingly frozen loose-jawed and appalled at some catastrophe, while on the floor before him lay—

But as Mr. Collins saw and fully grasped the inescapable import of *that*, he too was stricken. Low moans of a new and awful anguish issued from his staggering form.

Suddenly the spell within the agency broke. Again the room rang with combat cries. But this time they were the cries not of Seafood, but of Bugwine! Loud and bewildering, upon a new note,

they mounted, until for Columbus they drowned even the crash of turning tables—tables figurative as well as furniture. For even as the arriving Mr. Smathers and the now gray-gilled Mr. Collins clutched each other in the doorway, the climax came.

FULL at the stunned and swaying Seafood sprang Detective Breck. There was a gleam, a click; and as the new steel chain of a filled bear-trap was swiftly snubbed about a wall-side waterpipe, there rose the triumphant and revealing treble of Bugwine: "Tells you, Horizontal, I always gits my man! . . . And your gold money, too—on de floor dar, whar it took all de steam out dis crook when it starts rollin' out his vest in de rookus, like rain on de roof! And in de *bear-trap* is—"

"—*De polecat at de party!*" rang Mr. Smathers' answering roar. "It was Seafood Watson, what must have picked my pocket wid dem little small hands of his'n right *durin' de welcome I was flingin' for de skunk!* —But 'first come, first served,' I still says and pays. Pick you up one dem tens off de floor for your fee, Bugwine! And de *laugh's on Columbus.*"

Whereafter, far down Hogan's Alley, a fleeing framer who had failed, heard—long, loud, and raucous—that laughter which he had feared.

The Pirate's Beard

THIS story is about a beard, a Corsican pirate and love at first sight; but especially about the beard. The beard was not on the Corsican pirate, as you might have expected. It was on the face of J. Honeywell Packer, who ran the night cable-desk of the Inter-Press News Service in Paris. That, of course, was the trouble. Not that there is anything particularly obnoxious in a beard. As a device for concealing an ingrowing chin, or covering up your favorite inferiority complex, it has advantages. But a beard is not a modern American concept, and that is why this one caused an incident. Packer's jaw-feathers will be remembered by the American newspaper fraternity in Paris as clearly as Lindy's arrival at Le Bourget, or Ivar Kreuger's suicide.

J. Honeywell Packer himself is not to be dismissed with a mere flip of the wrist. He was not important, perhaps; but he was consequential. The consequences started happening from the day he got his job on Inter-Press.

I SAW him come into the office that day. To look at, he suggested a Gustave Doré drawing. He was a bit grotesque, and a bit funny. His head was too big for his body, which was big enough, God knows. His mouth was too wide for his face. But the startling thing about him was that brilliant pink beard. I say pink. It was of blond hair trying to be red. It was at least six inches long. It was cut off square at the end. It was, I assure you, something awful.

But Packer had a queer *Huckleberry Finn* sort of charm about him, and a touch of eternal youth, even if he did look like a minor prophet.

And the worst of it was that he had a name for his beard; he called it "Cap'n Cuttle."

He came strolling in that day and said:



Illustrated by Austin Briggs



Hectic hours while working on an American newspaper in Paris—by the author of "Cyrano to You, Gentlemen!"

By FULTON GRANT



"Where's the boss? Cap'n Cuttle and I are looking for a job."

After he explained about Cap'n Cuttle, we told him he hadn't a chance. But just then the Chief came into the room, and Packer spoke right up to him.

"Say, how about taking me and the beard on this staff? I'm an old Combination Press man. Five years in South America. Speak French and Spanish, too."

The Chief gave him the cold eye. He didn't look the type. He didn't even look like a newspaper man. He looked like a traveling proof-reader, or a bum, or a candidate for one of those hand-out tickets the American Aid Society sometimes gives to needy and deserving Americans who go broke in Europe. And

By the time they reached the scene nothing could be done with the writhing, white-hot metal—once the frame of that proud ship.

then—that beard! But the Chief used the good old formula.

"I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Packer; but we're all filled up here. Why don't you try one of the American dailies here in Paris? There's the New York *Star*, for instance, or the Chicago *Ledger*."

"I've been over to the *Star*," said this queer fish with a mossy grin. "But I don't want to work for a paper. Too bad, though. I thought you might start in with my scoop."

"Your scoop?"

"Sure. When I was over to the *Star*, somebody brought in a story, and I heard them talking about it. Well, I just sat down at a machine and typed it off. Nobody seemed to notice, so I thought I might as well. I was thinking you could scoop the *Star* with their own story. . . . You could catch the New York second editions if you filed your cable about now. It would be sort of a joke. . . . Well—that's all right, Mister. So long. I'll be seeing you."

The Chief bit. He hates the whole *Star* crowd, and he couldn't miss that chance. And it was a good story about an American who posed as a rich clubman in Paris and was really running a confidence game. He had just been arrested, and it was a good scandal. And Packer's story was a knock-out.

So Packer got his job.

It took us just a day to discover that he was the swiftest cable-desk man on the Inter-Press staff. He may have been fantastic, and he wore a beard, but he was a crack newspaper man. He spoke horrible French, but he knew how to get a story, probably by sign language. And he could write like a streak.

But one day the Pirate came into Packer's life.

THE Pirate's name was Olympia Bertucci, but she was "the Pirate" to us and will be to you. She came from Ajaccio, Corsica. Her brother was a real Corsican bandit. He was a member of the Spada gang, that kept the wild French island in hysterics for some years, as you will remember. Spada himself is cooling off in a French prison right now, but the gendarmes never caught the Pirate's brother. He is supposed to have gone noble and committed suicide as a heroic gesture; but rumor says he is still hiding in the *maquis*, the impenetrable lost-lands of the Corsican interior.

The Pirate herself was a stenographer at the Galleries Lafayette. She had run

away from Ajaccio with a smooth French traveling salesman, and came to Paris to look for love and adventure. She found both, too, in rather large quantities.

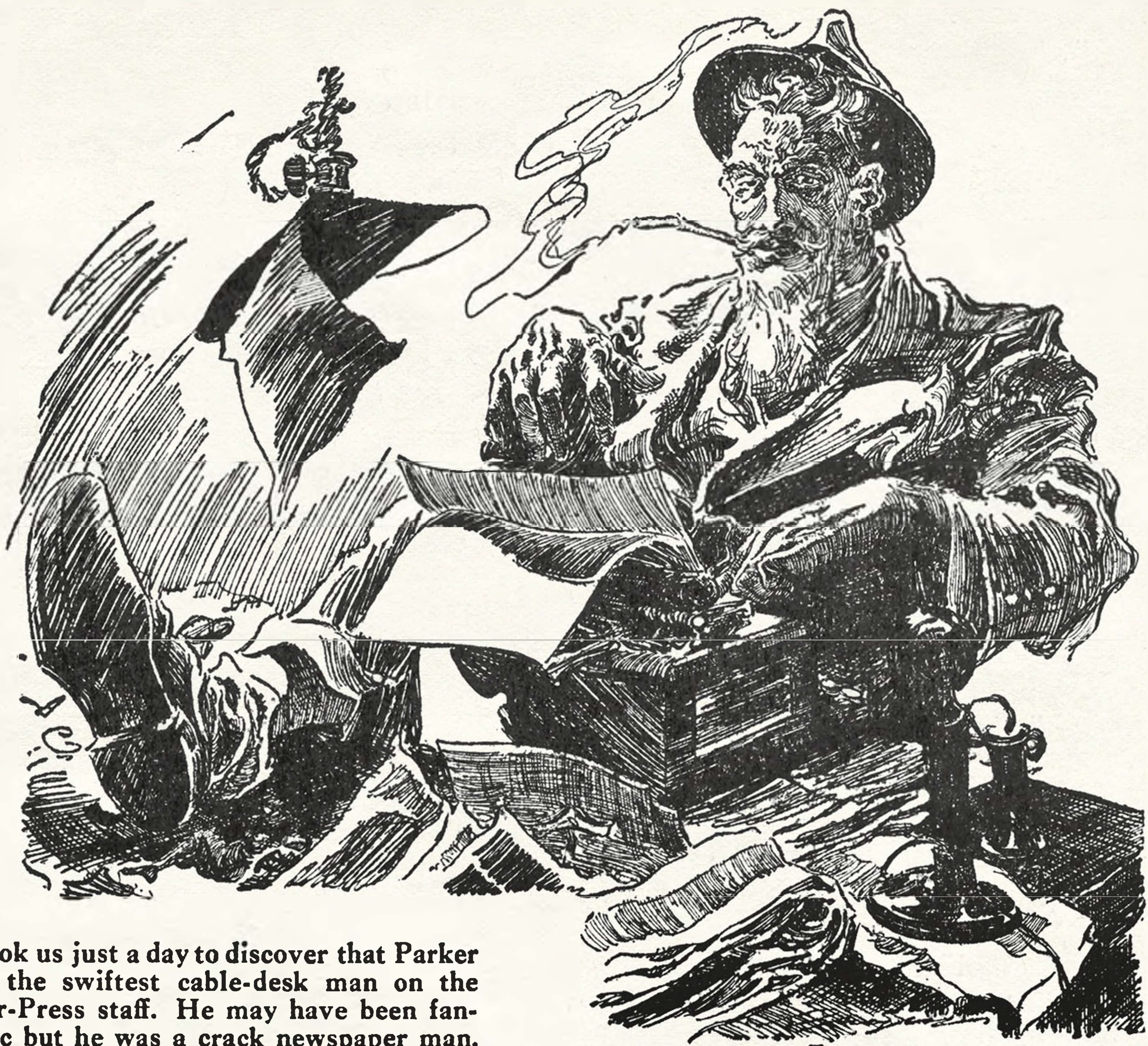
The night Packer met the Pirate, he got stabbed, witnessed a murder, landed in jail and reported a story for Inter-Press, all in six hours. If that isn't action, I'll buy the drinks. It all happened in a café called *Les Noctambules*, a tough place on the Left Bank, where nobody goes unless they are tight and not choosy. Packer was tight that evening, and he never was choosy in those days. The girls you can dance with at *Les Noctambules* are not what you would call "nice girls." Most of them are shopgirls, and some have other occupations less reputable. But the Pirate was, in her way, a nice girl.

PACKER saw her sitting alone at a table. She was tiny and pretty, and had inky black shingled hair. She had inky black eyes, and eyebrows that looked like two black daggers. She had an oval face and a dark olive skin; and she was dressed, that night, in a crimson velvet dress, girded with a broad gold-cloth belt. Packer staggered over to her and asked her, in his horrible French, to dance. She accepted, God knows why, and they cavorted all over the floor. At the end of the dance she parked Packer at his table and refused to sit with him. She went back to her place and sat alone.

Then trouble came in.

Trouble was American tourists. They were three college boys in dinner clothes, and two girls. They were on what they called a "party." The unattached youth spotted the Pirate. He galloped over to her and said something or other, probably meaning well enough, but in ambiguous French. Nobody knows what he said, but the Pirate hauled off and smacked him, hard. With that, a French tough butted in. The smacked boy's friends came over. Waiters came running. The toughs started a fight. The cashier lady came running from the cashbox and slapped the Pirate—that was because she was interfering with trade. One of the waiters knocked the Pirate down in the good old French sporting fashion. There was a terrible free-for-all. And of course Packer had to step in.

Packer is a big man. He plunged into that mob and committed mayhem on practically anybody he could reach, being too tight to be sure just which side he was on. Suddenly somebody slashed



It took us just a day to discover that Parker was the swiftest cable-desk man on the Inter-Press staff. He may have been fantastic but he was a crack newspaper man.

his shoulder with a knife. It was a bad gash, and it sobered him enough to make him back up a little. Just then there was a shot, and one of the waiters fell down with a bullet in his head.

The cops came. Everybody was arrested, especially the American youths and Packer. It seems that one of the college boys had picked a revolver off the floor just as the cops came, and so they charged them with murder at the police station. It took those French *agents* three hours to discover that this particular gun had never been discharged. And even then they didn't want to let the boys go, so they held them, and charged them with assault and disturbing the peace. Of course this made a good story for Packer and Inter-Press. And Packer never lost his head. He got the names of everybody concerned, found out about the boys' and girls' families back home, and had all the details ready for release before he left the police station.

When he got outside, he got a shock. There was the Pirate, waiting for him. She rushed up and told him that it was she who had stabbed him—by mistake. She made a terrible fuss. She cried and threw her arms around him, and called him her "big bearded animal." He

couldn't get rid of her. She stayed right with him, and came to the office in his taxi, and sat beside him while he wrote his story. Then she went home to his hotel and took off the bandages the police had put on his shoulder—washed his wound, mothered, petted and crooned at him.

Unfortunately, she upset a basin of water on the floor while she was doing it. It leaked down the radiator pipes to the landlady's place. The *patronne* came running. She saw the girl, the blood, the wound. She concluded that Packer was a tough or something, and she put him out of his hotel, then and there. It was a bad scene, even if it was funny. Packer went next door to another hotel. The Pirate helped him move. She wanted to stay right there and mother him, but finally he got rid of her after some embarrassment.

NEXT day, however, the Pirate was on deck, early in the morning. After her own job was over, she came down to the office and waited for Packer. And from that day on, the Pirate was Packer's shadow. There was nothing to do about her. She was determined to be his girlfriend, whether he wanted her or not.

Now, the Pirate was a nice little girl. Furthermore, she was in love with her "vegetable animal so big and so bearded," as she called him. She had no sense of class or intellectual distinctions. She had elected him to be her man; and that, as far as she was concerned, was that.

But the Pirate was a Corsican and jealous, and she had a temper.

I'll never forget the day Packer came in by the back door, his face scratched and bleeding, and two long slashes in his coat.

"It's the Pirate," he said. "I covered a story with Mary Felden of the *Ledger* yesterday, and the Pirate saw me. When I got home, she had cut all my clothes to bits with scissors, and broken everything in my room. And she was hiding in the clothes-closet. When I came in, she jumped out at me and pulled a knife out of her stocking. Believe me, big boy, love is grand!"

And that wasn't the worst.

Packer's sister, from some town in Massachusetts, came over to see him. The Pirate wouldn't believe she was his sister. She got a taxi and followed them around. She found them sitting in a well-known restaurant having dinner. She came in and screamed. She pulled the tablecloth off the table, broke all the dishes, made the soup fly, broke the sister's glasses, scratched her, pulled her hair, and was only prevented from murder by two laughing cops. Laughing, mind you! French cops think these jealous scenes are funny.

How did Packer take this? Well, he liked the kid. We all liked her. I used to sit in a café with her while she was waiting for her *grande brute* to come out of the office. She used to tell me how she was planning to marry him. The only obstacle she saw was that she didn't have a *dot*. If a French girl hasn't a dowry, she doesn't dream of marriage. But the Pirate was working hard at her job and saving all her money. One day she was going to have a *dot*, and then she was going to marry her big bearded *American*. . . . Poor kid!

THAT summer the Pirate got a telegram from Corsica. Her father was very ill, perhaps dying, and she had to leave at once. She tried to persuade Packer to drop everything and go with her. She wanted to show him off to the family—her future husband and beard. But Packer couldn't go, and wouldn't. He had his job. Furthermore, he was not

so sure about meeting her family. He liked the Pirate; but marriage was another thing.

"There's no reason why I shouldn't marry her, Brown," he once confided to me. "But I don't know. I'm crazy about the kid, too. Only—well, I just can't see her back home in Massachusetts."

There, I must say, he was right. She would have fitted in a New England town like a hornet in your silk hat. But I was sorry for the kid, because she simply loved Packer to death. The break had to come sometime, and I was afraid it would go hard on the Pirate.

The break came pretty soon, too; but the beard saved the situation.

ONE day while the Pirate was away, Mr. S. Wellington Stope, general manager of Inter-Press, came to Paris on a tour of inspection. Stope is a good man, but he is just a bit of a Rotarian and about five hundred per cent American. He hasn't got what you might call the international point of view, nor much of a sense of humor. Stope came in and tore our office apart. He changed men's jobs, started new systems and routines, and made life hell in general. And one day he came down for the night staff and saw Packer and "Cap'n Cuttle."

"What the hell is that?" he demanded of anybody. "When did we start putting Frogs on the cable desk?"

The Chief said:

"That's no Frog. That's Packer."

Stope knew Packer's name from his signature on cables.

"My God!" he said. "*That* is Packer? Send him in to my office."

Packer went in.

"Listen, Packer," said the big boss. "That spinach comes off. You can't work for Inter-Press and wear a beard. Get me?"

Now, Packer is no yes-man. He came right back.

"Sure," says he, "I get you. But now you get me: That beard stays on. That beard is my personal business. Inter-Press hires me to file cable stories and I do my job. But Inter-Press can't butt into my private life. You can tell me to use *x*'s for *t*'s, or to write stories in red ink; but you can't tell me how to treat my face."

"I can't, hey?" said Stope. "Now listen, son. Inter-Press is an American news-service—the finest, best American news-service in the world. You represent that service, see? People judge that

service by the men that work for it, see? And Inter-Press is not going to be represented by Santa Claus, nor by any young squirt who goes native over here, and wants to look like a French Huguenot. Get me?"

"Yeah?" drawls Packer, getting pretty sore now. "Well, this is my own face. It's maybe not a very good one, but it's all I've got. It's no disgrace to Inter-Press, either. And if I want to put a fringe on my face, that's my business. You've got no right to dictate to me about my personal appearance, Mr. Stope, and I won't take it."

"You won't, hey? Well, you'll damn' well look for another job; that's all."

"Sold!" says Packer, and he goes in and reports to the Chief that he has been fired.

The Chief liked Packer. Everybody liked Packer, regardless of his beard and the Pirate and his other fantastic idiosyncrasies. Also, he could go right around to the United Press or the Associated and get a job if he wanted to. He had a fine reputation on the cable desk. We couldn't afford to lose a man like Packer, either, especially to a rival news-service.

So the Chief went to the bat for Packer and Cap'n Cuttle. He gave Stope a stiff sales-talk on Packer, and made him seem pretty near invaluable; but he didn't quite win. Stope was categorical. He wouldn't have any beard on that staff, nor on any other. He was going to keep that staff American and clean-shaven. But he did agree to compromise. He said he'd give Packer a week to make up his mind. That was a decree. In seven days, either Packer went—or the beard.

There was mirth and hilarity in Paris newspaper circles that week. Packer told the story—his side of it—to everybody, made bombastic speeches about the divine right of the individual, and swore he would never shave that beard. But he did; and that was after he met Jenny-Lee Merrilees.

WHILE the little Pirate was away, for the first time in several months, Packer played around. It was on the day of the beard incident that he was sent over to the Hotel George V to interview Colonel Dan Merrilees of Beauville, S. C. Colonel Dan was a Southern gentleman who owned, published, edited and practically wrote the Beauville *Democrat*, the most powerful political organ in the Solid South, and a rip-snorting, swashbuckling paper, small but important. Packer in-



The Pirate was a Corsican and jealous—and she had a temper.

terviewed Colonel Dan, and he met his daughter Jenny-Lee; and that was where the Pirate lost out.

Jenny-Lee was a lovely girl. She was not only good for the eyes, but she was blessed with the greatest amount of good horse sense I have ever known in a twenty-three-year-old girl, and just about the sweetest disposition imaginable. She was born a blue-blood, but she didn't keep reminding you of it. She knew newspapers and could write. She was darned good company.

J. Honeywell Packer fell for Jenny-Lee like a ton of bricks; and what was more astonishing, she fell for him. He brought her around to the office. He took her to shows. They dressed up—or down, rather—like a couple of roughnecks, and they went into the tough dives together around the Bastille and the Place Maubert. She was amused at his beard. Of course, she never took it seriously. Of course, she told him that he was right about not giving in to Stope; but just the same, she knew he would shave it off if she wanted him to, I'm sure.

Then, on the last day of "grace" for Cap'n Cuttle, came the terrible disaster of the *R-101*, the British dirigible.

JENNY-LEE MERRILEES had a car. Her father had brought it from America, and they had been touring in it. She took the car out with Jack Packer, and they drove all over the Paris region together when he was off duty.

On Packer's night off they had been to Montmartre, dancing. It was about two-thirty in the morning when they started back to her hotel, and Packer began telling Jenny-Lee the truth, and that means about the Pirate. They stopped the car somewhere and she listened to him, very quietly. It was a bad moment for both of them. When he was all through, she looked at him and said:

"Don't you think you've been a little weak, Jack?"

"I guess I have," he said. "But—"

"You're going to say that she made it difficult for you to do differently. Don't say it, Jack."

"All right. I'm sorry."

"So am I."

"Does it—make any—difference?"

"You know it does."

"Well, I'm not going to marry her."

"You can't just slap her down, you know. I'm afraid I don't want to—well, I don't want to start off something that ought to be beautiful with—well, with our feet trampling down a little girl like that who couldn't understand. She did the best she could. I'm not a snob, and I don't want to talk stupidly about class; but she's not your equal, mentally or socially. It's not her fault. She probably doesn't know it. But she does love you, and you can't hurt her. No, Jack, I'm not going to let you hurt her. You've got to be gentle and kind to her. She's not to blame. You're to blame."

"Well, I didn't mean to get tangled up—"

"Don't say that. You were amused and fascinated because she was such a little animal. She was natural and impulsive and physical, and you liked it. But just because you are older and more experienced, and know more about the world than she does, is no reason why you should make her suffer. Is it, Jack?"

"No, I guess not."

"So I'll just say good-by—Jack."

THEN they were silent a minute. It must have been hard for both of them. Packer told me all about this before he went away, and I could see he had had a bad time. He said they just sat there for a while, not talking. And then Jenny-Lee turned on the radio of the car—just to break the silence; and the thing happened.

Packer remembers that it was just three-seventeen. The voice of a French announcer came out of the loud-speaker, and had been going for a few seconds be-

fore they both were shocked out of their silence.

"—near Beauvais. The *R-101* was the pride of the English navy, the last word in modern dirigible construction. The passengers on this first flight were British Army and Navy officials, including Sir John Simms, Minister of War. Now this magnificent craft lies in flames. It is thought that all aboard are trapped in the burning carcass, for the heat is such that the temporary rescue crew has not been able to approach—"

"My God!" cried Packer. "That's terrible! Jenny-Lee, we've got to cover that story. Got to go right now! Let me take you to your hotel and then borrow your car."

"I'll go with you," she said; and nothing could make her change her mind.

IN five minutes they had reported the disaster to the Inter-Press office, and telephoned Colonel Dan Merrilees. Within ten minutes more they were whirling out of Paris through Saint-Denis, through Pontoise and on the road to Beauvais. They had on their evening clothes. Packer had neither coat nor hat, and Jenny-Lee had only a light silk evening jacket. Packer told me that they made that sixty-four miles in eighty minutes, and they didn't speak a word all the way.

At Beauvais they found the streets in an uproar. From the housetops you could see the flames of the burning airship, far off to the northwest. The big craft had struck a low mountain, either because of the fog or because of some mechanical trouble, and had smashed itself headlong.

The wreck was toward Crevecœur, and part of the run had to be made cross-country. By the time they reached the terrible scene hundreds of frantic, excited people had collected. Railroad wrecking-crews, gendarmes, soldiers and firemen from Beauvais, Amiens and even from as far as Doullens, had rushed to the place. But nothing could be done with the writhing, twisted, snakelike white-hot metal that had once been the frame of that proud ship.

Jenny-Lee told me about Packer. He ran over to the wreck from where they parked their car, far enough away to keep the terrific heat from exploding their gas-tank. He fought his way through the lines, showing his *coupe-file* police card. He asked questions in his awful French, made signs and gestures and bothered everybody. But he got a story. He ran

back to the car and wrote that story on his stiff shirt-bosom, front and back. He had forgotten to bring paper. Then he made Jenny-Lee go back to Beauvais with the shirt and get the Inter-Press office in Paris on the telephone and read off the story to them.

That, incidentally, is the way the Inter-Press newspapers scooped America on that disaster. On a dress-shirt!

But Packer stayed at the wreck. He worked like a Trojan, hauling hose, dragging canvas strips with the charred bodies of the unfortunate passengers of that dirigible, bringing water to the two members of the crew who had been miraculously saved—and getting their account of the tragedy for the second edition color-story. Even trying to throw steel cable-line grapples into the flaming, searing mass in hopes of dragging out a body, dead or alive.

And he was not only scorched himself, but his evening clothes were torn, wet, burned and ruined—and, he had singed his beard!

All that night and late into the day Packer worked and hovered around the wreck of the *R-101*. Jenny-Lee had brought him some paper from Beauvais, and he wrote three follow-up stories which she telephoned back to us. He made her take a room in a Beauvais hotel and get some sleep, but he stayed on the job, helping where he could, and getting more material. When the girl came for him around noon the next day, she found him asleep in the grass, with an unfinished second-day story in his hands. She got people to help him into the car and brought him home. They made him stay in the hospital for two days, he was so badly burned.

WHEN Packer came in I happened to be in the office. We didn't recognize him. Not only was his head all wrapped in gauze, but his beard was gone.

"They did me a dirty trick," he said, grinning. "The interne had Cap'n Cuttle cut off while I was asleep. Tell Stope, will you? I guess I'll need my job now."

Stope and the Chief came in. Packer was a hero that day. He had helped us to beat the other news-services to the *R-101* story by three hours, and that is something in this business.

Then, out of a clear sky and a little like a thundercloud, came the Pirate. She had been to Packer's hotel and found him away, so she came straight down to the office to find out what was what. She

walked in, and announced herself, and they sent for Packer. When she saw him—without his beard—she was furious.

"*Mais non!*" she cried. "It is not possible! It is not my *grand barbu!* I do not know this man. But no, I do not know him."

AND she burst into tears. She wept and wailed. She would not speak to Packer. She wouldn't let him kiss her on both cheeks the way the French people do. She went from tears to a rage and back to tears again. She made such a scene that I took her outside to a café to quiet her down. And then she told me what she thought about his beard.

To the Pirate, that pink drip-catcher was a symbol. Beards are a Corsican institution. Corsicans understand beards. All Corsican he-men wear them. The Pirate's bandit brother (and she was very proud of him) wore a big black beard. She wasn't going to have any pansy in the family. She wasn't going to marry a man that her relations would make fun of. No! But no! She was through. She was going to go back to Ajaccio, where, it appeared, there was a young blade—with a beard—who had been lurking in the background all through this affair with Packer. But no, she would not listen to reason. To see this *American* without his beard, was like seeing him naked. It was immoral. It was just awful.

And besides—

"*Qu'il est mal fichu sans la barbe!*" she said; which means that she didn't like his unornamented face.

Of course I'll admit I was a little foxy about it. I told her that he would lose his job if he kept his beard. I told her that he had no intention of growing it again. I made it seem pretty difficult. You see, I knew something about Jenny-Lee Merrilees and Packer.

We never saw the Pirate again. I had a card from her about four months later. She sent it from Ajaccio, and it gave a lovely picture of the bay. She signed it:

"*Madame Olympia B. Spaldi (Le Pirate, comme vous le dites).*"

And that told the story. . . .

As to Packer, he didn't stay on the Inter-Press. He went back to America on the same boat that the Merrilees family took, and now he is managing editor of the Beauville *Democrat*, and the proud father of another J. Honeywell (Jr.)—who may, in good time, grow another pink beard.

TARZAN and

WITH Lady Jane in the power of the sinister Kavuru, Tarzan hurries through the jungle to her rescue.

Illustrated by
Frank Hoban



The Story Thus Far:

TO Tarzan in the heart of the African jungle there came a group of his native friends the Waziri, begging help: their young girls were mysteriously disappearing; it was suspected that the unfortunates were being carried away by the Kavuru, a strange savage jungle race, said to be white. Buira, daughter of Muviro the chief, had been the latest victim. Muviro and ten of his warriors started to her rescue, and Tarzan took up an independent trail. . . .

But he soon ran into peril: suspected by the Bukena tribe of being himself a Kavuru, he was overpowered, bound and imprisoned. Under cover of night he was set free by a Bukena witch-doctor who hoped thereby to curry favor with the Kavuru. Several days later Tarzan saved from a lion, a Kavuru named Ydeni. Though grateful, Ydeni refused to lead Tarzan to the Kavuru stronghold, hinting that it would mean the ape-man's death. They separated—but secretly Tarzan followed the other, who went directly to the village of the Bukena. Here, uttering a weird crooning call, Ydeni hypnotized a young girl and induced her to follow him. Tarzan rescued the girl while Ydeni slept, and started back with her. . . .

To Jane, Lady Greystoke—Tarzan's beautiful young wife—in London, came a wealthy woman friend who had married a titled foreigner much younger than herself, Prince Sborov. The new Princess Sborov brought a curious story: their pilot Neal Brown had told them of a weird white race in the African Hinterland who possessed the secret of eternal youth. The aging Princess was determined to discover this secret, and Lady Greystoke decided to accompany them—the Prince and Princess, Tibbs the valet, Annette the maid, and the pilot Brown. Buffeted by storm over a trackless African forest, their plane ran out of gas; luckily, they landed unharmed.

However, their situation was terrifying. An attempt to shoot an attacking lion disclosed that there was no ammunition. With a hand-ax and Brown's clasp-knife Jane shaped a crude bow and arrows and a spear from branches; they were forced to eat what game she could fell with these dubious weapons.

The second evening a quarrel arose between the selfish and arrogant Alexis and

the Immortal Men

By EDGAR RICE
BURROUGHS



his wealthy wife, and she openly declared her intention of changing her will to leave him penniless. When morning came, the horrifying discovery was made that she had been killed during the night—her skull split open. Suspicion rested upon Alexis, for the partly burned sleeve of a coat he had been wearing was espied in the campfire embers. After burying the Princess, the party—taking only the barest essentials—started through the jungle. Jane left a note telling of their plight, pinned to the boma wall.

As the castaways plodded on, ill-feeling toward Alexis ran high, though Jane tried to maintain an impartial attitude.

Brown and Annette had become greatly attracted to each other; though Sborov, repulsed by Jane, muttered darkly of a love-affair between the pilot and Lady Greystoke. That night Annette disappeared; Brown accused Sborov of killing her, but Jane pointed out that the girl had been seized and carried off by some unknown force. Sborov, maddened by a guilty conscience and tortured by unaccustomed hardship and deprivation, at-

tempted to kill Brown and failing, fled into the forest. The party, now reduced to three, went on without him—but that afternoon Jane too mysteriously vanished as they trudged along in single file. Brown and Tibbs hunted for her until darkness fell; then, disheartened, they climbed into a tree to await the dawn.

Tarzan, after returning to her home the Bukena maid rescued from Ydeni, came upon his own pet monkey Nkima—shortly after meeting Muviro and his men at an appointed rendezvous.

A Waziri warrior later arrived with a message Jane had sent her husband before the airplane take-off. While Tarzan considered the message Nkima bounded off into the forest, gleefully waving the envelope in the runner's cleft stick. But in the course of his simian adventures the envelope was lost; Nkima happily substituted therefor a bit of paper he found pinned to the wall of a flimsy hut. On his way back to Tarzan and the Waziri, he espied two people—a fierce-looking white savage and with him a white girl. Nkima, curious, stalked them to a village at the foot of a steep cliff; then he lost interest and hurried back to join the ape-man.

Tarzan, perusing the bit of paper Nkima displayed, found to his deep concern that it told of the mishap to the Sborov plane. Alarmed for Jane's safety, Tarzan ordered the Waziri to rejoin him at the village of the Kavuru—and himself started with Nkima to trace the ill-fated party. From the hut where the note had been found, he was swinging eastward, when there came to his nostrils the odor of a stalking lion and the scent-spoor of a white man. This man might know of Jane; it would not do to let Numa destroy him! (*The story continues in detail:*)

NO considerations of humanity prompted Tarzan of the Apes to hasten to the aid of this unknown man; nor would it have been selfish callousness to the



Thinking the end had come, Sborov fell to his knees, turning so that he faced the lion.

suffering of another that would have left him indifferent, but for the thought of Jane. The ape-man was a jungle animal, a fellow to the lion; and he knew that the lion must eat, even as he must. If it did not feed upon this man, it would feed upon some other living creature whose life was as precious to it as the man's was to him; in the philosophy of the jungle, one life is no more valuable than another, unless it be that of one's self or of a friend.

Tarzan knew that the two were not far ahead of him. The odor of Numa told him that the lion was not empty, and that therefore he was probably stalking the Tarmangani with no immediate likelihood that he would attack unless provoked.

Then the quiet of the jungle was shattered by a scream of terror; and Tarzan guessed that the lion's short temper had been aroused. Instantly the ape-man swung forward at terrific speed, and so swiftly he sped through the middle terrace of the forest, that even little Nkima had difficulty in keeping pace.

Sborov thought that the lion was charging, but it was not. It was merely keeping its prey in sight; but the angry growl of annoyance was a warning against attempted escape, and a threat of what the quarry might expect if it forced the king to exert himself un-

necessarily at this hour of the day, when heat lay heavy and humid upon the jungle, and royalty should be taking its siesta.

But Sborov would have been deaf to all warnings now, even had he understood them. He was crazed with terror. His one, his only impulse was to escape; and so he ran on, his legs staggering from exhaustion and fear, his heart pounding in his throat, choking the screams that trembled there unuttered.

Now indeed did Numa wax wroth. This pitiful thing was trying to escape him; and it was making him trot when he wished only to loaf along the trail at his ease until he was again ready to kill and feed. He would put an end to it; and that quickly! He voiced another warning roar as he prepared to charge.

Thinking the end had come, Sborov fell to his knees, turning so that he faced the lion; and as he did so, a strange thing happened, a thing so remarkable that it surprised the lion quite as much as it did Sborov: A white man dropped from above into the trail between them.

Sborov had never seen a man such as this: a bronzed giant, almost naked; a handsome giant with grim, stern features; a giant who faced a lion with as little apparent concern as one might reveal in shooing away an alley cat. He just stood there facing the lion and waiting; and the lion stopped in its tracks, eying the intruder with evidently growing displeasure.

AS Sborov looked at the man, he realized he was really not of gigantic proportions; yet he conveyed the impression of great size. Perhaps it was the suggestion of power and majesty in his mien that gave him the appearance of towering over other creatures. He stood perhaps a couple of inches over six feet; rounded muscles flowed smoothly beneath clear, bronzed skin; his proportions were as perfect, for his kind, as were those of the great lion he faced. It occurred to Sborov that these two were very much alike, and he began to be as afraid of the man as of the other beast.

They stood thus facing each other for but a moment; then the lion growled, lashing its tail, and took a step forward. The man growled, and Sborov shuddered. . . . Now indeed was he terrified. Above them a little monkey danced up and down upon the limb of a tree, chattering and scolding. He loosed upon the lion a vocabulary of rich invective; but

to Sborov it was only the silly chattering of a monkey.

The bronzed giant moved slowly forward to meet the lion; from the mighty cavity of his deep chest rolled savage growls. Numa halted then and glanced quickly from side to side. He shook his head, and holding it upon one side, snarled; then he wheeled about and stalked majestically away without a backward glance. The man had out-bluffed the lion!

Suddenly the newcomer wheeled upon Sborov. "Who are you?" he demanded. Had the lion spoken, Sborov would have been little less surprised than he was to hear excellent English fall from lips that had just been voicing the hideous growls of a beast. He was so surprised that he did not reply; then the man repeated the question. This time his tone was peremptory, brooking no delay.

"I am Prince Alexis Sborov."

"Where are the rest of your party—Lady Greystoke and the others?"

SBOROV'S eyes went wide. How did this man know about them? Who could he be?

"I don't know. They left me alone to die in the jungle."

"Who left you alone?"

"Only Lady Greystoke, myself, my valet and the pilot, Brown, were left of the original party when they abandoned me."

"Why did they abandon you?"

"Brown wanted me to die. He did not want me to reach civilization and accuse him of murder."

Tarzan scrutinized the man closely. There was nothing about him to arouse the ape-man's admiration or his liking. "Whom did he murder?" he asked.

"He killed my wife, because he thought that she could not keep up with the rest of us, and would thus prevent Brown's escape from the jungle. He knew that I would not leave her, and he did not want to lose any of the men—he was afraid to travel alone."

"Then why did he abandon you?" demanded Tarzan.

Sborov realized the inconsistency of his two statements; but his explanation came quickly, glibly. "He was in love with Lady Greystoke—they ran off together."

Tarzan's face darkened, and his fingers moved as though closing upon something—a throat, perhaps. "Which way did they go?" he asked.

"Along this same trail toward the east," replied Sborov.

"When?"

"Yesterday, I think; or perhaps the day before. It seems very long that I have been alone in the jungle—I have lost track of time."

"Where are Tibbs and Annette?"

Again Sborov was astonished. "Who are you?" he asked. "How do you know so much about us?"

Tarzan did not reply. He just stood looking at the man. What was he to do with him? He would delay the search for Jane; yet Tarzan could not leave him to die, as he most assuredly would, because he believed that he was a friend of Jane. In her note she had given no details of the mishaps that had befallen them. She had only enumerated the members of the party, explained that their ship had crashed, and that Princess Sborov had died. He naturally assumed that Jane was a guest of the Sborovs, and that therefore the man must be her friend.

"What became of Tibbs and Annette?" he asked again.

"Annette disappeared," explained the Prince. "We do not know what became of her. She just vanished in thin air. Her footprints led to a point beneath a tree. They stopped there."

"How long ago was that?"

"I think it was the day before Brown ran away with Lady Greystoke. Tibbs went with them."

"Why did he take Tibbs, and not you?"

"He was not afraid of Tibbs. He knew that I would protect Lady Greystoke, and also bring him to justice if we ever reached civilization."

Tarzan's level gaze held steadily upon Sborov as he appraised the man. He distrusted him, but no hint of what was passing in his mind was betrayed by any changing expression of his inscrutable face. He was repelled by Sborov's face, by his manner, by the suggestion of contradiction and inconsistency in several of his statements; yet he realized that in the latter must lie some germ of fact.

THE fellow had at least definitely assured him that he was on Jane's trail, and convinced him that the girl whom Nkima had seen with the Kavuru must have been Annette, for Jane must still have been with Brown and Sborov at the time that Nkima had seen the other woman.

"Come," he said to the man; "we shall go and find Lady Greystoke and Brown."

"Brown will kill me," said Sborov. "He has threatened to, many times."

"He will not kill you while I am with you."

"You do not know him."

"I do not need to know him," replied the ape-man; "I know myself."

"I am too weak to travel fast," explained Sborov. "If you know this country, you had better take me to some village and then go on after Brown yourself. I have not eaten for a long time. I doubt that I could walk another mile, I am so weak from hunger."

"Stay here," directed Tarzan. "I will get food; then we will go on after—Brown."

Sborov watched the man move off into the forest, a little monkey perched upon one broad shoulder.

CHAPTER XXIII

DOWN INTO DARKNESS

JANE'S thoughts had been far away as she swung along the trail behind Tibbs and Brown that afternoon; they had been far to the west, where a little time-worn cabin stood near the shore of a land-locked cove on the west coast. There had centered many of the important events and thrilling adventures of her life; there she had met that strange demigod of the forest whom she had later come to know as Tarzan of the Apes.

Where was he now? Had he received her cablegram? If he had, he was already searching for her. The thought gave her renewed hope. She longed for the sanctuary of those mighty arms, for the peace and safety that his strength and jungle-craft afforded.

As her thoughts reexplored the winding back-trail of time, her pace slowed and she dropped still farther in the rear of her companions. For the moment they were forgotten; she was alone in the great jungle of her memories.

But she was not alone. Eyes watched her every move; from the foliage of the trees above, they watched her, ever keeping pace with her.

Presently she felt an unaccountable urge to turn back. She wondered why. Was it a woman's intuition directing her for her best good? Was it a beneficent or a malign influence? She could only wonder.

At first this peculiar urge was only a faint suggestion; then it became more

pronounced, became a force beyond her power to deny. At last she ceased to wonder or to question. Tibbs and Brown seemed very far away. She thought of calling to them, but she knew that it would be useless. For just an instant longer she hesitated, striving to force her will to drive her along the trail in an effort to overtake them; then she surrendered. A power stronger than she controlled her, and she turned docilely back away from them.

It was as though some one were calling to her in a voice that she could not hear but that she must obey. It offered her nothing, nor did it threaten her. She had neither hope nor fear because of it. . . .

When the noose of the Kavuru dropped about Jane, she felt no surprise, no terror—her sensibilities were numbed. She looked into the savage, painted face of the white man who drew her to a limb beside him and removed the noose from about her body. It all seemed perfectly natural, as though it were something that had been foreordained since the beginning of time.

The man lifted her to a shoulder and started off through the trees toward the east, away from the trail that ran in a northeasterly direction at that point. He did not speak, nor did she. It all seemed quite normal.

This state of mind persisted for a matter of an hour or so; then it gradually commenced to fade as she slowly emerged from the state of hypnosis that had deadened her sensibilities. Slowly the horror of her situation dawned upon her. She realized that she was in the clutches of a strange savage creature that was also a white man. She knew now that she had been hypnotized, the victim of a strange power that turned her will to its own purposes, yet left her conscious of all that transpired.

She felt that she must do something about it, but what was there to do? From the ease with which the man carried her, she knew that his strength was abnormal—far beyond any that she could pit against it in an effort to escape. Her only hope lay in evolving some stratagem that would permit her to elude him when he was off guard. This she could never hope to do, so long as he carried her.

SHE wondered where he was taking her, and to what fate. If she could but carry on a conversation with him, she might discover this; but what language would such a creature speak?

"Who are you?" she asked in English. "What are you going to do with me?"

The man grunted, and then mumbled in a Bantu dialect with which she was familiar: "I do not understand."

When Jane realized that he spoke a language she was familiar with she experienced a moment of elation that was great by contrast with the hopelessness of her situation.

"I understand you," she said in the same dialect that he had used. "Now tell me who you are, and why you have taken me. I am not an enemy of your people; but if you keep me or harm me, my people will come and destroy your village; they will kill many of you."

"Your people will not come. No one ever comes to the village of the Kavuru. If any did, they would be killed."

"You call yourselves Kavuru? Where is your village?"

"You will see."

"What are you going to do with me?"

"I take you to Kavandavanda."

"Who is Kavandavanda?" she demanded.

"He is Kavandavanda." The man spoke as though that were sufficient explanation. It was as though one said: "God is God."

"What does he want of me? What is he going to do with me? If he wants ransom, if you want ransom, my people will pay much to have me back unharmed."

"You talk too much," snapped the Kavuru. "Shut up."

FOR a while Jane was silent; then she tried again, spurred on by the discomfort of the position in which she was being carried.

"Put me down," she said. "I can travel through the trees quite as well as you. There is no reason why you should carry me. It will be easier for us both if you let me walk."

At first the Kavuru appeared to ignore the suggestion; but at last he put her down. "Do not try to escape," he warned. "If you do try to, I may have to kill you. No one must ever escape from a Kavuru."

Jane stretched her cramped muscles and surveyed her captor. He was indeed a savage-appearing specimen; but how much of that was due to his natural countenance, and how much to the paint, the nose-ornament and the earrings she could not guess. Like many savage or primitive people, his age was not deter-



When the noose of the Kavuru dropped about Jane, she felt no surprise, no terror—her sensibilities were numbed. It seemed perfectly natural.

minable by his appearance; yet somehow she felt that he was a young man.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Ogdli," he replied.

"You are a chief, of course," she said, hoping to make a favorable impression by flattery.

"I am not a chief," he replied. "There is only one chief, and that is Kavandavanda."

She tried to draw him on into a conversation; but he was short and taciturn at first, finally becoming ugly.

"Shut up, or I will cut your tongue out," he snapped. "Kavandavanda does not need your tongue."

Thereafter, Jane was silent; for there was that about her captor and the tone in which he made the threat that told her it was no idle one.



The revolvers salvaged by the two Waziri still did effective work.

That night he bound her securely with his rope while he lay down to sleep, and the next morning they were on their way again. At the halt he had gathered some fruit and nuts, and these formed the only breakfast they had.

In the middle of the forenoon they came suddenly to the end of the forest and looked out across a narrow plain to a lofty mountain at the foot of which Jane thought that she discerned what appeared to be a palisade built close to a perpendicular cliff. The plain was strewn with large boulders, and cut by several washes, so that as they advanced across it toward the mountain, the palisade was sometimes in view and sometimes hidden from their sight.

As they approached more closely, Jane saw that the palisade was a massive affair of stone, and that it formed three sides of a rectangle, the rear wall of which was evidently the face of the mighty cliff that loomed high above them.

A small river followed a winding course across the plain from the very foot of the palisade, as though it rose there; though when she came closer, she saw it flowed from beneath the stone wall through an opening left for that purpose.

Her captor shouted as he approached the palisade; and a moment later one of the two massive gates swung open a little

way to admit them. Beyond was a narrow street flanked by small stone houses, the flat roofs of which suggested that this was a country of little rain. They were houses similar in design to those built of stone and adobe by the prehistoric builders of the ancient pueblos of southwestern America.

Savage warriors loitered before tiny doorways or tended cooking-fires built in little outdoor ovens. Like Ogdli, they were all young men; their ornaments, their apparel, their weapons were almost identical with his.

SOME of them gathered around Jane and her captor, examining her and asking questions of Ogdli.

"You and Ydeni have all the luck," grumbled one. "He captured a black girl and a white girl all during the full of the moon."

"The black girl got away from him," said another.

"Yes, but he went right back into the forest and caught a white girl."

"He will get no teeth for the black girl."

"No, but he will get a fine string for the white one; and Ogdli will get another row of teeth—that will make four for Ogdli. Kavandavanda will think well of him."

"He should," said Ogdli. "I am the greatest warrior among the Kavuru."

A big fellow grunted derisively. "You have but three rows of teeth," he taunted. "I have seven." And he tapped his chest where it joined his throat.

Jane, listening to this strange conversation, made little of it until this gesture of the speaker called her attention to the necklaces of human teeth about his throat; then she saw that there were seven rows of them, and that about Ogdli's neck were three similar strands. She glanced at some of the other warriors. Some had one or two, others had none. These necklaces were evidently a sign of greatness, evincing the prowess of the individual and his success in capturing women.

Suddenly she became aware of a marked peculiarity of her surroundings—here she was in an isolated village of a warlike people far removed from other villages, a village in which there were many men in the prime of life; yet she had seen neither women nor children.

What could it mean? Did some strange custom require that women and children remain indoors at certain hours or upon

certain occasions—or were there no women nor children? If the latter were true, then what became of the women captives of which they boasted? But it could not be true; there must be women and children. But if there were women, why did the men attend the cooking-fires? That was not customary work for warriors.

These observations and thoughts passed quickly through Jane's mind as she was led along the narrow street by Ogdli. At an intersection her captor turned into a narrow alley and led her to a low, circular building that lent to her surroundings a still greater similitude to the ancient villages of the Pueblo Indians; for this was a windowless structure against which leaned a primitive wooden ladder leading to the roof. If it were not a ceremonial kiva, its appearance belied its purpose.

With a grunt, Ogdli motioned her to precede him up the ladder; and when she gained the roof, she found still further evidence of its ceremonial character, for here the top of a second ladder protruded from a small rectangular opening.

Ogdli pointed to it. "Go down," he commanded; "and stay down. Do not try to escape. It will be worse for you if you do try."

Jane looked down through the aperture. She could see nothing—just a black pit.

"Hurry!" admonished Ogdli.

The girl placed a foot upon a rung of the ladder and started slowly down into the black, mysterious void. She was no coward, but her courage was tested to its utmost as she forced her unwilling feet down that shaky primitive ladder. Uppermost in her mind was the fact that she had seen no women in the village of the Kavuru. What had been the fate of the captives of which the warriors had boasted? Had they too descended this ladder? Had they gone down into this dark abyss never to return?

CHAPTER XXIV

DEFEAT

MUVIRO and the Waziri came to the end of the forest. Before them stretched a narrow plain that lay at the foot of a lone mountain.

One of the warriors pointed. "There is a village built at the foot of that high cliff. I see the palisade."

Muviro shaded his eyes with his hand. He nodded. "It must be the village of Kavuru. We have found it at last. Perhaps we shall not find Buira, but we will

punish the Kavuru. We will teach them to leave the daughters of the Waziri alone."

The other warriors assented with savage growls; for they were Waziri, known for ages as mighty warriors. Who might dare encroach upon their rights? Who might steal their women with impunity?

Other tribes suffered similar losses. They made big noise with tom-toms and shouting. They danced their war-dances. And then, when there was little chance of overtaking their enemy, they set out in pursuit; but always they abandoned the chase before they overhauled the quarry. Not so the Waziri! What they undertook, they pursued relentlessly, whether it brought victory or defeat.

"Come!" said Muviro, and led his warriors out upon the plain toward the village of the Kavuru. Suddenly he halted. "What is that?" he demanded.

The Waziri listened. A low droning sound that at first barely commanded the attention of their ears was growing steadily in volume. The warriors, standing in silence, looked up toward the sky.

"There it is," said one, pointing. "It is a canoe that flies. I saw one pass low over the country of the Waziri—during the storm, while the Big Bwana was still with us. It made the same sound."

THE ship came rapidly into view, flying at an altitude of three or four thousand feet. It passed over the plain and the Waziri; then it banked steeply and turned back. With motor throttled, the ship descended gracefully in wide spirals. At a few hundred feet from the ground the pilot gave it the gun, but still he continued to circle low over the plain. He was searching for a landing-place; for two hours he had been searching for one, almost hopelessly.

Lost, and with only a little fuel remaining in his tanks, he welcomed the sight of this open plain and the village with heartfelt thanks. He knew that he couldn't get fuel here, but he could get his position, and at least he was saved from making a forced landing over the forest.

Flying low, he saw the Waziri, white-plumed savages evidently coming from the forest; and he saw natives emerging from the village too. He saw that these were different in a most surprising way, and he dropped lower and circled twice more to make sure.

His companion, in the front cockpit, scribbled a note and handed it back to

him: "What do you make of them? They look white to me."

"They are white," wrote the pilot, and handed the message back to the other.

Owing to the washes and boulders, there were not many safe landing-places available on the plain. One of the best, or perhaps it would be truer to say least nearly impossible, was directly in front of the village; another, and perhaps a better one, lay across the plain, near the forest. Muviro and his Waziri stood near the edge of it, a band of primitive savages; and the sight of these and the implications their presence suggested determined the pilot to set his ship down nearer the village and its white inhabitants. Tragic error!

A GAIN the ship circled the plain, rising to an altitude of a thousand feet; then the pilot cut his motor and glided toward a landing.

Muviro resumed his advance upon the village; and as the way led him and his men down into a deep wash, they did not see the actual landing of the ship; but when they again reached higher ground, they saw two men climbing from the cockpits of the plane, while advancing from the open gates of the Kavuru village was a swarm of savage, white warriors, whose hostile intent was all too apparent to Muviro.

They were white! No longer was there any doubt in the mind of the Waziri chieftain; now he knew that these were indeed the Kavuru. They were shouting and brandishing their spears as they ran toward the two aviators. Apparently they had not as yet discovered the presence of the Waziri; or if they had, they ignored them.

Muviro spoke to his men in low tones, and they spread out in a thin line and moved silently forward at a trot. They did not yell and prance as do many native warriors; and because they did not, they seemed always to inspire greater fear in the hearts of their enemies. There were only ten of them, yet they charged the savage Kavuru, who outnumbered them ten to one, with all the assurance that they might have been expected to have had the odds been reversed.

The flyers, seeing that the natives were hostile, fell back toward their ship. One of them fired a shot over the heads of the advancing Kavuru; but as it had no deterrent effect, the man fired again; and this time a Kavuru fell. Still the savage white warriors came on.

Now both the flyers opened fire; yet on came the Kavuru. Soon they would be within spear-range of their victims. The men glanced behind them as though seeking temporary shelter, but what they saw must have been disheartening—a thin line of black warriors trotting silently toward them from the rear.

They did not know that these would have been friends and allies; so one of them raised his pistol and fired at Muviro. The bullet missed its mark; and the Waziri chieftain sought cover behind a boulder, ordering his men to do likewise; for he knew better than the Kavuru the deadly effectiveness of firearms.

Then he called to the two flyers in English, telling them that the Waziri were friendly; but the harm had already been done—the delay permitted the Kavuru to close in upon the two men before the Waziri could join forces with them to repel the enemy. Perhaps it would have done no good, so greatly did the Kavuru outnumber them all.

With savage yells they bore down upon the pilots, though several of their number dropped before the fire that the two poured into their ranks. Now they were close; but close, too, were the Waziri, who were moving forward again, now at a run.

Presently the Kavuru spears began to fly. One of the strangers fell with a weapon through his heart. Now a volley of spears leaped from the hands of the Waziri, momentarily checking the advance of the Kavuru, who seemed to fear spears more than they did firearms.

BUT they did not retreat, they merely paused a brief moment; then they launched another flight of spears; and this time the second pilot fell, and with him three Waziri. A moment later the Kavuru and Waziri closed in hand-to-hand struggle.

Now there were but seven of the latter; and though they fought valiantly, they were no match for the hundred Kavuru warriors that overwhelmed them.

Fighting close to the bodies of the slain pilots, Muviro and one of his warriors, Balandó, salvaged the pistols and ammunition of the dead men. At close quarters the firearms had a more definite effect on the morale of the Kavuru, stopping them temporarily, and permitting Muviro and his remaining warriors to fall back in search of shelter. Now there were but four of them: Muviro, Balandó, and two others.

The Waziri chief sought to reach a pile of granite rising spire-like from the plain; and at last he was successful, but now only Balandó remained alive to carry on the unequal struggle with him. Together they fell back to the rocky sanctuary Muviro had chosen; and while Muviro held the Kavuru at bay, Balandó clambered to the summit safely out of effective spear-range; then he fired down upon the enemy while Muviro climbed to his side.

Again and again the Kavuru hurled their spears aloft; but the height was too great for any but the most powerful muscles, and even the weapons of these had lost so much momentum by the time they reached the level at which their targets stood that they ceased to constitute a menace. The revolvers and bows of the two Waziri, however, still did effective work—so effective that the Kavuru fell back toward their village; and with the coming of the swift equatorial night Muviro saw them definitely give up the attack and file back toward the village gate.

As they passed the grounded ship, Muviro saw that they avoided it, and guessed that they were afraid of it as of something supernatural; then night fell, blotting out the scene.

Sorrowfully Muviro and Balandó descended from the rock that had afforded them sanctuary. They sought shelter and a place to sleep in the forest, the impenetrable gloom of which seemed no darker than their future. But they made no plans; they were too exhausted, too overcome by grief and disappointment to think clearly.

"If only the Big Bwana would come!" sighed Balandó.

"Yes," agreed Muviro. "If he had been here, this would not have happened."

CHAPTER XXV

TARZAN STALKS BROWN

THE morning mist floated lazily in the still air, the soul of the dead night clinging reluctantly to earth. A strange hush lay on the jungle, a silence as poignant as a leopard's scream. It awakened Brown. He moved gingerly in the crotch of the tree into which he had wedged himself the evening before. He was stiff and lame and sore. Every muscle ached. He looked up at Tibbs, a couple of feet above him, and grinned. The Englishman was spread-eagled across two paral-

lel branches to which he was clinging tightly in restless slumber.

"He looks like he was goin' to be grilled," mused the pilot. "Poor old Tibbsy!" He spoke the last words half aloud.

Tibbs opened his eyes and looked around. For a moment his expression was surprised and troubled; then he discovered Brown below him, and full consciousness returned.

"MY word!" he exclaimed with a shake of his head. "H'i was just drawing 'Is Grace's bawth."

"You even wait on 'em in your sleep, don't you, Tibbsy?"

"Well, you see, sir, h'it's been my life, always; h'and H'i wouldn't h'ask for a better one—all peace h'and orderliness. H'and you're always treated well—that is, by gentlemen. H'it's been my good fortune to be in the service mostly of gentlemen."

"Like this Sborov guy?" inquired Brown.

"'E was not a gentleman."

"But he was a prince, wasn't he? Don't that make him a gentleman?"

Tibbs scratched his head. "It should, but it doesn't; not always. H'i sometimes think when H'i see a bounder with a title, that possibly at some time his mother may have been indiscreet."

Brown laughed. "I guess there must of been a lot of indiscretion in high places," he remarked; and then: "How about pullin' our freight, Tibbsy? We got a long ways to go on a pair of empty stomachs."

Wearily the two men plodded on through the jungle. All the forces of nature and the laws of chance seemed to have combined against them from the first. Now they were sad, disheartened, almost without hope; yet each tried bravely to keep up the spirits of the other. It was oftentimes a strain, and occasionally one of them voiced the morbid doubts and fears that assailed them both.

"Do you believe in black magic, Tibbsy?" asked Brown.

"H'i 'ave seen some strange things h'in my life, sir," replied the Englishman.

"You know what the old dame come down here to look for, don't you?"

"Yes, something that would renew youth, wasn't it?"

"Yes. I know a lot about that. I knew a lot I didn't tell her. If I had, she might not have come, and I sure

wanted her to. I wanted to get that formula. Gosh, Tibbsy! It would be worth a million, back in civilization. But it's well guarded. A few men have tried to get it. None of 'em was ever heard of again."

"Well, we aint trying to get it now. We got troubles enough trying to find a way h'out of this jungle, to be bothering with any h'elixir of life. If we just go along and mind h'our own business, we'll be all right."

"I don't know about that. I never took much stock in black magic, but it is funny all the things that's happened to this expedition ever since it started out. Just like somebody or something had put a jinx on it. It started right off the bat with that zero-zero flyin' weather; then come the forced landin'; then the old dame's murdered; then Annette disappears; now Lady Greystoke's gone."

He shot a sardonic glance at Tibbs.

"Do you realize, Tibbsy, that of the six that took off from Croydon, there's only two of us left? It's just like something was following us, pickin' off one at a time. It sure gets my goat when I stop to think about it. It's doggone' funny, Tibbsy; that's what it is."

"H'i see nothing amusing in it, sir," objected Tibbs; "but then H'i've always 'eard that you Americans had a strange sense of humor."

"The trouble is that you Englishmen don't understand English," explained Brown. "But let's skip it. The question is: which one of us will be next?"

"Don't," begged Tibbs. "That's just what H'i've been trying not to think about."

Brown turned again and looked back at his companion, who was following along a narrow trail. The American grinned. "Wasn't Lady Greystoke walkin' behind when it got her?" he reminded.

TARZAN, following the trail toward the east found Sborov a problem. The man was too exhausted to move faster than a snail's-pace; and even so, he was compelled to rest often.

Tarzan was anxious to overtake Brown and Tibbs, with whom he believed Jane to be. He would kill Brown. The very thought of the man caused the scar across his forehead to burn red—the scar that Bolgani the gorilla had given him years ago in that first life-and-death struggle that had taught the boy Tarzan one of the uses of his dead father's hunting-knife, and thus set his feet upon the

trail that had led to the lordship of the jungle.

Ordinarily the life of a strange Tarmangani would have weighed as nothing as against a delay in his search for Jane; but Alexis had given the impression that he had been Jane's friend and protector, and Tarzan could not desert him to the certain fate that would have claimed such as he alone in the jungle.

So the Lord of the Jungle decided to remain with Sborov until he could turn him over to the chief of some friendly tribe for protection, and guidance to the nearest outpost of civilization, or place him in the hands of his own Waziri.

Seemingly imbued with many of the psychic characteristics of the wild beasts among which he had been reared, Tarzan often developed instinctive likes or dislikes for individuals on first contact; and seldom did he find it necessary to alter his decisions. He had formed such a conviction within a few moments after his meeting with Sborov, a conviction which made it doubly distasteful to him to be in the company of the man and waste time befriending him. He distrusted and disliked him; but for Jane's sake he would not abandon him. Little Nkima seemed to share this distrust, for he seldom came near Sborov; when he did, he bared his teeth in a menacing snarl.

CHAFING under the delay forced upon him by Sborov's physical condition, which bordered on complete exhaustion, the ape-man at last swung the surprised Sborov to his shoulders and took to the trees with the agility and speed of a small monkey.

Alexis voiced a cry of remonstrance that carried also a note of fear; but he was helpless to escape the situation in which he had been snatched as though by the hand of fate. Should he succeed in wriggling from that vise-like grasp, it would only lead to injury in the resultant fall to the ground below. So Alexis shut his eyes tight and hoped for the best.

He knew that they were moving rapidly through the trees; the swift passage of foliage and twigs across his body told him that. He remonstrated with the bronzed savage who was carrying him, but he might as well have sought conversation with the Sphinx. At last he gained sufficient courage to open his eyes; then indeed did he gasp in horror; for at that very moment Tarzan leaped out into space to catch a trailing liana and swing to another tree upon his

The shadow of a grim smile touched Tarzan's lips as he lifted the American above his head and tossed him into the underbrush. "You forgot Waterloo, Napoleon," he said.



arboreal trail. Fifty feet below the eyes of the thoroughly terrified Sborov, lay the ground. He screamed aloud, and then he found articulate voice.

"Take me down," he cried. "Let me walk. You'll kill us both." Overcome by terror, he struggled to free himself.

"It will be you who will kill us if you don't lie still," warned the ape-man.

"Then take me down."

"You are too slow," replied Tarzan. "I cannot be held to the pace of Kota the tortoise, if I am ever to overtake the man you call Brown. If I take you down, I shall have to leave you alone here in the jungle. Would you prefer that?"

Sborov was silent. He was trying to weigh the terrors of one plan against those of the other. All that he could think of was that he wished he were back in Paris; and that thought really didn't help at all in this emergency.

Suddenly Tarzan came to an abrupt halt on a broad limb. He was listening intently. Sborov saw him sniffing the air. It reminded him of a hound on a scent trail.

"What do those two men look like?" demanded Tarzan. "Describe them to me, so that I may know Brown when I see him."

"Tibbs is a small man with thin hair and a pinched face. He is an Englishman with a slight cockney accent. Brown is a big fellow, an American. I suppose he would be called good looking," added Sborov grudgingly.

Tarzan dropped to a trail that they had crossed many times as it wound through the jungle, and set Sborov on the ground.

"Follow this trail," he directed. "I am going on ahead."

"You are going to leave me alone here in the jungle?" demanded Alexis fearfully.

"I will come back for you," replied the ape-man. "You will be safe enough for the short time I shall be gone."

"But suppose a lion—" commenced Sborov.

"There are no lions about," interrupted Tarzan. "There is nothing near that will harm you."

"How do you know?"

"I know. Do as I tell you, and follow the trail."

"But—" Sborov started to expostulate; then he gasped and sighed resignedly, for he was alone. Tarzan had swung into the trees and disappeared.

THE ape-man moved swiftly along the scent-spoor that had attracted his attention. His sensitive nostrils told him it was the scent of two white men. He sought in vain to detect the spoor of a woman, but there was none. If the two men were Brown and Tibbs, then Jane was no longer with them.

What had become of her? Tarzan's jaw set grimly. That information he would get from Brown before he killed him.

A human life meant no more to Tarzan of the Apes than that of any other creature. He never took life wantonly, but he could kill a bad man with less compunction than he might feel in taking the life of a bad lion. Any living thing that harmed his mate or threatened her with harm he could even find a species of grim pleasure in killing; and Sborov had convinced him that Brown meant harm to Jane if he had not already harmed her.

The man's statement that Jane and Brown had run away together had not carried the conviction that the implication might have provoked, so sure was the Lord of the Jungle of the loyalty of his mate. Her intentions and her voluntary acts he never doubted or questioned. . . . What were his thoughts as he swung along the trail of the two unsuspecting men? That inscrutable face gave no suggestion of what passed in the savage mind, but they must have been grim and terrible thoughts of revenge.

Rapidly the scent of his quarry grew stronger in his nostrils as the distance that separated them grew shorter.

Now he went more slowly, and if possible, even more silently. He moved

as soundlessly as his own shadow as he came at last in sight of two men trudging wearily along the trail beneath him.

It was they; he could not mistake them—the small Englishman, the big American. He paid little attention to Tibbs, but his eyes never left the figure of the aviator. Stealthily he stalked, as the lion stalks his prey.

He was quite close above them; easily now at any moment he could launch himself down upon his victim.

Tibbs mopped the streaming perspiration from his forehead and out of his eyes. "Whew!" he sighed. "H't all seems so bloody useless! We won't never find her, anyway. Let's stop and rest. H'i'm jolly well done in."

"I know how you feel; but we got to keep on lookin', though. We might find her. The more I think about it, the less I think Sborov got away with Lady Greystoke."

"What's made you change your mind?" demanded Tibbs. "H'i thought you was sure he 'ad."

"Well, in the first place, she was armed; and she had the nerve to defend herself. He aint got no nerve at all."

"E 'ad enough to murder his poor wife," objected Tibbs.

"He sneaked up on her in the dark while she was asleep," sneered Brown. "That didn't take no nerve."

"But 'ow about Annette?"

Brown shook his head. "I don't know. I can't make it out. Of course, there was a good reason for his wanting to kill Annette. She had the evidence against him—she knew too much; and she wasn't armed."

"But what gets me is the way her footprints disappeared! If his footprints had been there too, and gone on, I'd have thought he picked her up and carried her into the jungle to finish her; but hers were all alone."

NOW they had stopped while Tibbs rested. The ape-man crouched above them, listening. He missed no word; but what effect they had upon him was not revealed by any change of expression.

"But 'e couldn't 'ave picked 'er up and carried her h'off, and her not scream," argued Tibbs. "That would have woke some of us."

"She might have been too scared to scream," explained Brown. "Annette was awful scared of him."

"Lady Greystoke wasn't scared of him. Why didn't she call for help?"

"Lady Greystoke wasn't scared of nothing. There was some dame, Tibbs."

"H'i quite agree with you," replied the Englishman. "Lady Greystoke was a most extraordinary person. H'i 'opes as how we find her."

"Yes, and I hope we find Annette. I can't believe she is dead, somehow." The note of yearning in the aviator's voice was not lost on the silent listener above him.

"You was rather soft on Annette, wasn't you?" said Tibbs sympathetically.

"Plenty," admitted Brown; "and that louse Sborov told her I was tryin' to make Lady Greystoke. Lord, can you picture a English noblewoman falling for me?"

"If you'll pardon my saying so, I can't," admitted Tibbs candidly.

"No more can I. She was a swell dame; but Annette was the only girl I ever seen that had me ga-ga. I'd give—well, all I aint got, to know for sure what became of her."

Softly the ape-man dropped to the trail behind the two men.

"I think I know," he said.

AT the sound of his voice, they wheeled suddenly and faced him, surprise written large upon the face of each.

"Who the devil are you, and where did you come from?" demanded Brown, while Tibbs stood with his lower lip dropped, staring wide-eyed at the strange figure of the ape-man. "And what do you think you know?" concluded the American.

"I think I know how your two women disappeared."

"Say," exclaimed Brown, "what are you, anyway? This country's got me nuts—people disappearing, and you jumping out of thin air like a spook. Are you a friend or what?"

"Friend," replied Tarzan.

"What you runnin' around undressed for?" demanded Brown. "Aint you got no clothes, or aint you got no sense?"

"I am Tarzan of the Apes."

"Yeah? Well, I'm glad to meet you, Tarzan; I'm Napoleon. But spill what you know about Annette—about both the dames. What got 'em? Was it Sborov? But of course you don't know nothin' about Sborov."

"I know about Sborov," replied Tarzan. "I know about the accident that wrecked your plane. I know the Princess Sborov was murdered. I think I know what happened to Lady Greystoke and to Annette."

Brown looked puzzled. "I don't know how you got hep to all this, but you know plenty. Now tell me what happened to the two dames."

"The Kavuru got them. You are in Kavuru country."

"What are Kavuru?" demanded Brown.

"A tribe of savage white men. They make a practice of stealing women, presumably for use in some religious rite."

"Where do they hang out?"

"I don't know. I was looking for their village when I heard about the accident to your ship. I believe I can find it soon. It lies in a very wild country. The Kavuru have secrets they wish to guard; so no one is allowed to approach their village."

"What secrets?" inquired Brown.

"They are believed to have discovered some sort of an elixir of life, something that will make old people young again."

Brown whistled. "So that's it? They were the people we were looking for."

"You were looking for the Kavuru?" asked Tarzan incredulously.

"The old dame was looking for the formula for that elixir stuff," explained Brown; "and so am I, now that she is dead—some one has to carry on, you know," he added rather lamely. "But say, how did you hear of the accident to the ship? How could you hear about it? We aint seen or talked to no one." Suddenly Brown ceased speaking. His face darkened in anger.

"Sborov!" he exclaimed.

The Prince, rounding a bend in the trail, halted when he saw Brown. The American started toward him menacingly, an oath on his lips.

SBOROV turned to run. "Stop him!" he screamed to Tarzan. "You promised you wouldn't let him harm me."

The ape-man sprang after Brown and seized him by the arm. "Stop!" he commanded. "I promised the man."

Brown attempted to wrench himself free. "Let me go, you fool," he growled. "Mind your own business." Then he aimed a heavy blow at Tarzan's jaw with his free hand. The ape-man ducked, and the clenched fist only grazed his cheek. The shadow of a grim smile touched his lips as he lifted the American above his head and shook him; then he tossed him into the underbrush bordering the trail.

"You forgot Waterloo, Napoleon," he said.

Upon the branch of a tree above little Nkima danced and chattered; and as



Annette pressed close to Jane. "I am so afraid!" she gasped.

Brown was extricating himself with difficulty from the thorny embrace of the bushes, Nkima gathered a ripe and odorous fruit and hurled it at him.

Tibbs looked on in consternation, believing that Brown had made a dangerous enemy in this giant white savage; and when he saw Tarzan step toward the struggling American, he anticipated nothing less than death for both of them.

But there was no anger in the breast of the ape-man as he again seized the aviator and lifted him out of the entangling bushes and set him upon his feet in the trail.

"Do not again forget," he said quietly, "that I am Tarzan of the Apes, or that when I give an order, it is to be obeyed."

BROWN looked the ape-man squarely in the eyes for a moment. Then—"I know when I'm licked," he said. "But I still don't savvy why you wouldn't let me kill that louse—he sure has it coming to him."

"Your quarrels are of no importance," said the ape-man; "but it is important to locate Lady Greystoke."

"And Annette," added Brown.

"Yes," agreed Tarzan. "Also that you three men get back to civilization where you belong. You do not belong in the jungle. The world is full of fools who go places where they do not belong, causing other people worry and trouble."

"If H'i may make so bold as to say so, sir, H'i quite agree with you," ventured Tibbs. "H'i shall be jolly well pleased to get h'out of this bally old jungle."

"Then don't any of you start killing off the others," advised Tarzan. "The more of you there are, the better chance you will have of getting out, and three are none too many. Many times you will find it necessary for some one to stand watch at night; so the more there are, the easier it will be for all."

"Not for mine with that Prince guy along!" said Brown emphatically. "The last time he stood guard, he tried to kill me with a hatchet; and he'd have done it, if it hadn't been for old Tibbsy. If you say I don't kill him, I don't kill—unless he forces me to it; but I don't travel with him, and that's that."

"We'll get him back here," said Tarzan, "and have a talk with him. I think I can promise you he'll be good. He was in a blue funk when I found him—a lion had been stalking him; he'd promise anything, not to be left alone again."

"Well," agreed Brown grudgingly, "get him back and see what he says."

Tarzan called Sborov's name aloud several times, but there was no answer.

"'E couldn't have got so very far," said Tibbs. "'E must 'ear you, sir."

Tarzan shrugged. "He'll come back when he gets more afraid of the jungle than he is of Brown."

"Are we going to sit here waiting for him?" asked the American.

"No," replied Tarzan. "I am going on to find the Kavuru village. My own people are somewhere to the east. I'll take you to them. Sborov will most certainly follow and catch up with us after we stop for the night. Come."

CHAPTER XXVI

MADMEN AND LEOPARDS

AS Jane reached the foot of the ladder leading down into the dark interior of the crude ceremonial building structure in the village of the Kavuru, her ears caught a faint sound as of some one or something moving at no great distance from her.

Instantly she froze to silent immobility, listening. She thought that she heard the sound of breathing. Dim light from the opening above relieved the darkness immediately about her, and she knew that she must be revealed to whatever was in the room with her. Then a voice spoke, spoke in English with a familiar accent.

"Oh, madam! It is you? They got you too?"

"Annette! You are here? Then it was not the Prince who took you away?"

"No, madam. It was a terrible white man who held me powerless by some black magic. I could not cry out for help. I could not resist. I simply went to him, and he took me up into the trees and carried me away."

"One of them took me in the same way, Annette. They possess a hypnotic power beyond anything that I had ever dreamed might be possible. Have they harmed you, Annette?"

"I have only been terribly frightened," replied the girl, "because I don't know what they intend to do with me."

Jane's eyes had become accustomed to the gloom of the dark chamber. Now she could discern more of the details of the interior. She saw a circular room with a litter of dry grasses and leaves on the hard dirt floor. Against one wall Annette was sitting on a little pallet of these same leaves and grasses that she had evidently scraped together. There was no one else, nothing else, in the room.

"What do you suppose they are going to do with us?" asked Jane. "Haven't they given you any clue at all?"

"None, madam, absolutely none. Nor you?"

"The man who captured me was named Ogdli. He told me that much, and that he was taking me to some one called Kavandavanda—who, I gathered, is their chief. When I asked more questions, he threatened to cut my tongue out, saying that Kavandavanda did not need my tongue. They are most unpleasant people."

"Ah, madam, that does not describe them—they are terrifying. If only Monsieur Brown was here! You have seen him lately, madam? He is well?"

"Quite well, Annette, in body; but his heart was sick. He was worrying about you."

"I think he loves me very much, madam."

"I am sure of it, Annette."

"And I love him. It is terrible to have this happen now when we might have been so happy. Now we never shall be. I shall never see him again. I have that feeling, madam. It is what you call a— a premonition. I shall die here in this awful village—soon."

"Nonsense, Annette! You mustn't say such things; you mustn't even think them. What we should be thinking about is escape—and nothing else."

"Escape? What chance have we, madam?"

"I saw no guard at the entrance to this hole when they brought me in," explained Jane; "and if there is none posted at night, we can certainly get to the roof. From there on will depend upon what obstacles we find in our way, but it will be worth trying."

"Whatever you say, madam."

"Tonight, then, Annette."

"S-sh, madam! Some one is coming."

FOOTSTEPS sounded on the roof above them now, and then the opening through which they had entered was darkened by the form of a man.

"Come up!" he commanded. "Both of you."

Jane sighed. "Our poor little plan!" she bemoaned.

"What difference does it make?" asked Annette. "It would not have succeeded, anyway."

"We shall have to try something else later," insisted the other, as she started to ascend the ladder.

"It will fail too," prophesied Annette gloomily. "We shall die here, both of us—tonight, perhaps."

As they stepped out onto the roof, Jane recognized the warrior as the one

who had captured her. "Now what, Ogdli?" she asked. "Are you going to set us free?"

"Be still," growled the Kavuru. "You talk too much. Kavandavanda has sent for you. Do not talk too much to Kavandavanda."

He took hold of her arm to urge her along—a soft, smooth, sun-tanned arm. Suddenly he stopped, and wheeled her about until she faced him. A new fire burned in his eyes. "I never saw you before," he said in a low voice. "I never saw you before." It was an almost inaudible whisper.

JANE bared her teeth in a flashing smile. "Look at my teeth," she said. "You will soon be wearing them; then you will have four rows."

"I do not want your teeth, woman," growled Ogdli huskily. "You have cast a spell on me; I, who have foresworn women, am bewitched by a woman."

Jane thought quickly. The change in the man had come so suddenly, and his infatuation was so apparent, that for an instant it only frightened her; then she saw in it possibilities that might be turned to the advantage of herself and Annette.

"Ogdli," she whispered softly, "you can help me, and no one need ever know. Hide us until tonight. Tell Kavandavanda that you could not find us, that we must have escaped; then come back after dark, and let us out of the village. Tomorrow you can come out to look for us; and perhaps, Ogdli, you will find me—find me waiting for you in the forest."

The man shook his head as though to rid his brain of an unwelcome thought; he passed a palm across his eyes, like one who would push aside a veil.

"No!" he almost shouted; then he seized her roughly and dragged her along. "I will take you to Kavandavanda. After that, you will bewitch me no more."

"Why are you afraid of me, Ogdli?" she asked. "I am only a woman."

"That is why I am afraid of you. You see no women here. There are none, other than those who are brought for Kavandavanda; and they are here but briefly. I am a priest. We are all priests. Women would contaminate us. We are not allowed to have them. If we were to weaken and succumb to their wiles, we should live in torment forever after death; and if Kavandavanda knew it, we should die quickly and horribly."

"What is he saying, madam?" asked Annette. "What are you talking about?"

"It is preposterous, Annette," replied Jane; "but Ogdli has developed a sudden infatuation for me. I tried to play upon it in order to tempt him to let us escape—and meet me in the forest tomorrow."

"Oh, madam! You would not!"

"Of course not; but all is fair in love and war, and this is both. If we ever get into the forest, Annette, it will just be too bad for Ogdli if he can't find us."

"And what does he say to it?"

"Thumbs down. He is dragging me off to Kavandavanda as fast as he can, so that temptation may be removed from his path."

"All our hopes are dashed, madam," said Annette woefully.

"Not entirely, if I know men," replied Jane. "Ogdli will not so easily escape his infatuation. When he thinks he has lost me, it will tear at his vitals; then anything may happen."

The Kavuru was leading the two girls along the main street toward the rear of the village. Confronting them was a heavy gate across the bottom of a narrow cleft in the cliff that towered ominously above the village.

Ogdli opened the gate, and herded them through into the narrow rocky cleft, beyond which they could see what appeared to be an open valley; but when they reached the far end of the cleft, they found themselves in a box cañon entirely surrounded by lofty cliffs.

A small stream of clear water wound down through the cañon and out through the cleft and the village, where it was bridged over at the outer gate, as well as in the cleft leading into the cañon.

THE floor of the cañon appeared extremely fertile, supporting numerous large trees and growing crops. In the small fields Jane saw men laboring beneath the watchful eyes of Kavuru warriors. At first she paid little heed to the workers in the fields, as Ogdli led her and Annette toward a massive pile of buildings standing in the center of the cañon, but presently her attention was attracted to one of the laborers who was cultivating a small patch of Kaffir corn as suddenly he threw down the crude wooden hoe he was using, and stood upon his head in the mud. "I am a tree," he screamed in the Bukena dialect, "and they have planted me upside down. Turn me over; put my roots in the ground; water me, and I will grow to the moon."

The Kavuru warrior who was guarding the workers in the vicinity stepped up to the man and struck him a sharp blow across the shins with the haft of his spear. "Get down and go to work," he growled.

The worker cried out in pain; but he immediately came to his feet, picked up his hoe, and continued to work as though there had been no interruption.

A little farther on another worker, looking up and catching sight of the two white girls, rushed toward them. Before the guard could interfere, he was close to Jane. "I am the king of the world," he whispered; "but don't tell them. They would kill me if they knew; but they can't know, because I tell everyone not to tell them."

OGDLI leaped at the fellow and struck him over the head with his spear just as the guard arrived to drag him back to his work.

"They are all bewitched," explained Ogdli. "Demons have entered their heads and taken possession of their brains; but it is well to have them around, as they frighten away other evil spirits. We keep them and take care of them. If they die a natural death, the demons die with them; if we were to kill them, the demons would escape from their heads and might enter ours. As it is, they can't get out in any other way."

"And these workers are all madmen?" asked Jane.

"Each has a demon in his head, but that doesn't keep them from working for us. Kavandavanda is very wise; he knows how to use everything and everybody."

Now they had arrived before closed gates in the wall surrounding the building that they had seen when they first entered the cañon. Two Kavuru warriors stood on guard at the entrance to Kavandavanda's stronghold; but at the approach of Ogdli and his prisoners, they opened the gates and admitted them.

Between the outer wall and the buildings was an open space corresponding to the ballium of a medieval castle. In it grew a few large trees, a few clumps of bamboo, and patches of brush and weeds. It was ill-kept and unsightly. The buildings themselves were partially of unbaked brick and partially of bamboo and thatch, a combination which produced a pleasing texture, enhancing the general effect of the low rambling buildings that seemed to have been put together at different

times and according to no predetermined plan, the whole achieving an unstudied disharmony that was most effective.

As they crossed to the entrance to what appeared to be the main building, a leopard rose from a patch of weeds, bared its fangs at them, and slunk away toward a clump of bamboo. Then another and another of the treacherous beasts, disturbed by their passage, moved sinuously out of their path.

Annette, her eyes wide with fright, pressed close to Jane. "I am so afraid!" she gasped.

"They're ugly-looking brutes," agreed Jane. "I wouldn't imagine this to be a very safe place. Perhaps that is why there are no people here."

"Only the guards at the entrance ahead of us," said Annette. "Ask Ogdli if the leopards are dangerous."

"Very," replied the Kavuru in reply to the question that Jane put to him.

"Then why are they allowed to run at large?" demanded Jane.

"They do not bother us much in the daytime, partly because they are fairly well fed, partly because only armed men cross this courtyard, and partly because they are, after all, cowardly beasts that prefer to sneak upon their prey in the dark. But it is after dark that they best serve the purpose of Kavandavanda. You may be sure that no one escapes from the temple by night."

"And that is all that they are kept for?" asked the girl.

"That is not all," replied Ogdli.

Jane waited for him to continue, but he remained silent.

"What else, then?" she asked.

He gazed at her for a moment before he replied. There was a light in his eyes that appeared strange to Jane, for it seemed to reflect something that was almost compassion. He shook his head. "I cannot tell," he said; "but you will know soon enough another reason that the leopards are here in the outer court."

AS they were almost at the entrance, a weird, wailing cry broke the stillness that seemed to brood like an evil thing above the temple of Kavandavanda. The sound seemed to come either from the interior of the mass of buildings or from beyond them.

Instantly it was answered by the snarls and growls of leopards which appeared suddenly from among the weeds, brush, or bamboo, and bounded off to disappear around the ends of the buildings.

"Something called to them," whispered Annette, shuddering.

"Yes," said Jane, "something unclean—that was the impression conveyed to me."

At the entrance there were two more guards to whom Ogdli spoke briefly; then they were admitted. As they passed the portal and came into the interior, they heard muffled screams and growls and snarls as of many leopards fighting, and to the accompaniment of this savage chorus the two girls were conducted through the dim rooms and corridors of the temple of Kavandavanda.

Kavandavanda! Who, or what, was he? To what mysterious fate was he summoning them? Such were the questions constantly recurring in the thoughts of the girls. Jane felt that they would soon find answers, and she anticipated only the worst. There seemed to be no hope of escape from whatever fate lay in store for them.

That one hope that had given her strength to carry on through danger-fraught situations many times in the past was denied her now, for she felt that Tarzan must be wholly ignorant of her whereabouts. How could he know where, in the vast expanse of the African wilderness, the ship had crashed? He would be searching for her—she knew that; for he must have long since received her cablegram. But he could never find her—at least, not in time. She must depend wholly upon her own resources, and these were pitifully meager. At present there was only the frail straw of Ogdli's seeming infatuation. This she must nurse. But how? Perhaps when he had delivered her to Kavandavanda, he would return to the village, and she would never see him again; then even the single straw to which her hope clung in the deluge of dangers that threatened to engulf her would be snatched from her.

"O GDLI," she said suddenly, "do you live here in the temple, or back in the village?"

"I live where Kavandavanda commands," he replied. "Sometimes in the village; again in the temple."

"And now! Where do you live now?"

"In the village."

Jane mused. Ogdli would be of no good to her unless he were in the temple. "You have lived here all your life, Ogdli?"

"No." His manner was wary.

"How long?"

"I do not remember. Perhaps a hundred rains have come and gone, perhaps two hundred; I have lost count. It makes no difference, for I shall be here forever—unless I am killed. I shall never die, otherwise."

JANE looked at him in astonishment. Was he another maniac? Were they all maniacs in this terrible city? But she determined to humor him.

"Then if you have been here so long," she said, "you must be on very friendly terms with Kavandavanda. If you asked him a favor, perhaps he would grant it."

"Perhaps," he agreed; "but one must be careful what one asks of Kavandavanda."

"Ask him if you can remain in the temple," suggested the girl.

"Why?" demanded Ogdli, suspiciously.

"Because you are my only friend here, and I am afraid without you."

The man's brows knit into an angry scowl. "You are trying to bewitch me again," he growled.

"You have bewitched yourself, Ogdli," she sighed. "And you have bewitched me. Do not be angry with me. Neither of us could help it." Her beautiful eyes looked up at him appealingly, seemingly on the verge of tears.

"Do not look at me like that," he cried huskily; and then once more she saw the same look in his eyes that she had noticed before they left the village.

She laid a hand upon his bare arm. "You will ask him?" she whispered. It was more a statement than a question.

He turned away roughly and continued on in silence; but on Jane's lips was a smile of satisfaction. Intuition told her that she had won. But what would she do with her success? Its implications terrified her. Then she gave a mental shrug. By her wits she must turn the circumstance to her advantage without paying the price. . . .

As they passed through the temple corridors and apartments, Jane saw a number of black men—fat, soft, oily-looking fellows that reminded her of the guardians of a sultan's harem. They seemed to personify cruelty, greed and craft. She instinctively shrank from them if they passed close. These, she assumed, were the servants of Kavandavanda. What, then, was Kavandavanda like?

She was soon to know.

The great climax to this latest adventure of Tarzan, the Lord of the Jungle, will appear in the next (the March) issue.



The Card of Death

The strange murder of a gypsy fortune-teller provides the detective Isaac Heron with an interesting problem.

By WILLIAM J. MAKIN

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

"I ADMIT I'm flummoxed," conceded Detective Inspector Graves, as he padded along, trying breathlessly to keep up with the long, loping stride of Isaac Heron, the wealthy gypsy who sometimes liked to amuse himself as an amateur detective, and who had more than once given the Inspector real help.

"Meaning you haven't a single clue as to who committed the murder?" said Heron, a rare smile crossing his brown face.

The Scotland Yard man panted round a corner into that Bohemian quarter known as Gower Street, Bloomsbury.

"There are eight possible murderers," said Graves solemnly. "Eight!" he repeated. "They were all sleeping in the house that night, and any one of them might have crept to the room of the old fortune-teller and murdered her."

"And what about a murderer from outside—a street prowler, anybody?" asked Isaac Heron.

"Almost impossible," replied the Scotland Yard man. "The front door was locked and bolted at midnight. The boarding-house keeper is certain of that. Moreover, as she went upstairs to bed, she met the old fortune-teller at the door of her room. She was standing there with a lighted candle in her hand."

"What for?" asked Isaac Heron.

"She wanted to know if the house had been securely locked up. Said she was afraid of burglars. The boarding-house keeper reassured her, and went to her own room. Two hours later, or maybe before, according to the Divisional Surgeon, the old fortune-teller was bludgeoned to death. . . . But we're nearly there. It's just round this corner."

A few moments later they stopped before a dilapidated Georgian house whose original beauty had been lost in the London grime. A uniformed policeman was stationed at the doorway. He saluted immediately he saw Detective Inspector Graves.

"Anybody attempted to leave the house yet, constable?" asked Graves.

"No sir," was the prompt reply. "The body has been taken away to the mortuary, and the Divisional Surgeon has left. There's been a few callers—postman, baker's boy and the like. And several newspaper reporters. They're difficult fellows, sir, and they're still hanging about."

"I know they are," nodded Graves. "Keep 'em away for the present."

In answer to his tug at the bell, the door was opened by a stern-visaged woman. Her hair was drawn back ruthlessly and twisted into a bun. Her yellowing mask betrayed no emotion as she recognized the Scotland Yard man.

"Come in, sir," she said. "Everything is still the same—except for the body, which has been taken away. And I hope you've come to tell us that we can go out. It's now nearly three o'clock in the afternoon, and the house is getting on everybody's nerves."

"I've no doubt," agreed Graves laconically, stepping inside the doorway. "This is Mrs. Simmonds, the boarding-house keeper," he explained to Isaac Heron.

"And such a dreadful thing as a murder has not happened in my house during the fifteen years I've been here," nodded the woman. "And who'd have thought of killing that poor old gypsy woman Lily Lee, she who never did any harm to anyone?"

"That's what we intend to find out," said Graves brusquely. "Close the door, Mrs. Simmonds. We're going upstairs to the room."

"D'you want me up there?" asked the woman. "The room needs tidying something dreadful."

"Not just yet," replied Graves, and stamped toward the stairs.

ISAAC HERON followed him. In the gloom of that dismal boarding-house his eyes glittered strangely, and there was a tightening about his mouth. The gypsy fortune-teller Lily Lee was well known to the tribe. They all respected her and sympathized when old age and rheumatism kept her in London away from the caravan and the open road.

He tramped up the stairs in the wake of Inspector Graves. A few steps along the landing of the first floor, toward the back of the house, a door faced them. Graves twisted the knob.

"This was her room," he said quietly.

FOR a few moments both men stood on the threshold, their gaze searching for that detail which might reveal everything. A couch which served as a bed filled one side of the room. A table and three chairs, obviously picked up cheaply in the Tottenham Court Road by the landlady, were the chief furnishings. For the rest, there was a dirty piece of carpet stretched across the room, and now stained with the blood of the murdered woman.

"The weapon?" asked Isaac Heron.

Graves nodded toward the fireplace.

"A poker. It had been picked up by the murderer, who battered in the head of the old woman from behind. Having done this, he calmly flung the poker back into the fireplace."

"Finger-prints?"

"None at all. The murderer must have worn gloves."

"There are plenty of bloodstains," pointed out Heron. "The murderer must have carried some away with him."

The Scotland Yard man nodded.

"The first thing I did was to examine the clothing of all in the house. I found no bloodstains."

A pack of cards sprawled upon the table. One of them, the ace of spades, was lying on the floor. The gypsy in Isaac Heron caused him to shiver slightly as he picked it up.

"I suspect the old woman was reading the cards when she was struck so savagely," said Graves.

"It looks as though she had come to this card, the card of death, at that very moment," said Heron in somber tones.

He put the card on the table, walked toward the window and looked out. An ordinary back-yard lay beneath, and a plain brick wall of about ten feet in height. A rusty drain-pipe ran past the window to the roof of the house.

"Some one might have climbed into the room by this pipe," murmured the gypsy.

"But they didn't," said the detective, shaking his head. "I've had it carefully examined. I can say for certain that nobody climbed it within the past three months. Moreover, this window was always tightly latched. Lily Lee took no

chances of burglars. And for the life of me, I can't understand why we found about tenpence ha'penny in the room when we searched it this morning."

"Only tenpence ha'penny?" asked Heron, his eyebrows rising.

"I'm not surprised," said Graves. "Even Mrs. Simmonds admits that the old fortune-teller was three weeks in arrears in her rent."

"But I'm surprised," said Heron thoughtfully. "Do you know, Graves, that Lily Lee was a comparatively rich woman. She must have had about two thousand pounds tucked away."

"How d'you know?"

"All the brothers of the black tents knew," replied Heron. "She has, in her time, been the most successful *dukkerer* or fortune-teller, in England. I think we are beginning to discover the motive of the murder."

"Maybe the money was in the bank," pointed out the Scotland Yard man.

Isaac Heron shook his head.

"No gypsy would trust money in a bank. Lily Lee feared burglars because the money was here in this room."

"But why hadn't she paid her rent?" protested Graves.

Isaac Heron smiled.

"Again, because she was a gypsy, and all gypsies loathe paying rent. . . . But tell me, where did you find the tenpence ha'penny?"

"In the drawer of that dressing-table," nodded Graves in the direction of a cheap piece of furniture with a cracked mirror surmounting it.

Heron walked over and examined it.

"Yes," he murmured, as if to himself, "a cracked mirror in a gypsy's bedroom is another incongruous object. Of course, the murderer broke it as he was swinging the poker."

HE gazed thoughtfully at the couch. It had been made into a bed but not slept in. Heron moved toward it, bent down and dragged a black tin box from beneath the bed.

"Nothing in that but a few old clothes, and some dirty packs of cards," said Graves. "We examined it thoroughly."

Isaac Heron was touching with a certain tenderness a faded orange-colored headcloth, some cheap glittering earrings, and the gaudy little coat of a gypsy woman's parade garb.

"Nevertheless," he asserted savagely, "I would like to wager that this box contained the life savings of Lily Lee,

and that the murderer rifled it before he departed."

"If we can prove that the old woman had that money—" Graves hesitated.

"Of course she had it," insisted Heron. "I tell you, all the gypsies knew that Lily Lee had a comfortable nest-egg."

Graves shrugged his shoulders. For some moments there was silence in that sordid little room of death. Isaac Heron was staring at the table and chair and the scattered pack of cards.

"Yes," he nodded. "She was telling some one's fortune by the cards when the murderer suddenly attacked her. She knew he was in the room. She knew she was going to die as soon as that ace of spades turned up in her hand."

"The murderer was certainly a savage brute," agreed Graves. "The old woman's head was battered frightfully. But even if we discover the man, we've only circumstantial evidence to go upon. And circumstantial evidence is not very popular with juries today. If only we had a witness to the murder."

A SQUAWK from a corner of the room caused him to jump. The Scotland Yard man swiveled round angrily. He muttered in the direction of a cage containing a gray parrot with red-tipped wings surmounting a heap of junk in one of the corners.

"That damned parrot gives me the creeps!" he muttered.

But Heron was gazing at the parrot with a gleam of interest in his dark eyes.

"There's your witness, Graves," he said solemnly. "That parrot saw the murder."

"But damn it all," protested Graves, "what can a parrot tell?"

"A good deal," said the gypsy quietly. "I think it can tell us who murdered Lily Lee."

Isaac Heron had carried the cage to the table and dumped it there. Seating himself in a chair, he gazed thoughtfully at the bird, which was hopping about on its swinging perch and pecking irately at the wire bars.

"Strange, uncanny birds, these parrots," he murmured aloud to the puzzled and slightly irritated Graves, who was still prowling about the room. "Even Aristotle wrote about them; and Cato did not hesitate to say that the craze for parrots was a sign of decadence in Rome."

"How very interesting!" said Graves sarcastically. "Don't you think we had better have a talk with Mrs. Simmonds?"

"I'm going to talk with this beautiful gray parrot," went on Isaac Heron, unperturbed. "Gray parrots are always the best talkers. Did you know that?"

"I did not."

"Queer, how the parrot flits and squawks through history. Every palace, every court of consequence, had a parrot as favorite. And no two are alike. Some parrots like to sit bolt upright; others seem to live continually upside down. Parrots have been good companions throughout the ages—"

"And now they are the pets of maiden aunts," growled Graves.

"And of gypsies," nodded Isaac Heron. "Lily Lee has had this one all her life. She used it to pick out cards from a box which contained the fortunes of those who consulted her. Ah, there is a box of cards on the corner, Graves. Please hand it to me."

"If you're going to sit here practicing fortune-telling with a damned parrot, then I must get to work to find the murderer of the old woman," protested Graves. But he handed over the box.

Isaac Heron ignored him. He was whispering queer Romany words to the bird, which had stopped its fluttering and pecking, and now sat with head at one

side and beady eyes watching him with a strange air of intelligence.

"I say, I think I had better get to work," repeated Graves.

Isaac Heron nodded.

"Do, my friend. Go upstairs and talk with some one. I want to talk with the parrot."

And with a calming gesture he opened the little door of the cage. The parrot promptly fluttered out and perched upon the brown wrist. Heron stroked the gray feathers, and continued that soothing talk of Romany words.

It was then the parrot lifted up its gray, wrinkled neck and squawked back in the Romany tongue. Heron smiled triumphantly at Graves. But the Scotland Yard man merely snorted and trudged upstairs. . . .

It was an hour later before Graves came downstairs again and entered that little room where Gypsy Lee had been murdered during the night. He was frankly baffled, and looked baffled. And his irritation at the sight of the gypsy still sitting at the table and muttering to the gray-feathered bird on his wrist nearly burst forth explosively.

"Well?" asked Isaac Heron.

"No luck," growled Graves. "I've interrogated each of the boarders one by one, and although I feel it in my bones that one of them murdered Lily Lee, I can't discover the flaw in their evidence."

"There's a French couple among them, isn't there?" said Heron.

"Yes," nodded Graves. But then he stopped. "How did *you* know? Has Mrs. Simmonds been talking?"

The gypsy chuckled.



"No, but the parrot has. Tell me about the French couple, Graves."

The Scotland Yard man shrugged.

"They're two French youths living in the same room. Their passports are in order. I gather that they're waiters in a restaurant not far from here. They seem harmless, and speak English very well."

"What have they to say of last night?" asked Heron.

Graves drew out a notebook.

"They left the restaurant at half-past eleven," he read. "At a quarter to



"*Tuez le cochon!*" hissed the one Frenchman to the other. . . . Blow followed blow until the poor old woman was dead."

twelve they entered the house, a quarter of an hour before the door was locked. Their room is on the second floor. Everything seemed quiet as they passed up the stairs. They did not see Lily Lee. They went into their room and took their boots off."

"That's true," nodded Isaac Heron. "It's a thing every waiter does, immediately he gets home."

"They smoked a cigarette each, talked and then went to bed," continued Graves. "They heard nothing until the morning, when the shrieks of Mrs. Simmonds brought them out of their room."

That's their story. They're particularly worried that nobody has been allowed outside this house. They fear they will lose their jobs. I'm inclined to let them go back to work," Graves concluded.

"Why?" asked Isaac Heron.

"Because, if you ask me," said Graves, "I suspect a lazy, insolent Indian student who has the top garret. He's supposed to be studying law at London University. I should say he's just the type to commit a murder of this brutal character."

"Well, we'll interrogate him last," smiled the gypsy. "But as you want the two French waiters to get back to their job, we'll talk to them first. Eh, Polly?"

And he clucked at the gray bird.

Graves stared.

"D'you mean to say that you're going to talk to each of these eight boarders in turn?" he protested.

The gypsy nodded.

"You want me to find the murderer?"

"D'you think you can?" asked Graves eagerly.

"I can't," smiled Isaac Heron, irritatingly; "but the parrot can. . . . Hurry up, and let us get rid of the two Frenchmen."

With a sigh at this crazy procedure, Graves plodded up the stairs again. A few moments later he returned, and ushered in two pale, tired-looking youths who were already in the greasy evening-dress of their trade.

"Alphonse Légros and Pierre Claudel," Graves announced.

"COME in, gentlemen," invited the gypsy. "I shall not detain you five minutes. I understand you wish to get back to the restaurant."

"The propriétaire is a ver' difficult man, you understand, monsieur," murmured Légros eagerly. "And already he will be anxious about us."

"It may be that we are already discharged," almost wept Claudel.

"I have sympathy for you," nodded Isaac Heron. "But you understand there is an affair here that must first be cleared up."

"I wish that we could help you," sighed Légros. "*Pauvre Madame Lee!*"

"All that I ask of you," went on Isaac Heron blandly, "is your help in a little experiment."

"A leetle experiment?"

Claudel seemed alarmed.

"It is nothing," said the gypsy, with an airy wave of his hand. "I would like, with the help of this very wise parrot, to tell your fortunes."

Graves spluttered his disgust:

"Really, my dear fellow—"

A look from those dark eyes silenced him.

"But can this help in discovering the—the murderer of Madame Lee?" asked Légros.

"I feel sure it will help a lot," smiled Isaac Heron. "Now you, Monsieur Claudel, will you please look at this parrot and concentrate on what is your dearest wish in the world."

S LIGHTLY apprehensive, the pallid youth seated himself and stared at the beady eyes of the parrot held on the wrist of the gypsy. As he did so, Isaac Heron crooned softly in Romany to the bird. It seemed to shake its gray plumage from head to tail, and then suddenly pecked downward at a box of cards that was placed on the table. The parrot jerked back its head, a single card held firmly in its beak. Heron took the card between his fingers, read it, and smiled.

"And now you, Monsieur Légros," he invited, waving the other Frenchman aside.

Sulkily, Alphonse Légros took his place in the chair.

"What you want me to do?" he asked.

"I want you to look at the parrot and concentrate on your dearest wish," repeated the gypsy.

Hands resting on his thighs, the French youth obeyed. Once again the parrot shook its gray feathers, and at the command of Isaac Heron, dived its beak among the box of cards. And once again the gypsy secured the card, and smiled.

Irritated more than ever at this farcical proceeding, Detective Inspector Graves was staring moodily out the window at the dismal back yard. But he swiveled round at an unearthly scream in French: "*Tuez le cochon!*"

It was the gray parrot, which had screamed this phrase in French, and with ruffling feathers was fluttering toward the passion-distorted face of Alphonse Légros.

"Get 'em, Graves!" shouted Heron, leaping himself upon Légros, while the Scotland Yard man flung himself at Claudel, trying to escape by the door.

Even as the four men rolled onto the floor, Graves managed to get his whistle between his teeth and blew. In a moment three constables were in the room, and the two bedraggled-looking waiters secured. The gray parrot had flitted to safety in a corner of the room, and there, trembling with rage, continued to scream:

"*Tuez le cochon!*"

"Kill the pig!" nodded Isaac Heron, dusting his clothes. "That's what they hissed at each other as they sat in this room with Lily Lee last night. I should get them under lock and key, Graves. They're both murderers."

"I don't see that we can take a parrot into the witness-box," said Graves ten minutes later. "And there's still a lot to be explained before those two men can be delivered to the hangman."

Once again Isaac Heron was soothing the parrot.

"What more do you want me to tell, Graves?" he said. "I told you the parrot would find the murderer for you; and it has. A parrot, more than an elephant, never forgets. That phrase hissed out in this room last night with the old gypsy woman toppling over from a blow with the poker, has burned itself into the brain of the bird. While you were upstairs interrogating the boarders, the parrot hissed that phrase into my ear. I realized at once the significance of it. Lily Lee spoke only Romany. She would never speak French. And the very word *kill* in French was sufficient for me."

"But how did they do it?" asked Graves. "There's no bloodstains on their clothes."

"Strip those absurd evening-dress suits from them at the police station, and I guarantee that you will find blood on their bodies," said Heron. "Yes, they were naked murderers," he went on. "They came home last night at the time they stated. They went to their rooms, stripped themselves, and covered their naked bodies with mackintoshes. Probably slippers on their feet, and as is inevitable with Frenchmen making a call, they wore gloves. Then they came downstairs, knocked at Lily Lee's door and begged her to tell them their fortunes. They explained away the lateness of the hour by their work, and the mackintoshes concealed their bodies."

"Suspecting nothing, and grateful as ever at the chance of earning a shilling

or two, Lily Lee invited them into her room. She shuffled the cards. In the meantime they had an eye for the treasure they had come to steal—the nest-egg of which they must have heard. One of them prowled about the room while the other sat at the table listening to the tale of the cards.

"Lily Lee must have suspected something. Suddenly she turned up the ace of spades—the *card of death!* She half rose, ready to scream. It was then that the sitting Frenchman hissed to the other: '*Tuez le cochon!*' The mackintoshes were flung on the couch. The poker was seized. Blow followed blow until the poor old woman was dead. Then they searched desperately. They found the box under the bed, rifled it, and padded out of the room with the mackintoshes over their bodies. And all the time the beady eyes of the gray parrot watched them from its cage."

"And the money?" asked Graves, rising, flushed with the joy of capture.

"Hidden in their waiter-suits, I've no doubt," said the gypsy. "You'll find it when you strip those two murderers. And if you want more proof—"

BUT the Scotland Yard man was already clumping down the stairs in haste to get to the police-station. He had not waited to hear Isaac Heron read the two pieces of pasteboard which the parrot had picked out of the box.

Each read the same: "*The end is near. Beware!*"

"I don't suppose the jury of today would accept that evidence, either," sighed Isaac Heron. "But the gypsy's warning has again proved itself."

With a cluck of the Romany tongue he coaxed the parrot back into the cage. A few moments later he prepared to take his departure.

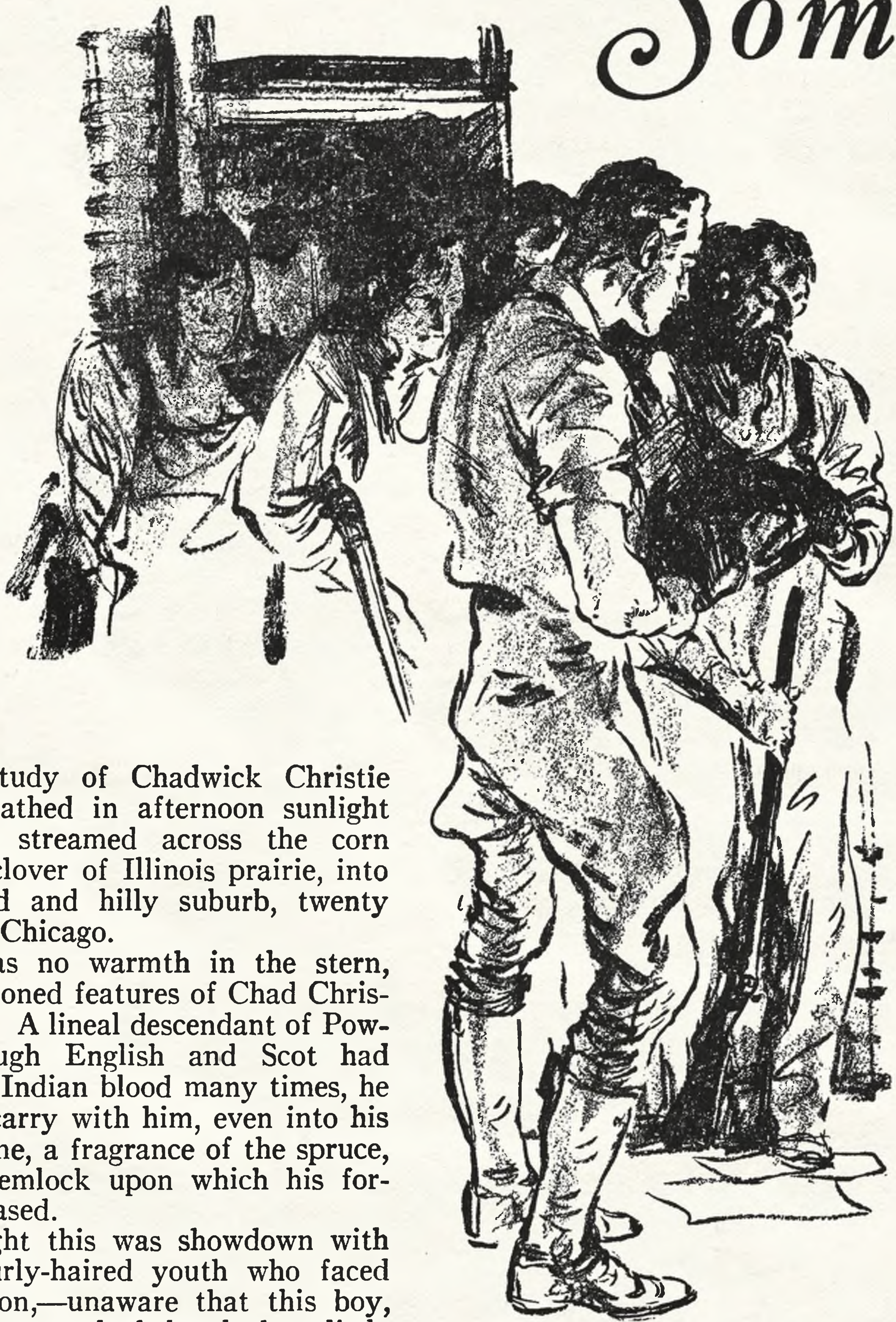
"You are avenged, Sister Lee," he murmured aloud. "May your spirit roam the Elysian fields."

And with a cage dangling from his arm, he slowly made his way downstairs.



Another of the strange cases of the gypsy detective Isaac Heron will be described in our next issue.

Some



THE study of Chadwick Christie was bathed in afternoon sunlight which streamed across the corn and white clover of Illinois prairie, into this wooded and hilly suburb, twenty miles from Chicago.

There was no warmth in the stern, high-cheekboned features of Chad Christie, though. A lineal descendant of Powhatan, though English and Scot had diluted the Indian blood many times, he seemed to carry with him, even into his palatial home, a fragrance of the spruce, pine and hemlock upon which his fortune was based.

He thought this was showdown with the tall, curly-haired youth who faced him,—his son,—unaware that this boy, whose blue eyes had laughed a little more seldom the past year, had bravely called his poker-player father many months before.

So Chad Christie was terse and business-like. The love he cherished for this twenty-four-year-old youth who resembled his dead mother, Lachlan Christie, he hid far back of the graven oak of his features. It is doubtful that Rance Christie, the son, ever guessed the extent of that love. He thought Chad a business man and a hellion; and was absurdly proud of him. Rance knew himself to be a black sheep.

"This is my last word, Rance," said the father quietly, grimly. "You will

do two things strictly according to my specifications, and you will do them well. Or else—"

"I won't say no in advance, sir," said the young man seriously, looking into his father's uncompromising face. "You are talking."

The elder nodded. "Yes, I am talking, and you take heed!" he admonished. "How did you come out last year with that fool real-estate business in the South? How much *net* did you make over and above expenses?"

Rance shrugged. "About two hundred, I suppose," he said.

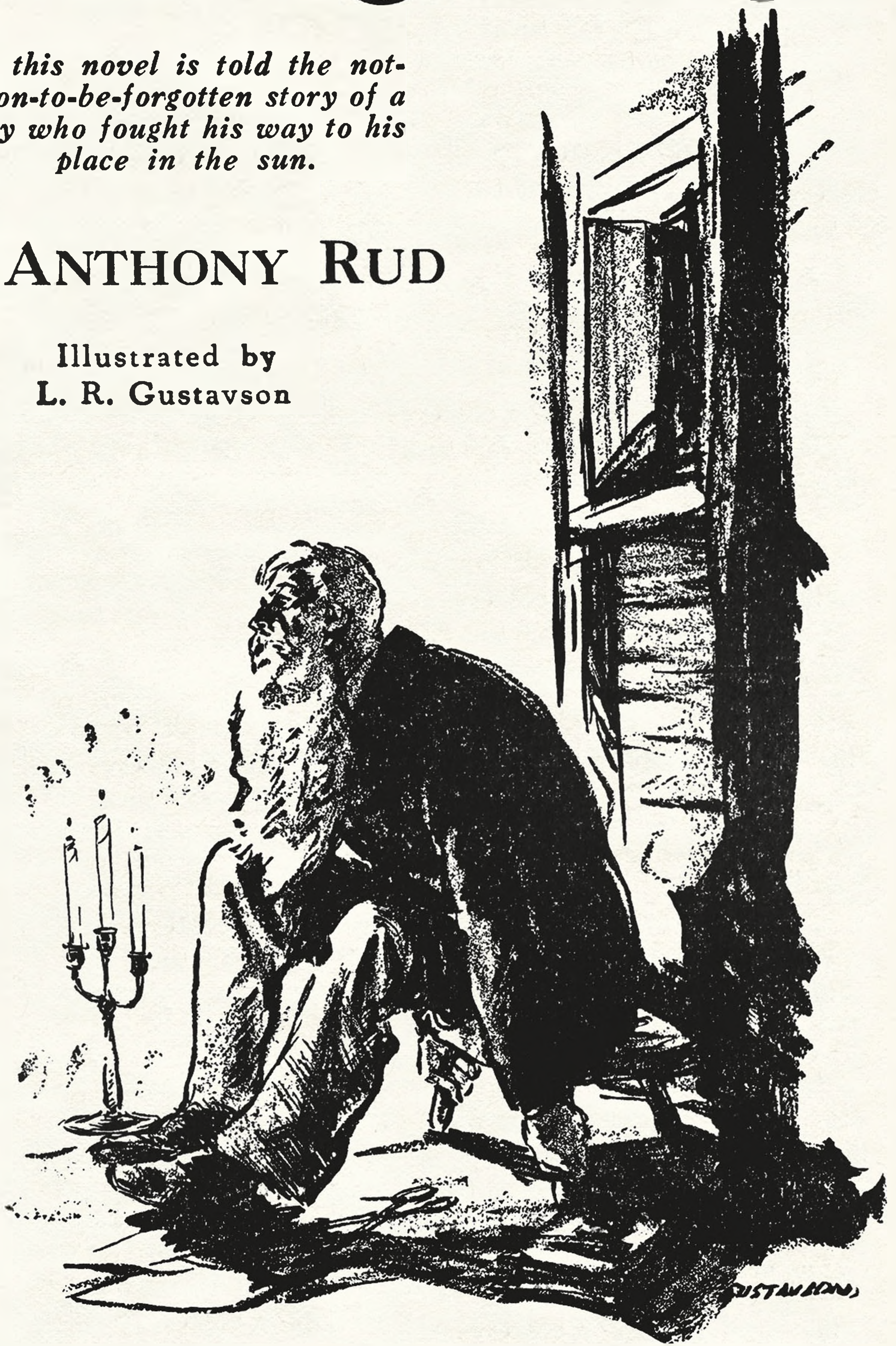
Call It Courage

In this novel is told the not-soon-to-be-forgotten story of a boy who fought his way to his place in the sun.

By ANTHONY RUD

Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

"Go back and tell him that as long as I live neither he nor his will cut timber here! He knows well the price he would have to pay!"



"If you do that for thirty years, you'll have—six thousand dollars. That is, if you don't go crazy and dump it all at the racetrack in one afternoon!"

"I'm paid only twenty per cent commission," said Rance, coloring a trifle. "Even at that, in three or four years I'll be my own boss. Then all I make will be mine. There's going to be a boom in Southern real estate. I'll be there, maybe."

"Maybe, *hell!* I tell you different. Right now you're going to wire your

resignation. You're going to take a man's job in my lumber company. Twenty-five a week to start. If you make good quick and hard, I'll double that in six months—and go on doubling it every year thereafter, as long as you will stand the gaff of work!

"Also, you'll take a look around, pick out a square, fine woman, and marry her! I won't limit your choice in any way, except I won't stand for any cheap girl who's been everybody's sweetheart before you started to shave!"

Rance grimaced and then grinned. "Touché," he admitted. "That doesn't alter anything now, though. I'm sorry to tell you that I can't obey either dictum, Dad. The fact that you were right as rain about that chorine I fell for when I was nineteen, is beside the point. I'm standing on my own feet, ever since I broke with your lumber company, and got this job of my own. You will never make a lumber-man out of me; and you will never *see me marry any woman!* That's my final word, sir!"

Chadwick Christie took the blow without flinching. He gave no sign at all that in this moment the greatest hope of his middle age had been smashed to shards.

"I suppose you realize just what this means?" he asked.

Rance nodded just as coolly, unwilling to trust his voice.

"Then that is all," said Chad Christie, rising. "Hereafter you are entirely your own man, son. God bless you and keep you—for I won't!"

He turned, gathered up some papers, and left the room, not even offering his hand in farewell.

Rance regretted many things, but he could not explain. He left the house, and made his way to a telegraph-office. There, recalling the fact that his girl wife Jessica expected her own father to visit her for a couple of days in Mobile, he sent a carefully worded night letter to her.

An outsider would not have understood; but the meaning of the latter portion of the telegram was: "*Under no circumstances tell your father. We must keep this secret about two years more.*"

The girl Jessica, who worked as a cashier at Van Antwerp's, and who still passed as a bachelor maid with a tiny apartment of her own, bowed regretfully to the dictum. The wire stated, however, that Rance would be home in a few days. That was all that really mattered. Before he left for the North, her husband should have guessed one secret. Now she would have the shy, incredible delight of telling him.

THEN came the morning when the papers carried horrifying headlines of the great wreck. Jessica shuddered, but never dreamed that Rance had been on the train, coming sooner than he had said. In the fire his body was lost. Even his watch and signet ring, which might have identified him, were fused.

Two months later, resigning her job, Jessica broke silence, trying to tell all she knew of the heartbreaking story, to her own father. He had suspected something shameful, but had said nothing.

Now at her first words concerning the child that was coming, he exploded. He never heard the truth, that his daughter had been married for over a year to the man she loved. . . . Nicholas Berlier, unheeding, stormed out of her apartment. An hour later he had left Mobile.

Jessica was left alone with her heart-break, and with a growing sense of injustice and anger. She was tight-lipped, silent and haughty when death came to seek her and solve all the misunderstandings. But her man-child lived, to take the maiden name of his mother, Berlier, and to suffer as an orphan thought to have been born out of wedlock.

CHAPTER II

MARCH, 1935. Lush warmth in the pine-woods of Alabama. Quail stalking in pairs, unafraid of men with guns. Redbirds fluttering in the laurel and anise thickets. Squatter Cajans half furtively planting their cleared acres in the glades of the forest.

Chiefly because he was out of a job, vaguely homesick, and had the chance to drive the monster foreign car of the new ring champion to Jacksonville, Florida, Rance Berlier came back to the South-land.

At Jacksonville, the champion gave him a hundred-dollar bill and a set of used training-gloves—also a card to Breck Meacham of New Orleans, the promoter. Then a wave of the hand, and the champion forgot all about Rance forever. Rance was a good sparring partner, all right; but for the next year the champ intended to do movies and enjoy himself. No more hard work.

Rance detoured forty-five miles northwest out of Mobile, on his way to New Orleans. Blackjack, Alabama, was all the home he had ever known. Memories were bitter indeed. One of them he meant to cancel and assuage; and for the others—

Well, in his secret heart he did have some hopes of a friendly word, the clasp of a hand given to an upstanding man who once had been a beaten and berated lumber-camp ordinary—a bond-boy who drudged from dawn till after sundown for his keep and five dollars a month.

The years had dealt unkindly with the little town of Blackjack. The turpentine stills had been moved farther into the woods. Half of the inhabitants had moved away. There was no one at the tumble-down station when Rance's train stopped, wheezed, and pulled out asthmatically northward.

Rance lifted down the suitcase trunk which held all his worldly possessions, then walked around the platform. Del Harmer, the skinny, bent station-agent, came out of the station shack at that moment, bearing an envelope for the train conductor. Harmer picked up the receipt and turned back. Rance was there, grinning at the fretful scowl.

"Hyah, Del," he greeted, offering his hand. "Remember me?"

The seedy little old fellow peered up at the tall young man, but did not offer to take the extended hand. "Hm. Why-uh, I seen yo' sometime. Long while back. Ye-es, yo' kinda familiar, stranger, but I dunno jest when—"

"Rance Berlier's the name."

"Oh, yeh. The kid who run away from Anstey's lumber-camp. Yeh. Come back to serve out yo' time, huh?"

The agent's tone had changed subtly.

Rance spoke a curt dissent, as he turned on his heel.

Come back to serve out the two years at Anstey's? Great God in heaven, what a thought!

Those two years had gone forever. So had five more on top of them. Rance Berlier was twenty-three. He owned a night high-school diploma, and had fought sixteen bouts in the ring—as well as serving as a human punching-bag for the world's champion. Go back and taste the whip of Jolo Anstey once more?

"I think I'll give Jolo a taste of it, instead," he promised himself grimly.

He walked across the cinder-paved main street of Blackjack, to the grocery run by Breen and Weedon. Breen had died. Bespectacled and bald Willie Weedon ran the place, which did not look clean or prosperous.

"And what will yours be?" said Willie with a faded semblance of briskness.

"Nothing, I reckon," said Rance wryly. "I just stopped in to say hello. The name is Rance Berlier. I used to come down here for tobacco, times we ran out at the camp."

"Oh-oh!" said Willie, his voice falling and his mouth remaining half open. "You got a nerve to come back, aint you! You goin' up to see Jolo Anstey?"

SUDDEN, gloating anticipation was in the storekeeper's voice, as he abruptly visualized what Jolo and the lumber-camp bullies would do to this renegade bond-boy, good clothes and all. Willie would go and watch, provided there was no peril to himself.

"Maybe I'll do that little thing," nodded Rance. What a homecoming! Just to clinch the irony of it, he stopped at the drug-store, run by a stranger now, and then at the frame shack which housed the weekly *Blackjack Banner*.

Editor Applegate was slightly more cordial, seeing in the visitor an appetizing half-column badly needed for his sheet; but Rance saw through him and stayed only long enough to give his name. Then he strode upstreet to the shabby white hotel, and told Thomas Lacey, the proprietor, that he wanted luncheon.

Lacey, who used crutches now, said that the meal would be ready in half an hour. He squinted searchingly at Rance, but said nothing. The visitor had to sign the register, though; and five minutes after that, Tom Lacey whistled below his breath as he clumped back into the office to telephone the news to the man most interested, Jolo Anstey. *Now* the fur would fly!

FORTY minutes later the hulking Jolo himself, glaring mayhem from his single deep-set raisin of an eye and from the red, empty socket which matched it, arrived at the hotel in a mud-grimed car, stamped up the wooden steps, and into the musty lobby of the hotel, where Tom stood back of the registry desk.

"Y'say thet goddam no-'count woods colt Rance is back?" Jolo demanded in a hoarse whisper. The proprietor jerked a thumb toward the dining-room.

"Take him out, so's not to muss up things," he begged. "He's growed up since you had him, Jolo, an'—"

The lumber-camp proprietor did not wait for the caution, however. He was a tyrant, well-to-do according to pine-woods standards, overbearing and ignorant. His sons ran the lumber-camp now, but Jolo was just the same as ever. He was ten pounds heavier than when he last had beaten Rance Berlier, but still an active and dangerous man weighing close to two hundred fifty pounds—and most of that bone and hard muscle.

He lacked imagination. No doubt he had forgotten the seven years that had passed, and expected to see the tall, half-

As the second round started in a mêlée of flying gloves, old Chad found himself on his feet cheering the wraith of a boy he had loved.



fed, overworked boy he had known as Rance. Certainly he did not recognize at first the filled-out, hardened, well-dressed young man seated there before the single long board of the country hotel dining-room.

Rance knew him at sight, of course, but gave no sign. He saw Jolo looking at him, then at a red-haired hardware salesman, then at a man and wife and three children, tourists from the North. There were no others at the table. Jolo's single eye came back to Rance, and narrowed in a squint of cruelty.

"You!" he said throatily, with relish. This was an expletive with the woodsman; he never pronounced the word that way in ordinary conversation. "Come on out of hyah, yo' damn'—"

He made the bad mistake of striding forward and slamming down a gnarled and dirty hand to the back of Rance's neck, with the evident intention of hauling the youth away from the table by the scruff of the neck.

That was as far as it went. Things happened suddenly. Rance got to his feet away from the table. Then he seized Jolo, breaking the woodsman's

first grip with ease and tying up the bully's right arm behind his back with a police jiu-jitsu grip.

There was no use parleying. Jolo was asking for it; and Rance, memories of scars on his back which would show till his dying day, was far from unwilling. So the younger man marched the woods bully straight out of the front door, to the right, and out beyond a group of sheds. Behind them Lacey and the hardware salesman came to the front gallery, but Rance paid no attention. Jolo was speechless with rage.

"Now you're going to get paid for *one* of those hundred beatings you gave me," said Rance grimly, and flung Jolo free. "Defend yourself—if you can!"

Once free of that punishing grip, Jolo exploded. Roaring out incoherent, frenzied threats, he came at the younger man, arms outflung for a grip which would bear Rance to the ground.

It was not a fight, just punishment. The fairly competent young pugilist never allowed those huge arms to enfold him, or even catch a semblance of grip. In three seconds Rance whipped in six savage short-arm punches to Jolo's face.

Then, with the surety in him that Jolo would bear some marks of the encounter, with which to remember his erstwhile slave, Rance ended it with a sharp, well-timed uppercut to the button.

Jolo pitched forward to the ground, limp and unconscious.

Wiping his hands on his handkerchief, Rance made his way back to the hotel for his big suitcase.

"Tell that swine, when he recovers," said Rance grimly to the astonished and silent hotel man, "that I aim to do that to him every time we meet, from now on! I owe him plenty!"

With that he turned and strode to the station, to await the down train.

CHAPTER III

CHAD CHRISTIE had retired from the lumber business, still keeping a part interest in several companies, when black depression seized America and building practically stopped. Chad went right ahead playing golf and poker, staying out of the tangle. Later, foreseeing a resumption of building in 1935, he bought back some of the interests he had sold—at one-quarter their former price—and also bought "dirt cheap" an immense tract of yellow pine in Alabama and Mississippi.

After that you no more could have kept Chad Christie plodding a golf fairway than you could have kept Nova Hercules 1934 from exploding itself into a first-magnitude star. Chad flung back his mane of white hair, snorted, and went South to start something.

Habit was strong. Old Chad worked, interviewed subordinates at the Battle House, Mobile, and elsewhere. But he played hard too. There came a day when he took train to New Orleans. That night there would be a good fight bill. The final would be a catchweight bout of light-heavyweights, two young and promising boxers who one day might resin their shoes in the same ring with the champion of the world. Chad got a seat in the third row.

There were two indecisive loving-match prelims, then a quick kayo by a negro welter over a dark-skinned opponent, then a ten-round, bovine draw between overfat heavies for a semi-final. Lastly Breck Meacham, the promoter, came out with bad news and a megaphone. He carried a card written by the world's champion, in his other hand.

Omitting his preamble, what he had to say was this: One of his wind-up scrappers was in the infirmary with flu; but he, Meacham, had been lucky. He had secured a new man.

"Battlin' Berlier of Chicago, then, will face Satan Sauer in the wind-up! Battlin' Berlier at 183 pounds. Satan Sauer at 191 pounds!" he foghorned. "This is what the world's champ has to say about Berlier! 'Dear Breck: Here is my next challenger for the title, maybe. Match him. Yours, Max.'"

The ensuing roar of disappointment made the rest he had to say inaudible. The sick Kid Carrigan was a local boy and a favorite. The crowd disliked the idea of a substitute. Sauer would murder him, of course; even Carrigan had not been really expected to lick the fast and ring-wise Satan Sauer.

In the third row, near Sauer's corner, sat a wrinkled-faced white-haired man; high-cheekboned, looking more like an Indian in his years of borrowed time, than ever before. Without much interest he watched the two robe-clad warriors climb through the ropes, be fussed with by seconds, and flex their legs while holding the ropes at the corner.

When the referee called them out to shake hands, something strange happened to the old man in the third row. He got his first good look at the unknown, Battling Berlier. With a sudden jerk Chad Christie's two hands clenched until the knuckles patched red and white. His eyes widened in something like horror; and the golf tan of his seamed cheeks faded into pallor.

There, but for the grace of God, and nearly twenty-five years' lapse of time, stood his dead son Rance Christie!

Formalities went along. Chad saw nothing of them. Like one hypnotized, he stared at the substitute fighter. The same brown curly hair, the same blue eyes and high cheekbones as Rance.

Of course there were some differences. There were bound to be, since this could be no kin to the dead Rance Christie. This man was taller, stronger, heavier. His face was sterner. He would laugh less often than the pleasure-loving Rance Christie of old.

But a choking constriction stayed in the old man's throat. He had to blink to keep tears from flooding to his eyes.

THE warning whistle shrilled: ten seconds more! Then the gong sounded, and the fight began.

A moment of sparring and footwork, of sizing up each other. An explorative straight left from Sauer, instantly repeated as Berlier flinched his head out of the way and countered with a glancing right hook aimed at the jaw.

To one unbiased, the two men matched up well. The unknown had an inch of height and reach. This was more than compensated by Sauer's extra poundage and greater ring experience—he had fought sixty-six battles, winning the last eighteen straight. In this bout Sauer was confident, too, sure that one or two rounds would suffice to give him the measure of Berlier, who had not trained at all for this sudden match.

Berlier, from the first, was the underdog with the crowd. He was with himself, too, though that did not affect his determination to win. He knew that his lack of strict training would tell, if the bout went the entire fifteen rounds—even if he managed to keep his chin out of the way of Satan Sauer's deadly right for that length of time.

During the whole first round, he attempted only one really serious blow, a right grapevine on going into a clinch.

The punch missed. So did his quick attempt to clinch. And he had to take instant retaliation from Sauer in the form of a quick tattoo of body punches before he could cover. The crowd yelled for Sauer to finish what they thought a farce. But the bell clanged.

"First round gone to the devil!" yelled a pudgy man on Christie's left. "Bet Sauer knocks him kicking in five rounds!"

The white-haired plunger turned. "How much?" he inquired briefly.

"Ten bucks!"

"Okay. Want more?"

"A hundred!"

"It's a bet. This gentleman beyond you will hold the stakes." And with the passing-over of the century banknote, Chad Christie proceeded to forget the pin-money wager, which was not so unimportant to the pudgy man, however.

As the second round started in an explosive whirl and mêlée of flying gloves, with a trickle of blood suddenly appearing at one corner of Sauer's cold gash of a mouth, old Chad found himself on his feet cheering the unknown—cheering the wraith of a boy he had loved—cheering for Berlier to win!

ROUND Two, Round Four, Round Six. . . . The hundred-dollar bill and the pudgy man's two fifties reposed in Chad

Christie's vest pocket, since Satan Sauer had not succeeded in stopping the unknown, as yet.

There was no doubt at all that Sauer was ahead on points; but he had not managed to connect with a single fazing wallop. Many straight lefts had landed, but Battling Berlier showed no ill effects. His face and the skin of his body did not bruise easily; while from less punishment, Sauer's extremely blond skin was patched with red over the kidneys, and his mouth continued to bleed slowly despite the styptic pencil on his lip between rounds.

There had been a shift in sentiment. The crowd still wanted Sauer; but they no longer booed Berlier. So far, the battle had been fast and in deadly earnest. Many realized that this unknown from Chicago really was putting up fully as good a fight as they had expected from their home-town lad. And a fight crowd loves a boy who tries with all he has.

There came a moment when in a fierce interchange of blows Berlier seemed to gain a slight advantage. Chad was breathing fast, his black eyes gleaming.

That was the exact second when in a follow-up flurry, staged by Satan Sauer, Berlier's nose suddenly sprang a red leak.

IN other parts of the country that much blood might have given Sauer a technical kayo; but they never bother about a nose or two in New Orleans. The scrap went on; and between rounds some snuffed-up adrenalin chloride stopped the red stream, though it did nothing to prevent Berlier's nose from swelling. Which it did. And through ensuing rounds Satan Sauer pecked away at it.

The ninth round thudded to a close with Satan Sauer leading five rounds to two on points, with two rounds even, and with Battling Berlier obviously tiring. A man must be trained to the minute for a bruising battle of heavies; and Berlier had been given just four hours' notice of this chance to win one hundred dollars for each round he was able to stay with Sauer.

Infighting, at which Satan Sauer excelled, had brought about the lessening of Berlier's effectiveness. Now he strove to keep away, or to clinch, as the tenth round began. At long range, his reach gave him at least an even break. But the blond demon kept boring in, his fists going in and out like pistons. Unexpectedly a simple one-two punch caught Sauer looking down, and staggered him for a

blessed few seconds. And those seconds helped Berlier immensely. He fought off Sauer the rest of the round.

In that minute of rest that followed, Rance Berlier took a swig of water to wash the taste of blood from his throat. He knew his opponent was going to try for the kill in the eleventh. What to do? Meet him halfway and slug it out, or stall and hang on for another round?

The decision was taken out of his hands after twenty-eight seconds of the new round. Calling on a burst of reserve speed, Sauer rushed, weaved, socked over body blows, refused to allow a clinch, and showered in lefts and rights to the jaw and ears which made Berlier cover and duck no matter what he meant to do.

Then the inevitable happened. A right cross, so swift it seemed to lack authority, crunched on Berlier's jaw, and he went down, asprawl on the canvas, nearly out. Not quite. The first knockdown—also the last, unless he got up soon—*now!*

At the count of seven he lurched to one knee, head hanging. At nine he staggered up, just able to raise his hands.

But in the next ninety seconds Sauer seriously damaged his own career in the ring, merely by being too anxious. He sprang in, swinging left and right in roundhouse blows which even the dazed Berlier could duck or parry, falling into one clinch after another.

The break came swiftly each time, but even seconds were precious. Satan Sauer began to breathe gustily, frenziedly. He swung, ducked his head and piled in like a wild man. Berlier was hit more than once, but none of the blows connected with the dazing impact of that first right cross; and the unknown began to realize that he was stronger again. Also, that Satan Sauer was exhausting himself in this futile fusillade.

Then, in the final fifteen seconds of the round, the crowd saw something absolutely incredible. The staggering quarry, the supposedly punch-drunk Berlier, came out of his trance and *attacked!*

Before Sauer could gather his wits, and remnants of his defense, he had been dazed by a stiff solar-plexus blow and a pile-driver right to his forehead. Then came a wham on his right ear, a left uppercut which clicked his teeth together, another body blow.

And then as his knees tried to buckle, Berlier flashed in with a straight right to the jaw which had every ounce of strength in it the unknown still possessed. While the crowd gasped, almost silent,

Satan Sauer wilted and pitched forward on his face to the canvas.

ALMOST instantly the bell rang for the end of the round; but that did not matter. They had to carry Sauer to his corner, and even when the minute of frantic restorative measures had ticked past, Sauer was still in dreamland. He could not answer the bell. The referee, with some reluctance, raised Berlier's wet glove in token of victory. . . .

Next morning at eight-thirty a white-haired old man, with a gleam of excitement in his black eyes, entered the Searchlight Detective Agency just as Chief Inspector Ahrends lit a cigarette and unfolded his newspaper.

The old man laid down five hundred dollars in banknotes on the desk. His demands sounded simple, but he wanted fast action. Everything possible concerning the man who called himself Battling Berlier—his family, parents, facts of birth, training, education—indeed everything a competent detective agency could gather in forty-eight hours, and damn the expense!

CHAPTER IV

THE agency missed a great deal, owing to the shortness of time allowed and the age of the story they wanted to unearth. Chad Christie himself knew something, and suspected now a great deal more. But he did not aid the agency. He took what they offered and appeared satisfied. Then characteristically he sent a note to Berlier himself, enclosing the hundred-dollar bill won on the fight, and asking Berlier to call at the hotel.

He had thought the child for whom he had established that trust fund twenty-two years ago had been a girl. At that time, broken-hearted and sick of the whole world, he had accepted the rather garbled account of a representative who had stayed one day only in Mobile. That man had said that there were certain traces which went to show that the dead boy, Rance Christie, had lived with a woman in a Mobile apartment; that the woman had died; that the offspring of that *liaison* was now in an orphanage.

In his heart, old Chad knew that this young pugilist was his own grandson! Illegitimate, of course; but that was not his fault. To make absolutely sure, and to make up his own mind now as to what

he could and would do about it, the white-haired man waited almost nervously, for the coming of the tall fighter.

"He may even hate me!" Chad groaned aloud, pacing the floor. "I wonder how much he knows?"

When Rance arrived, old Chad began:

"I'm buying just a few minutes of your time. If I am able to do so then, I may talk turkey on the project of *all* your time! I know a little about you, Mr. Berlier. I am not in the least interested in the promotion of fights. I own two hundred thousand acres of timber-land in the southern region of Alabama, where I understand you lived at one time. You have sand in your craw, which appeals to me.

"Now, you are at liberty to walk out of here and plan your fistic career. Or you can tell me about yourself. I'm genuinely interested!"

THE fighter's eyes held the hint of a bitter smile, as he looked straight at the old man.

"I like that kind of talk, Mister," Berlier acknowledged. "You've no right to ask, of course, but I'm not secretive—up to a certain point. I won that fight on a sort of fluke, and I know it. I have several men after me now, who want to be my managers. I don't think I'll take on a manager. I need seasoning, before thinking of going after the title; and I've worked in a training-camp long enough to know how titles are often won—and lost. I'll manage myself, I think.

"Before that? Well, all right. I'm an orphan without brothers or sisters. I was brought up in the Southern woods—in a lumber-camp, in fact. I ran away, went North, happened to be fairly handy with my fists, got in a few preliminary bouts here and there to keep eating. Fought one semi-final and won. Served as a punching-bag for the champ through six weeks of training for his last fight. And so what?"

The blue eyes were questioning, but not suspicious now. Rance Berlier felt an odd confidence in this brusque, distinguished old fellow, who now simply nodded, then spoke straight to the point as he had previously.

"The big idea in asking you here was not to tell you what a splendid ring career lies before you—perhaps.

"I am a lumber-man with a tremendous problem; and I find myself just about licked, for the first time in my life. I need a fighter, a young man with

courage, one who knows the woods down here, even if he does not know much about the lumber business.

"So this is it: I offer you one year of employment with me—at a salary of ten thousand dollars. If—"

"I could get three times that much for my next fight," smiled Berlier.

"True!" snapped Chad Christie. "Then what? I offer you a career in business. If you make good with me, your second year will bring you much more. You will become wealthy, have the honest knowledge of achievement, and the respect of the world. Do you want it?"

"Mr. Christie," said the young man unexpectedly and gravely, "have you and I ever met before?"

The old man started, for once caught momentarily off guard. But—"Never, as far as I know," he answered truthfully. "I saw you for the first time there in the ring."

"I see. Well, Mr. Christie, before I say more about your proposition, there is one thing I wouldn't have told you before—not if you had sent a thousand-dollar bill, instead of a century. But now things are different. I am tempted. But maybe *you* won't be when you hear the rest!"

"I've heard some tough ones," said Chad Christie.

Rance nodded. "I never knew my father," he said shortly. Then he waited a space of heartbeats. "If he's alive, I hope to meet that man sometime! He let my mother die alone in a Mobile hospital—and unwed," he continued bitterly. "I know that such things make a big difference, even in the North. Now do you want to repeat your proposition?"

"Consider it repeated word for word," said Chad Christie without the turn of a hair. "Do you want to come with me and take a bigger fight on your hands?"

Rance nodded, a pleased light in his eyes. He rose and held out his hand.

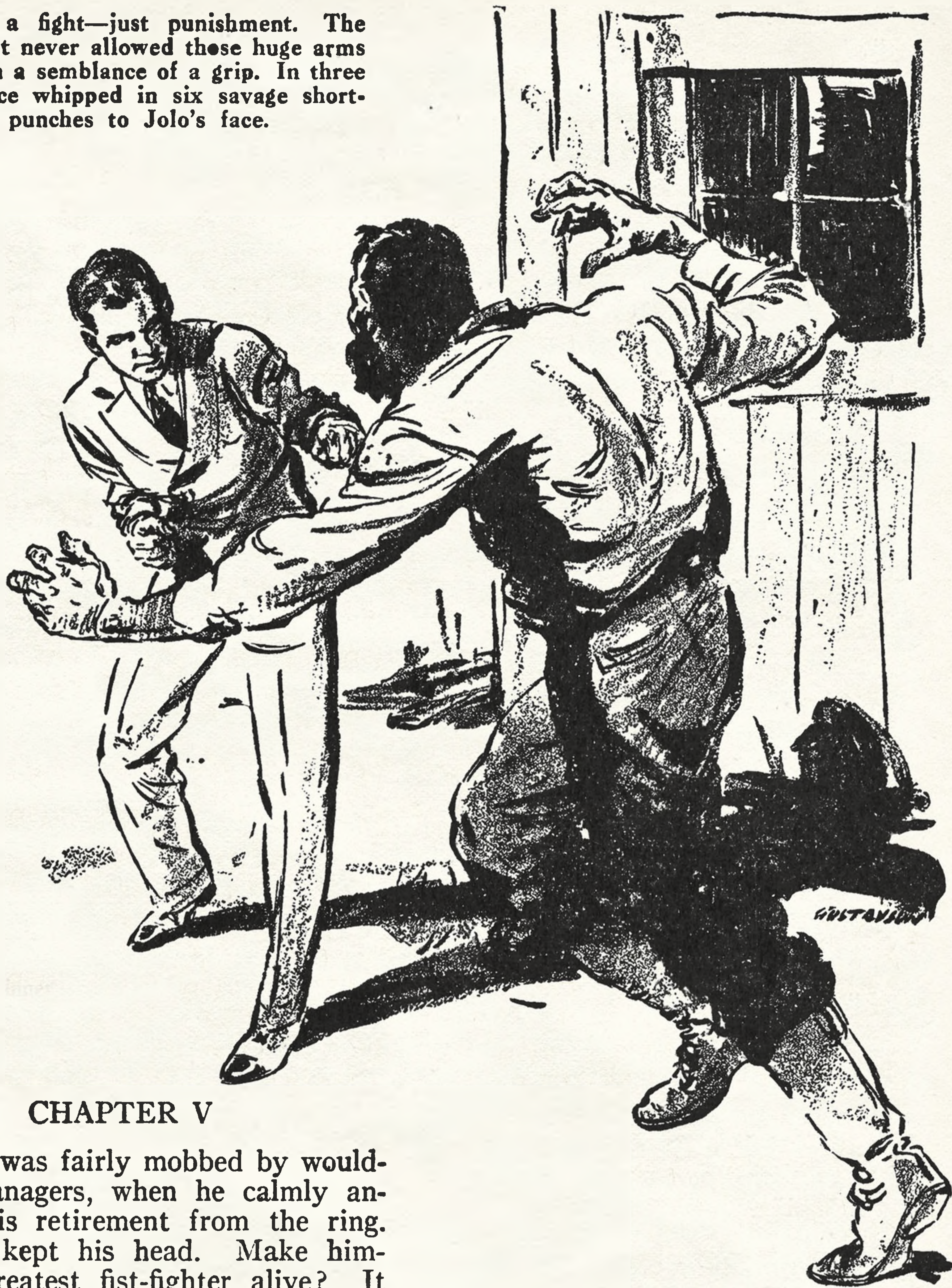
"I'm going back now and hang up my gloves!" he said.

FOR a long minute after Berlier had departed, Chad Christie sat almost motionless. Then he coughed dryly.

"Sometime I'm going to find out what became of my five thousand dollars a year!" he observed to the empty chamber. "Not just now, though. Not now. I might spill the beans!"

"Good Lord, but he's like Rance! No, he's like what I wanted my son Rance to *be!*" The old eyes blurred with tears.

It was not a fight—just punishment. The young pugilist never allowed those huge arms to catch even a semblance of a grip. In three seconds Rance whipped in six savage short-arm punches to Jolo's face.



CHAPTER V

RANCE was fairly mobbed by would-be managers, when he calmly announced his retirement from the ring.

But he kept his head. Make himself the greatest fist-fighter alive? It might be possible. But after talking with Chad Christie, Rance was queerly surprised to note that he possessed no such ambition! He wanted a better life. According to old Chad, there would be fight enough—in this lumber business.

Knowing a little about the Cajan country, the pine-woods in which Chad's immense tracts of timber were located, Rance was ready enough to believe it. Between eight and ten thousand Cajans, descendants of Evangeline's exiled Acadians (intermarried with the Indian giants of North America, the Choctaws) were squatters in or near that forest. Shotgun title was their only claim to the land, on which far-distant white men paid taxes; but shotgun title had sufficed for them through almost two centuries.

Chad wanted the yellow pine, the oak, the blackjack, the cypress which grew on this area—a total space on the map nearly half as large as the State of Rhode Island. And Rance, given an expert timber boss, was asked to cut that timber!

His last word to old Chad was this: "All you really want is the chance to let loose your experienced men. If I make that chance for you, see to it that you are not molested in getting out your lumber, my job then will be done. Is that it?"

"Your first job!" corrected old Chad. "There will be others!"

"My first job, then," chuckled Rance. "Okay. Buy me a broad-gauge car, one that'll fit the ox-cart ruts. Give me

five grand for possible expenses. I'll wire you in a month, or less."

"What d'you mean to do?"

Rance grinned, though the set of his jaw told the story of his determination.

"If you're able to find that car at once," he said quietly, "I'm going up into your woods tomorrow—alone!"

It came out that the new cars were not as yet available in broad gauge to fit ox-cart ruts—about the only sort of road to be found anywhere in the pine-woods, but Rance himself discovered a serviceable second-hand machine of this type when he went to Mobile. Saying farewell to Chad Christie at the train, Rance went immediately to the task of buying camp-equipment and provisions.

EARLY next afternoon he reached the town of Blackjack. As soon as Chad had mentioned the Romney, Bissell and McCaffery tracts of timber as being parts of his great purchase, Rance had grinned ironically. That meant Blackjack would be his permanent base of supplies!

He drew up the loaded car in front of the brick bank. Stopping only to take the loaded automatic from the seat holster back of his knees, and to thrust the weapon into the side pocket of his jacket, he got out and entered the bank.

Del Harmer, the station-agent, was inside, chatting. His eyes bulged at sight of Rance, whose exploit in knocking out the feared woods-bully Jolo Anstey had been discussed in excited whispers by the entire town. But he offered no word of greeting, and Rance paid no attention to him, going straight to the teller's grille, where a sullen-faced fellow named Harvey Morris served as general factotum. Rance already had an account in Mobile; but he knew that the one thing these townspeople would understand and respect would be some money in the local bank in his name.

Harvey Morris eyed him askance, but Rance set his jaw and seemed not to notice. "I want to start a checking-account here," he said briefly, and laid out three five-hundred-dollar bills.

Del Harmer choked out an expletive of surprise. Then, when Rance turned coldly in his direction, he hurried out the open door to spread this new tidbit of astonishing information. Of course the town of Blackjack, which subsisted chiefly on a weekly paper—rarely seeing one from Mobile, even—knew nothing at all of the fight held in New Orleans. How Rance Berlier ever had got hold of such

a sum of money, would be a throbbing question for many days to come.

The bookkeeper-teller mumbled something inarticulate, taking the bills back of the grille with him, and immediately examining them with a reading-glass. They were the largest Morris had ever seen, but they seemed genuine enough!

"Where'd you get these?" he demanded suspiciously.

"That is none of your business at all. They are genuine."

"Well, what if they are? That aint what I asked." He caught the stern, unsmiling expression of Rance's eyes, and fluttered in sudden panic. He grabbed in an open drawer, and brought up a shiny revolver, which he dumped on the ledge before them both.

"What is this? Do you make a practice of holding up prospective customers?" Rance jeered.

"No! But I have a feeling—" began Harvey indignantly.

"Suppress it!" advised Rance. "Bankers should be unemotional. Now, either give me a checkbook and passbook, and take the customary signatures, or else shove back that money. I'll deposit it elsewhere. I might tell you that for some years I intend to have an account in some bank of this region; and that my next deposit may well be ten times as large as this! Do you want me for a customer?"

Harvey Morris could not refuse, if he wanted to keep his job. So with grunts he made out an entry in a passbook, shoved out a checkbook, got the three necessary specimen signatures, and then breathed a sigh of relief as Rance Berlier walked out of the bank.

There was just one purchase Rance had forgotten. He went to the hardware store and made it. A twelve-gauge automatic shotgun with ribbed barrel, and two boxes of shells. One box was No. 8, for quail and rabbit; and the other was No. 1 chilled buck!

The storekeeper told a little later, almost in a whisper, how Rance had loaded up the weapon right away with the buck-shot. Taken together with the punishment of Jolo Anstey, this was sinister.

JOLO himself heard it, and went white under the mottled purple blotches of his cheeks. The fifteen-hundred-dollar deposit meant something altogether different, to him. He was scared; old sins were coming home to roost. He had to do something about it, and immediately!

The editor of the weekly paper came in with news that he suspected might be pertinent. Over at Bay Minette, across the bay from Mobile, a bank had been held up the previous day. Yes, there had been five-hundred-dollar bills in the loot—and the bandit had escaped!

Now the case against Rance Berlier, who at that moment was driving his old car northwestward and thinking only of the big problem of the squatter Cajans in the timber, was black indeed!

NOT a town-dweller of importance questioned it. Only Keene Porter, the dry and sarcastic justice of the peace, pointed out that a fugitive bank-robber scarcely would try to deposit his loot in cash the very next day—and in an adjacent county of the same State!

No one paid much attention to old Keene Porter, though, for the town of Blackjack was aroused and on the scent of blood.

So Jolo, who intimidated the hotel proprietor and saw to it that the hardware salesman—the only other witness of that memorable licking—was out of town, had a plausible tale all told: He had come to demand a payment of two hundred dollars, or else to have Rance Berlier serve out the two years and one month he had skipped of his bond. Jolo had no difficulty at all rounding up a posse of blood-hungry, shouting men, ready to go on the trail of a quarry—almost any sort of a quarry. A man, for choice. And when Jolo impressed upon them that this fugitive was a bold bank-robber, doubtless ready to shoot to kill the moment he believed himself cornered, the posse was ready and willing to shoot on sight also.

Japp Odell, the town marshal—who never in his life had been called upon to handle anything more serious than shiny-drunkenness—was called now to swear in the entire posse as deputies. Japp himself would stay at the jail. He had rheumatism which was genuine enough, and could not walk far. By the time the posse returned with their captive, however, Japp would conquer his aches well enough to get down to Gulfcrest or Citronelle, or somewhere else well out of the way. If they hanged somebody while Japp was away, what could a town marshal do about it?

Just before Jolo departed on the trail of blood, he got himself a few moments alone in the one really private phone-booth of the town—the booth up at the telephone office, which was a direct

wire to the exchange at Mobile. This was used by people who did not want Miss Merriwell at the desk to know their business.

Jolo talked restrainedly, for him. He cursed, and he told a thin-faced, fidgety lawyer fellow at the other end of the line, all about what was happening in Blackjack—and how the posse would go now, and come back only when Rance's hide was stretched to a board.

The middle-aged Mobile lawyer, whose name was Jake Casner, very nearly had a fit before he could shut up Jolo Anstey, who talked far too frankly on the wire. It was a terrible calamity, Jake was willing to agree, but don't talk any more about it! He, Jake, would be right up, as fast as a car could bring him. Go ahead and complete that business. Jake would join in, and help as soon as he could get there. After that, there would be something to chew over in private.

So as Jolo led his posse into the woods, a very scared lawyer jammed his foot on the accelerator of a car and went northward at sixty miles an hour until the good road ended. He had to take it slow from there on, to Blackjack. But Jake made up in worry, what he lacked in speed. For twenty-two years he and Jolo had split that trust income, looking upon it as part of their own due. Now to have it threatened—well, murder was only an incidental peril!

Jolo Anstey was far from satisfied, for he doubted that the posse, despite their wild talk, would do his job for him as swiftly as it must be done.

"I better make sartain of this, my own self!" gritted Jolo to himself.

AT the hardware store Rance had let drop the information that he expected to camp out in the woods for a spell. There was only one main road; and Jolo had made sure the tracks of the new tires of Rance's car led in that direction.

The one-eyed woods-bully offered a ride for two members of the posse; but only a lanky youth in overalls, named Bunny Leary—a tobacco-chewing half-wit who clutched a brown and ancient single-barreled shotgun—accepted. The others preferred to stick together, and follow a little later in the grocery truck. That refusal sealed the fate of the unfortunate Bunny Leary, for a plan had come full-blown to Jolo's crafty mind.

Bound northward into the silent woods, following the track of Rance's car, there

was only one incident. Anstey met a Cajan ox-cart bearing a load covered with gunnysacking. The load might be hampers of snap beans and okra, but it was more likely to be green "shinny" in four-gallon crocks.

The two Cajans, big, surly fellows named LeBlanc, showed no disposition to drive out of the road and let Jolo go by in the ruts. If he tried to go around the ox-cart he would go down to the hubs in sand. It took him five minutes of irascible argument before the Cajans, threatened with having information lodged against them as shinny-makers, sulkily led their yoked oxen out to one side and let the two white men through. Their black eyes flashed hate; and if Jolo had not been thinking of a more pressing matter, he might have shivered.

BUT Jolo did win by, and drove a half mile farther. Of a sudden then he gave a realistic start, and his hand momentarily gripped the thin shank of Bunny Leary.

"What was that—over in them bushes?" he whispered hoarsely. "Yo' eyes are better than mine." He pointed dramatically, then withdrew his arm. The unsuspecting half-wit lifted his shotgun, and stared over obediently into a tangle of anise and ti-ti, seeing nothing at all. The car lurched to a stop.

"I don' see nawthin'—" began Bunny.

That was as far as he got. The barrel of a .38 crunched down on the back of his head, knocking him unconscious.

Jolo descended from the car, careful to step on a tuft of grass where his footprints would not show. He looked back the way the car had come. Nothing.

He was just too late to see the swarthy, scowling face of one of the Le Blanc brothers, who had followed the slow-moving car, hoping no doubt that it would get stuck in the deep sand, and afford him a shot at one or both occupants. Le Blanc dodged into the covert, then crept closer. What he saw then puzzled and rather dismayed his mind.

Jolo aimed carefully at the stunned youth in the car. He fired one barrel of his shotgun straight at Bunny's head—*through one side of the windshield!*

This was a masterly touch. Who indeed would imagine that any man would smash up his own car this way?

After staring and listening, Jolo rapidly cleaned and reloaded his weapon, putting in a pair of No. 2's, and hurling both the empty shell and the full one

from the breach of his double-barrel, far into the scrub. They almost hit the watching Cajan, who picked them up.

Except for a jerk when the buckshot hit him, Bunny had not moved. He never would move again.

Jolo climbed in, managed to turn the machine, and drove back. Near the deserted turpentine still north of Dwight he came upon the grocery truck laden with the posse. Shotguns bristled in the air. The men hailed Jolo—and then came cries of horror as they saw the dead boy Bunny. He had been an object of dislike and contempt before; but now as Jolo, his empty eye-socket scarlet and his good eye blazing hate, told his story, half-witted Bunny Leary came near to being a hero.

"It *mought* have been a Cajan—but damned ef I think so!" was Jolo's conclusion. "I jest seen a car up ahead, loaded down, with a tarp over the back. Then somebody poked a gun over a bush an' let go!

"I was too scairt to move. But when I come to, the car up ahead had gone! I come back as fast as I c'd come! Fellas, thet no-'count woods-colt Rance wanted to git *me!*"

At that moment a dusty car driven by an agitated Mobile lawyer drove up behind the grocery truck. Jake had to hear the tale all over again. With no more than a bitter glance at this rough-and-ready but too daring confederate, Jake gave it as his considered opinion that any man who would do what Rance Berlier had done, ought to be shot down like a mad dog. He even offered to accompany them.

Their morale strengthened, the posse—now nothing but a bloodthirsty mob—left the truck and started into the woods on foot after Rance.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER leaving Blackjack, Rance followed the sandy highway several miles, bucking drifts almost as large as dunes, digging a way through when the sturdy car could not make it without help. The oak scrub, squat second-growth pine and maroon-starred anise gave way to thickets and small trees.

On still further. Rance was bound for a forest where the traveling mills, sent through certain parts a generation before, had not gone. Of a sudden, there were taller trees upon the ridges.

The road began to twist, climbing among black, silent boles. Here the pines were gashed cruelly. Beardings of whitened, dried gum trailed from the deep notches down into tin basins nailed beneath.

The trees were pitch-bearers, which in time would give all their sap to the thirsty turpentine stills. The trees themselves would decay and fall, so much dry punk. For lumber they would be no good at all.

This was Cajan country, where an intruder ventures at grave risk. Rance already had gone farther than the boundaries he recalled from boyhood. He no longer saw cabins built near the road. Cajans hide their homes carefully.

HE stopped the car to consult his odometer, and the large-scale map furnished him by Chad Christie. He had been correct. Just ahead here a little way, a wood road departed from the so-called highway; and he would have to watch carefully. Such wood roads were the faintest of tracks, often screened almost completely by resilient branches from the sides, through which imperturbable oxen would push their way slowly. This road, though, must have been used quite a little. It led to the two camps Chad's men had established, in their first fruitless attempt to cut the timber. There was not a soul of those two lumber-crews left there now. The Cajans had driven them all from the woods.

Rance found the road, which was not as dim as most, and turned onto it, left. Here immediately the difficulties of driving were greater. Where the sand showed at all, it was high in sculptured dunes which had to be shoveled away. There were fallen tree-trunks over which oxen could pull anything, but where the automobile had hard going. Projecting stumps in the middle of the road threatened the car's clearance. Scraggy roots, worn clean by sub-tropical cloudbursts, projected a foot above the ground.

Time and again Rance pried the car over such obstructions with a crowbar. Other times his ax alone opened the way. After three-quarters of an hour more of slow travel with many enforced stops, he had come sixteen miles from Black-jack. Over there somewhere, about ten miles, lay the railway; but stops were few and of no importance until the steel reached a town in Mississippi, eighty miles distant. Over to the east fifteen



"Be seeing you, Julie dear!" he whispered.
"Get away—and find your father!"

miles or so, lay the county seat. This had a handful of whites, a few negroes and perhaps a dozen Cajans. There was little pretense at a county organization, and less attempt to enforce law. Here in the heart of the pine woods a shotgun was the only force readily obeyed.

Suddenly Rance heard the excited yelp of a dog—then again! Was he being stalked by a man with a dog?

Listening and watching carefully told him no more. The dog made no further sound, though it had surely been there in the woods no more than two hundred feet from him when it barked. Rance started the car again and went perhaps a mile farther.

Then he reached a stream he guessed was the Chickasawaya River—here little more than a trickle of creek. On the bank was a black-charred oblong one hundred feet by twenty, where once a logging shack had stood. Smaller heaps of ashes showed where the other buildings of the camp had met a similar fate.

There was a second and larger camp over across the Mississippi line, but Rance was not concerned with ruins. His was the first and most necessary step, before any rebuilding, or cutting of the standing timber, could be contemplated. He must get in touch with the Cajans who had done this, who had driven out the lumbermen,—killing several and terrorizing all of them,—and in some manner make peace and persuade them to allow the land to be timbered.

Rance got out, listened, and then took a cautious look around. He observed that there had been little tree-felling done. Apparently the log buildings just had been erected, when they were deserted and destroyed. The tall, silent forest here showed no scars of pitch-gatherers, either. That meant, probably, that there were no woods negroes or "po' whites" here at all. Cajans themselves, except those who have had considerable intercourse with town dwellers, do not gather pitch to any great extent. At any rate the trees of the forest were tall, straight and unspoiled. Huge wealth lay here waiting.

A queer sensation of uneasiness, which he himself put down to knowledge of real peril and the coming of nightfall made itself felt as Rance made camp. Supper this night was simple—coffee, a can of pork and beans, bread, butter and a can of peaches for dessert. Later he would find game to supplement this fare.

With pine needles for a mattress, rolled up in his blankets, Rance went into soundless slumber only an hour or so after darkness came. There were no dangerous animals to worry about; his only peril was—Cajans.

And indeed as the queer vestigial sixth sense had warned him, he had been under constant observation ever since he had driven the toiling flivver into the wood road. Yet nothing wakened him, though during the darkest time before the dawn a Cajan did come into the new camp on all-fours. He had a long knife in his belt ready for use, but he did not use it. Instead he busied himself with another operation, and then left as silently as he had come.

IN the misty dampness of sunrise Rance awoke. His blankets and face were wet with dew. He sat up, and immediately noticed that something was about his ankles—something which he had not put there the night before.

It was a thin loop of cheap coir rope. It was not drawn tight, but evidently had been slipped over his ankles—blanket-swathed as they were—as he slept!

The thin brown line of cord led into the underbrush, and seemed fastened to something there. Rance, now wide awake and wondering, followed it to its end in a narrow glade of the woods. There in the soft mold of forest ages had been dug a sort of trench, six feet long by about three wide, and some two

feet deep. His own shovel, the one he had employed to dig a road through sand, had been used. It lay at one side.

At the head of this six-foot trench now stood something which brought shivers to Rance's spine. It was a rude cross made of pine branches; to its base was attached the other end of the coir rope!

A Cajan threat—a warning! A grave, and waiting for Rance, if he stayed.

He could not guess, of course, the fate that hunted him like a mad dog, back along the highway to Blackjack; but just the same his resolution did not waver. He would stay right here in the woods.

Picking up his new shotgun, he went down to the stream for a drink of cold water and a wash. Five minutes later he left the camp exactly as it was, and trudged away into the forest on the first stage of his search.

CHAPTER VII

SOMETIME earlier than this moment when Rance set forth blindly on his search for the forest folk, trouble which was to concern him directly had come to a head among the Cajans themselves. The sullen-featured, high-cheekboned Louis Jacques, who two nights later would crawl into Rance's camp on all-fours to leave the grim warning, had gone to call upon a girl whose father did not have any use for Louis whatsoever.

Louis resented the power and authority old Nicholas Berlier arrogated to himself; the white-bearded, calm-eyed patriarch for years had used an authority among the forest folk which was much like that of an old-time absolute monarch of France.

True, old Nick Berlier had no method of enforcing his judgments and commands; yet they were bowed to and obeyed just the same. He was one of the very few Cajans who had been out into the world, acquired education and what seemed a huge fortune as gauged by woods standards, and then had come back to give his people the benefit of his experience and advice.

The sneering-mouthed Louis Jacques, who himself had made a good thing out of buying up green shinny at lowest prices, and selling it to white men who flavored it, aged it a few months, then bottled it as Scotch whisky, saw no reason why he should not be thought a very superior young man. Why should any

girl, even if she had been down to a place called Tulane University for a few winters, think he was not fully as good as she?

Finally, what authority did old Nick have over the girl, anyhow? He called himself her father, but everyone knew that was not true. She was plain Julia Reynolds, daughter of that fool New York painter who died down in Citronelle. Nick Berlier had heard of her hard struggle to make some kind of a living, and had helped her—when her own people would not even provide a job as nurse or maid, to help her keep soul and body together.

Now Julie was through school, and back home again. Louis Jacques had called several times without making any headway at all; but he had decided rather violently that he was going to have Julie for his woman—his wife, if necessary. She was worth looking at; and she was stronger now, too, able to cook and keep house like anyone else. Yes, Louis was prepared to marry her, though he did not care too much about such bonds.

But right now this day he meant to do something about it!

The two-floored log house of Berlier, twice the size of any other Cajan habitation, had glass in all the windows, and was said to have a basement wherein stood a tin monster called a pipeless furnace. This could send up hot air like a volcano, the few days in winter it got cold enough to make hearth fires insufficient.

DESPITE his hundreds of dollars salted away, and the good clothes he wore (brand-new overalls, shoes, socks of the hue of cooked shrimps, a black-and-white checked shirt, and a tie which incredibly matched his socks), Louis always had a feeling of trepidation when he approached the big house, and tried to see Julie.

This day the feeling was amply justified. He was met by white-bearded, black-skullcapped Nick Berlier, who did not care at all for Louis or his tribe.

"Good day, Mr. Jacques," greeted the old Cajan courteously. He did not offer to take the young man inside his home, which was exceptional, but stepped out to the front gallery, closing the door at his back. "How can I serve you?"

"I came to see Miss Julie," blurted Louis, nettled at the reception. "Where is she?"

"Julie is in the house—but she is not in to you," returned Nick Berlier grimly. "I told you last week, Louis, that I did not have anything personally against you. Only, I don't want you to bother Julie. She does not like you."

"I don't believe it!" contradicted the young man hotly. "Bring her here! I want to talk to her—not to an old man who isn't even her kin!"

For a moment the old man's eyes smoldered. But when he spoke again his voice was well controlled.

"You are right," he acknowledged. "Julie is not my flesh and blood, though she has taken the place of my daughter who died many years ago. I shall always be a father to her. And the chief duty of a father is to keep away undesirable suitors."

"Undesirable?" cried Louis. "What do you mean?"

"I shall tell you fast enough," came the cold reply. "If you seek some woman in marriage, why not marry Celeste Bombazanne, by whom I hear you have two children?"

LOUIS started. He did not imagine that this entanglement had become known up here in the woods.

"Celeste is dead!" he cried, and then could have bitten his tongue.

"I knew that too," said Nick Berlier dryly. "And *that* is why I will not have you bothering my girl! Go—and never return!"

He pointed toward the reaches of the woods, and his hand did not tremble. There was nothing to do but obey. Louis cursed under his breath, turned and flung away, mentally resolving to have revenge. Also, Louis would get Julie—though not until the old man was out of the way.

The instant he was shrouded in oak scrub, away from the big log house, a chance for petty vengeance came his way. And Louis, feeling as he did just then, was not the man to ignore it.

The valuable and pampered little pedigreed Scottie belonging to Julie herself ran up to Louis, smelled at his overall leg, and growled threateningly. Louis reached down, seized the coal-black canine mite, and clamped a hand over the dog's muzzle so it could not bark. Then Louis made tracks for the deeper forest. He had heard that Julie had paid some preposterous sum like two hundred dollars for this utterly useless caricature of a dog. And the Cajan knew the girl



"Git ready to die, fella!" bade Louis.

loved her pet. She would come out calling it, and searching. *That* would be the opportunity for Louis Jacques!

In order to insure the success of his trap, Louis took a rabbit snare, and tightened it around the black Scottie's hind legs. When the supple sapling straightened, the dog was pulled upward until only his fore legs remained on the ground. From this excruciating position he sent forth agonized yelps.

But Louis Jacques had planned a little too well, or gone a trifle too far. The dog's cries did not reach the ears of its mistress, even when she went out in the dark, anxiously calling and searching.

Next morning, after a sleepless night of worry, she went out again, and searched all day. But the one time she did pass near to the place where the half-dead pet was held in the snare, the dog had given up yelping and had lapsed into a coma. And Louis had gone away for an hour, seeking a bite of food, and a drink of his own shinny. So Julie, disconsolate, gave up the dog for lost. . . .

Louis Jacques had been given a surprise which banished all thoughts of Julie and her pet dog, for the moment. A stranger had come into the woods, driving a car and carrying camping equipment! He had come straight to the burned logging-camp!

The reason why this was of such importance to Louis was because Louis lately had purchased a big copper still of his own. He had not used it even once as yet; his mash hogsheads were still fermenting. But the still lay hidden down

there on the bank of the Chickasawaya River, less than one hundred yards from the spot where Rance Berlier had made his camp. Louis Jacques was out in the world too often, selling his liquid wares, to think that he could murder a white visitor to the woods, the way he would have killed off any Cajan.

But Louis did leave a warning. He then went down to the thickets near his still. If anybody came down *there*, that person was just simply out of luck! Even Cajans would absolve him completely, for guarding his own!

CHAPTER VIII

RANCE, conscious after a little while that he could have used some breakfast, trudged slowly through the forest, relying upon eyes and ears rather than speed and exhaustive search. He knew there were many Cajan cabins scattered here and there through the woods. The job was to find just one that was occupied, and persuade the man or woman to act as his intermediary.

About a half mile or so from the river bank where he had camped, Rance did come upon a rickety and empty cabin. There were interstices between the hand-hewn boards, and only the fact that the roof eaves leaned against a chinaberry tree kept the structure from collapsing. A glance through the open doorway showed that no one was here at the moment. Rance hesitatingly crossed the threshold, and his eyes, focusing in the semi-dark, frowned down questioningly at oblong patches of white upon the board floor. There were eighteen or twenty of them. They looked like leaves of a book, set about the floor according to some odd pattern. Then Rance saw they were held down in place by pins.

Unknowingly, he had chanced upon the out-of-the-way shack where a white-bearded old man came to be alone and to indulge a secret passion. Catalogues!

The time had been when old Nick Berlier had been an antique dealer and his own auctioneer. In those days he dwelt frugally in the city, and bought none at all of the goods he sold. But out here in the woods, with nothing to beautify once his two-story log house was furnished with precious things which only he and Julie appreciated, he had needed scope for his imagination. The catalogues from the metropolitan centers of the world helped him dream. . . .

Rance began to smile. Some one, a Cajan of course, was planning a city mansion for the time when his ship came in—or for the happy day when Schley paper-shell pecans again sold for one dollar a pound in the shell.

Rance himself yearned to own a big car. Just let him fulfill his mission here with the Cajans, cash in with old Chadwick Christie— He started up guiltily. Already he was thinking of possible rewards, when his fight had not yet begun!

The far-off, despairing, agonized yelp of a dog had come to his ears. Rance recalled that he had heard a dog bark the night before; and afterward he had been handed that grim warning of the cross and the grave. What would come this time?

Circling warily, Rance twenty minutes later found the half-dead dog, still suspended from the noose and sapling, where Louis Jacques had placed it. Rance instantly cut the noose from the stone-cold hind legs, chafed those members, and then patted the oversize, grotesque head when the Scottie opened one eye, sniffed, and then tried to lick Rance's hand.

Rance made a curious mistake in regard to the dog's name. Bobby Bruce, the Scottie, had a leather collar with a gold plate. On this plate was etched in fine, slanting script:

S. S. Van Dine
AKC—67—45630972

"From the steamship *Van Dine*," mused Rance wonderingly. "Well, old man, you're a long way inland! Reckon I'd better take care of you for a while. It doesn't look as though you'd be able to walk again for some time."

There seemed to be no bones broken, but when the man put Bobby Bruce on the ground the Scottie could do no more than drag his hind legs and whimper plaintively, looking up from anguished eyes. Rance could not stand that.

"Got to take care of you, darn your soul!" he growled, and picked up the dog again, striding through the woods.

But Rance had taken no more than a dozen steps, when he halted. He saw from the tail of his eye a leveled shotgun, and a scowling Cajan face behind it.

"Wait, stranger!" came the velvety, cruel voice of Louis Jacques. "You-all don't believe in warnings—is that right? Put down thet-thar dawg, an' then we'll see about *you*!"

Cursing himself for carelessness, Rance obeyed, and then raised his hands above his shoulders.

"Are you a Cajan?" he demanded. "I came here looking for a Cajan—one who might like to make a thousand dollars!"

That was a bid for life, but the man with the shotgun did not seem jolted out of his caution. "Got it in yore pocket?" he demanded.

"Of course not," retorted Rance coldly. "It's in the bank back at Blackjack. But—"

"Then it aint goin' to help yo' none at all! Git ready to die, fella!" bade Louis. He ran the tip of a red tongue out over his full red lips. The murder of an interloper like this one would just about put Louis back into good humor again. Of course there would be no repercussions. Who in the world kept tabs on the goings and comings of fool white men who came up to camp in the piney-woods?

Rance felt the chill of genuine peril, but his face gave no sign.

"The little dog acts as though his back is broken," he said, indicating the Scottie.

Involuntarily the Cajan let his eyes fall to where the animal was trying ineffectually to get to his feet in spite of the numbed legs.

With ring footwork, and a diving lunge to deflect the shotgun muzzle as the weapon exploded deafeningly, Rance reached his man. One smashing left, and then a jarring right to the side of the head, and the Cajan was licked. His shotgun, still smoking, fell to the ground and was kicked out of the way. Rance leaped upon the man himself as he fell, but there was no need for further blows.

Rance made sure the man had no other weapon with him. Then as Louis was recovering, the visitor gave him a contemptuous kick and chased him away, stumbling, into the woods. He might try bushwhacking; but Rance did not think so. Louis was more apt to go away somewhere and pretend absolute ignorance of the encounter.

THE shotgun he captured, Rance took down and dumped in the creek. Its breath of destruction had not missed his neck by more than a few inches; but ring warfare deals in fractions of an inch. Rance gave the incident little further thought. He came back for the black dog, picked him up, and patted his head.

"Can't leave you here, old fellow," he said. "Maybe it'd be more merciful just to shoot you now—"

"Drop that dog, you thief! Put it down, or I'll shoot!"

It was the voice of a girl—a voice ex-

cited, distraught. Julie Reynolds was a lonely girl, and little Bobby Bruce meant friendship and love, to her. She had chanced to hear a shot, and had come to see who was near and if he had any news of the missing Scottie.

To see this tall white man calmly carrying Bobby away! In a moment Julie would realize that something was wrong with her deductions; that if this man had stolen the pedigreed dog two nights and a day earlier, he surely must have got farther away with the prize by this time. But at first glance the blue-eyed, fair-haired Julie Reynolds, holding her little .25 automatic leveled, was almost as near shooting as Louis Jacques had been.

With a sense of utter unreality, Rance turned and looked at her. He put his hands shoulder high, while down on the ground the black Scottie whimpered, and tried to drag himself to his mistress.

"Nice, sociable bit of woods you've got here," said Rance dryly then. "I get held up twice in ten minutes."

The fair sex never had meant much to him. But here a swift tingle came to the man, then a rush of delight. This was a tall, slim, pretty girl—and he thought he recalled who she was! A mournful, long-legged little girl with pig-tails down her back. . . . Reynard? No. Reynolds! Daughter of that painter!

"*You* are held up! What are you talking about?" she asked sharply, coloring with indignation. "What did you do to my dog?" There was a quiver in her voice now. "You b-broke his—"

"No, Miss Reynolds," said Rance gravely. "I found him caught in a rabbit snare, back there a little way. He couldn't walk, so I picked him up. There was a name but no address on his collar, so I didn't know just what to do."

DISREGARDING the weapon, Rance lowered his hands, picked up the Scottie, and walked toward the girl. The dog licked his hand, and then whimpered and wriggled his tail in anxiety to be taken by his mistress.

Though she did not mention the fact, Julie saw Bobby lick the hand of this big young stranger. That probably turned the scales, since the animal was usually intolerant toward anyone save herself and old Berlier. In the stress of the moment she felt a thrill of surprise that the newcomer knew her name; but then the injured dog took her attention. She put the automatic into her pocket, and

took her pet from Rance, snuggling him against her cheek, while a mist of tears came to her eyes.

"I think he'll be able to walk, once the numbness wears away," Rance told her. "I couldn't find any broken bones."

In all truth Julie Reynolds hungered for the society of her own kind. Though she loved the woods, and the old man who had been her benefactor, the years she had spent in New Orleans had made her fond of company—especially the light-hearted kind. At college she had been swamped with male attentions; but since coming back to the forest, identifying herself with the Cajans, the boys she had known had dropped away. Three or four had come up for visits—one visit each. Then they had come no more, and even their letters died away. Julie was hurt; but she never had thought it at all necessary to explain that she herself was not a Cajan. To her, Cajans were just like other people—except possibly a little more decent and generous to those who were unfortunate.

NOW Julie was easily convinced. This big stranger was different from any other man she had ever known.

She sat down on a log while she rubbed the legs of her pet; and Rance sat beside her. Naturally enough, he told her of the meeting with the Cajan Louis, just a few moments earlier.

In that moment, when they naturally exchanged names, Rance came to the verge of the most astounding and appalling discovery of his lifetime. But it was postponed. A chance remark of his own, after he had been permitted to call the girl Julie, and had given his own name of Rance, changed everything. He had a good-enough excuse. The fact that the first Cajan he met had come within inches of killing him left the man with a certain grim animosity toward Cajans.

"The reason I'm here in the woods," he told her, "is to have a stab at making peace with the people who chased out those two timber-crews awhile back. I am working for the man who owns the timber. It doesn't seem that I've made a very propitious start."

"Well," she replied with a shrug, "you mustn't take that as any criterion. If the man who was going to shoot you was my boy-friend Louis, I can tell you he isn't a fair sample. But of course I know all Cajans hate people who come here to chase them from their holdings. I know my father—" She bit her lip,

thinking how little the old man would like her to be sitting here on terms of easy friendship with one of the hated enemies from the North.

Rance had been under the impression that Reynolds, her father, had died years before; but evidently that was a mistake. Probably he had just been in ill health, and had recovered by living out here in the pine-clad hills—the actual spot where all the many Muscogee tribes of Indians once sent their sick braves to recuperate.

“I am going to try to offer the Cajans a genuine bargain they’ll find it hard to resist,” he said quietly. “My employer owns all this land. I am going to employ Cajans, if they will work for him—and me. I am going to offer each one who actually has a cabin here, a home-site deed to that, with enough land for truck-farming, and enough standing timber to take care of his wants and those of his family. Besides this, I can pay Cajan woodsmen bigger wages than they ever heard of in their lives.

“But I see it may take a long time to get anyone even to listen to me. I’d be proud to meet your father, Julie. No doubt, living right here, he could help me pound a little sense into the heads of these Cajans!”

There it was, the one thing which the girl would resent instantly and bitterly. She recoiled as if he had struck her, and leaped to her feet, the dog in her arms.

“My *daddy* is Cajan!” she cried, eyes flashing, and quick color mounting to her cheeks. “And if you don’t think *he* has more sense than any damn-Yankee in the whole world—”

“Oh, my Lord!” breathed Rance. “I didn’t mean it *that* way! This one who was going to shoot me before he as much as heard what I wanted—”

BUT words could not stem the girl’s resentment now. In vain Rance attempted to explain that he was as much a Southerner as herself. Not that he put any stock in sectional distinctions.

“I suppose it must give you a shock,” she concluded with a toss of her head. “But I think if you stay long around here, there will be many worse ones coming to—to such as you! You will fail, of course. I may say—”

“Julie,” came a quiet, stern voice from the scrub near at hand, “it does no good to lose your temper with strangers. Come along. I care nothing about this man or his business here!”

Rance swung about, smothering an ejaculation. So her father had heard what he had said! There was no chance to explain or apologize, however. A man’s figure stood there, shielded from detailed view by the branches of thicket. The gun he held was not veiled in any way. It pointed directly at Rance, who tried in vain to stutter out some kind of entreaty for a talk.

The white-haired man behind the bush maintained a stern and scornful silence.

“There are black dogs of various kinds!” observed Julie over her shoulder, as she marched away into the scrub. “I prefer mine!”

CHAPTER IX

RANCE was not one to waste much time over spilt milk. Julie Reynolds, however, was a girl he would have liked to know far better—when she was in a friendly mood.

“Darned if I ever heard of a Cajan named Reynolds,” he muttered with a scowl. “How could I know? Now if it’d been the other way around, *she* might have thought my name of Berlier had a Cajan sound to it.

“Anyway, if her old dad was listening, he heard me tell what business brought me to the woods. So he probably wouldn’t have done anything more’n take a shot at me, if I’d gone to him not in Julie’s company. Oh, damn it all, now I’ve got to hunt up somebody else.”

He set out through the woods at right angles to the course taken by Julie and her father. But a long ramble in a half-circle through the forest proved fruitless. He came upon two Cajan habitations: one of them was empty; from the other, at sound of his hail, a stoop-shouldered woman, dragging a barefooted urchin about four years of age, darted out the back, into the underbrush, evidently scared half out of her wits at the approach of a stranger. There was no sign of her man anywhere. Rance shrugged finally, and resumed his stalk through the woods. He was hungry now. Better get back to his car, and cook himself a meal.

Ten minutes later he came to a branch he had crossed, a trickle of water over which the branches interlaced and tangled with interminable strands of the thorny Choctaw rose, making a long funnel or tube. He paused with one foot on the fallen log used for a bridge. A mutter of

men's voices had reached him, though he could not discern the speakers.

Rance moved cautiously upstream in the direction of the sound. This might be the chance he wanted, to talk to some Cajans before they were prejudiced against him.

Before he came in sight of the talkers, who seemed to be farther away than he first imagined, a crackling blaze off at his right, in the vicinity of his own camp, caught his ears—then his eyes, as he moved that way. Who could have built a big fire there? Woodsmen of all sorts use the smallest possible cooking-fires.

A couple of minutes later, his face grim and harsh with the seething bitterness within, he stood in a covert near the destroyed logging-camp above the little river, where he had stopped. There on the other side of the clearing, his car, with all his camp equipment and supplies, was a roaring forge of fire! Tongues of flame licked through the top, and high into the air. The gasoline long since had added its volatile help, and there was no possibility of approaching near enough to save anything at all.

One of the tires exploded, then another. Then a few seconds later came a snapping as of firecrackers. The fire had reached Rance's ammunition. He felt his pockets, reassuring himself that he had a couple extra clips for the pistol, and a few shells with which to reload the shotgun.

Reverting to primeval man, he stalked the voices he had heard a few minutes earlier. He determined after some minutes that the two or more talkers, whose voices still could be heard in occasional mumbles, were still farther upstream. The latticed branch acted as a sort of speaking-tube. The air-current, moving down with the flowing water, carried sounds far.

Finally, unheard and unsuspected, he looked out at a tiny blue-green glow of fire, and two seated figures of men. The curious flame was that of a portable alcohol stove, just now being used for making chicory-coffee.

EVEN before he got close enough to distinguish details, Rance knew these were not Cajans. In a forest where fat pine lies at hand everywhere, offering a quick, hot fire to anyone with a match, alcohol stoves were unknown. Only strangers brought them; and even they soon threw them aside.

Rance slowly advanced. Now he could distinguish one of the talkers, the one

with the lighter, oilier voice. He was a complete stranger, a city man, to judge by his Panama hat, white shirt, blue tie and two-piece gray flannel suit. Only his high laced boots of cordovan—for a protection against poisonous snakes—were a concession to the pine-woods. But the second man loomed familiar to the watcher—his old enemy Jolo Anstey. Rance's jaw tightened. It would be quite like the one-eyed bully to destroy the car and the supplies.

Jolo grunted and set down his tin cup. "He'll come back for his car sometime," he said, evidently repeating a previous speech. "All we got to do is wait. Bitzi'll find him. All I hope is Bitzi don't shoot right off. I got somep'n to do—afore that pup dies!"

"You're still drunk," said Jake coldly. "Sober up quick and get some sense. I want to see Berlier dead, and I'll breathe a long sigh of relief when he is. But murder isn't my line. Sometimes I wish it was!"

"All yo' need's some sand in yo' craw! I got plenty!" boasted Jolo contemptuously.

"I sometimes wonder," drawled the Mobile lawyer.

"Rats to yo'!" snarled Jolo. "Just lemme git thet no-'count woods colt down under me, an'—" He made a significant downward gesture of gouging with his thumbs.

Rance had been racking his brain to imagine some reason why the city stranger desired his death, and finding none. Jolo, of course, was no enigma, although now there seemed to be some secret held in common by the two men!

Rance strained forward to listen to the next words.

The lawyer poured more coffee. "Look at it this way, Jolo," he said persuasively. "The Cajans, Bitzi and Louis, will shoot him on sight. So will the posse that's hunting him for the murder of that half-wit boy. You and I will probably see him first, and we'll shoot first and ask questions afterward. Yes! You'd better agree to that!" he added sharply, as the heavy man shook his head and snorted. "You had one taste of Rance's fists, and your face will never be the same again. Want some more, do you?"

"Go to hell!" snarled Jolo thickly. "I'll get hold of him somehow, an' when I do, I'll make him wish t'hell he'd never seen outside of a crib-stall, I will!"

"All right—you, Jolo!" said Rance coldly, coming out into the open, and

covering the two coffee-drinkers with his pistol. "I'm here, and I'm ready to—"

That was as far as he got. Behind him sounded a sharply intaken breath. Some one had slipped up behind him—had come upon him silently.

As Rance whirled in surprise, trying to bring his weapon to bear upon the stealthy attacker, the body of a man launched itself at him. The upraised bare arm ended in a hand that clutched a long knife.

The attacker had not been quite ready, and the fact was all that saved even as accomplished a boxer as Rance. He ducked. The man's knife whished down, missing. And then in a split second Rance had thrown him over his shoulder, straight at the two who had been seated there beside the coffee-pot, and who now had drawn weapons and were looking for a chance to make out who was in the thicket.

Rance did not join the issue just then. He wanted a chance to think. Killing these three—the third being a Cajan, and unwashed, as he had found out in the moment of grappling and throwing—would not settle anything. There were others, a posse, after Rance! He was accused, it seemed, of murdering some half-wit boy!

Swiftly he ducked and dodged away. He lost the shotgun, and out of the tail of his eye he saw Jolo leap for it and throw it to horizontal.

Dropping flat, Rance scrambled for the protection of a thicket. The shot-

gun exploded, but the load of buckshot clipped through the thicket a yard at one side.

A moment later he doubled down a branch, then sought the thicker forest. He had nothing but the pistol now, but it scarcely mattered much. Firearms could not blast a way to freedom for him through a triple ring of enemies thirsting for his blood.

CHAPTER X

RANCE BERLIER had proved in the ring that he could take it, and keep plugging onward—even when trying was palpably hopeless. So it was that he resumed his search for other Cajans who might listen to him. And oddly enough, he found them, though that did not solve many of his difficulties.

He came upon a straggly-bearded Cajan and three grown sons. There was a bent woman, probably the wife and mother, hovering in the back of the place; but Rance did not meet her.

The men looked at the newcomer distrustfully; but as he came alone and with nothing but a short-gun as a weapon, they did not take alarm. They were comparative newcomers here in the deeper woods. They had lived for years over near the prison at Calvert, and so knew a good deal about white men and their ways.

Rance nodded to each, in the silent way of the Cajans. Then he hunkered



Not even a jack rabbit could have hopped out of there and completed a successful dash for safety.

down on his heels. He started to talk, telling the same story he had begun to tell Julie, only in far simpler language, and in greater detail.

Aware of how terribly cramped for time he doubtless was, how those who wanted him to die were closing in, stopping all roads by which a fugitive could depart this section of the woods, Rance nevertheless argued clearly and earnestly, without any indication that he did not have the rest of a long lifetime to devote to this particular problem and its leisurely exposition.

And he would have been cramped even in one lifetime, if he had been compelled to persuade these four to any direct course of action immediately. But that was not the case. The Cajans listened, and from certain turnings of their dark eyes toward one another, and a few sounds made by the bearded father, Rance knew that they did not completely believe him—and yet their interest certainly was won by the promise of home-site deeds and three silver dollars a day for doing nothing but cut down trees and drag them to a railroad a few miles away. Oxen could do the dragging. As far as the tree-cutting went—well, they did a lot of that every day anyhow.

Here the fact that the family of Charliers had been chased from cleared land wanted for a big satsuma orchard, weighed a trifle in Rance's favor. These Cajans knew what it meant *not* to own a tract of land on which their home cabin stood, and to see a stern band of white men come and make them move, demolishing the cabin!

Even so, the four Charliers were not ready to say anything encouraging. When Rance had done and stood up, trying to press gently for a promise that at the very least these men would carry the word to other Cajans, and make an issue of the decision, he got slow bows and acquiescence from Père Charlier and his eldest son. But what that assent meant, the old man went on to say.

"You speak well," he returned courteously in the Cajan patois—which is mixed English, French, Spanish and Choctaw, but not impossible to understand unless fired fast at an unprepared listener, "but we cannot say what we think. We must ask Nick."

"Nick?" repeated Rance. "Who is he?"

A GAIN he came within the space of a breath of hearing something which would have stricken him speechless. But

the evasiveness of the Cajans saved him for a greater shock later.

"Old Nick o' the Woods!" said one of the sons, and instantly shifted as his father frowned.

"There are some whose counsels are wise," was all the bearded father would tell. "We will carry your message and ask what the others think."

"Would it not be all right for me to go with you—and talk to him you call Old Nick?" asked Rance. "I would tell him nothing more or less. You will stand with me as I speak. And if he advises for me, I am ready to give guarantees concerning the plots of land on which your cabins stand."

"I do not see why not, *père!*" said the youngest of the sons eagerly, then drew back, coloring, as the bearded father frowned down such lack of control.

BUT it seemed Rance had established himself better with these folk than he had done elsewhere in the woods. After a moment they took him into the cabin, solemnly handed around a gallon jug of shinny, from which he had to strangle a drink which made his eyes pop, and then led him away on a long footpath through the forest.

Rance was second in line, following the father of the clan. The sons stepped in the footprints of the two leaders. And once, when they pursued a winding way across a stretch of swamp where to either side a man might have disappeared and left no trace, Rance felt a hand drop lightly on his shoulder.

It was only the young Charlier behind, guiding Rance. And yet for a fleeting instant the visitor to the woods tasted death in a quagmire where that hand might have thrown him all too easily.

But then he emerged to a part of the woods he recognized. He had been here just a few hours—or was it half a lifetime?—before. This was the curious leaning cabin, with its eaves resting against the broken umbrella of a chinaberry tree. And here it was that those strange pages of catalogues were pinned to the floor!

"The shade is down!" said the eldest Charlier, turning to wag his beard solemnly; apparently that battened window was a signal they all knew, for the three boys following Rance made sounds of satisfaction with their tongues, though none spoke in answer.

Père Charlier advanced, gave a peculiar throaty cry which was answered faintly but identically from within the

cabin. With no hesitation he led the way inside.

Rance followed. In the darkness of the interior—the one window was covered by a cloth, and the door now had a baize hanging which each of the visitors had to lift aside—a trident of candles burned. The wavering light showed Rance a crouched figure, that of a man for a moment he thought must be the same white-beard he had glimpsed through the thicket—the fellow Reynolds, who had allowed him no chance to explain his intolerance of Cajans!

He saw the four Cajans bow decorously again, and range themselves standing against the outside wall. The old fellow, who had been leaning and blinking over the catalogue pages on the board floor—with a pile of what looked like new catalogues at his side, a pair of long-bladed scissors, a black crayon, a paper of common pins at his right hand—now straightened up, bowed decorously to each one of the four Cajans in turn, and then walked back and seated himself upon a three-legged stool. He hunched forward, pointedly ignoring Rance—who bowed, rather numbly. The old man's white beard came down to his thighs as he crouched a little forward on the stool.

USED to formal introductions, Rance waited. The silence grew so intense that a guttering sound from one of the three tapers came in the silence like the premonitory bubbling of a geyser. Were they waiting for him to speak?

"Sir!" he said, his resonant voice sounding harsh in the silence.

"Mr. Rance Berlier!" acknowledged the oldster in a voice whose depth and gravity outmatched Rance's own.

The visitor felt a constriction of hopelessness in his heart. This oldster knew even his last name! For the second time, however, he stated his proposals—even more clearly and concisely than he had been able when speaking to the four Cajans. Provided only that listeners were prepared to take his guarantees, it seemed to Rance that acceptance was unavoidable.

But all the while the old man's eyes held his, scarcely winking. The very air was charged with an electricity of antagonism. When Rance had finished, the spark crashed.

"I pay you the compliment of admitting that you no doubt believe what you have said," the old man said, only a slight quaver denoting how severely

he was repressing wrath. "However, you have not been told the truth! There is no truth *in* Chadwick Christie, or any of his promises!

"Go back and tell him, sir, that as long as I live, neither he nor his will cut timber here! He knows full well the price he would have to pay!"

"Price?" Rance caught him up, for the moment ignoring the mention of past treachery in respect to Chad Christie. "If it is a just price, I'm sure Mr. Christie—"

"Never!" rasped the white-haired arbiter of the Cajan fortunes. "Let him come to me and pay it! Then I will bargain for the trees, and for the ten-acre tracts as home-sites for the dwellers of my forest! Yes—then I will bargain, *when he comes to me!*"

Inexpressibly sinister was the suggestion behind those words. The old fellow's seamed face worked with scorn and anger. But Rance saw fit to ignore the implications, and hold the patriarch to the only sort of promise he offered. At least this might be a basis for negotiations; and Rance doubted that when all truths were recognized, that Chad Christie knowingly had perpetrated any great injustice here.

"I hold you to that offer!" cried Rance. "I shall bring Mr. Christie here just as soon as he can come!" For the moment the visitor was carried away, forgetting his own desperate predicament as outlined by Jolo Anstey and the unknown city man.

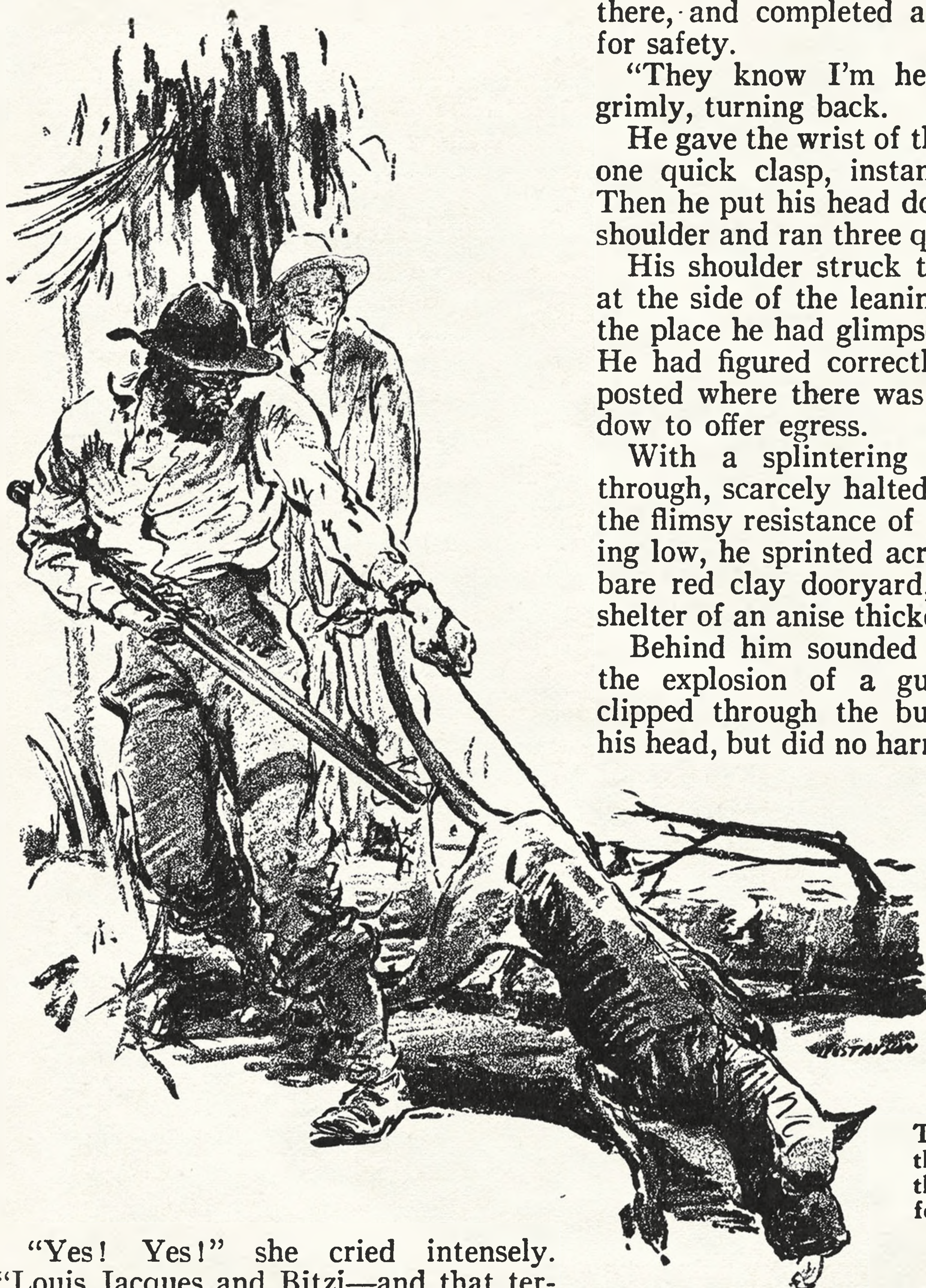
"He will never come," denied the old man. "He is a coward!"

"Now I'm *sure* there's something wrong!" said Rance with satisfaction. Chadwick Christie might be almost any sort of rascal except a petty one, almost any sort of a pirate in big business; but he could never be a coward. "I'll be seeing you again, very soon—and Mr. Christie will be with me!"

THE sharp cry of a girl cut through his last words, halted him as he raised the baize door-curtain for his departure. Julie's agitated countenance appeared, and her hand thrust Rance back into the cabin. The girl was pale with fear and horror.

"Oh, please go out the window—and run!" she commanded in a whisper. "Daddy, they're after him—and they will *kill* him!"

"Who will kill him?" demanded the old fellow stiffly. "And why? Certainly not while he is visiting me, here!"



"Yes! Yes!" she cried intensely. "Louis Jacques and Bitzi—and that terrible man Anstey! They—they were talking, and I heard them say they had managed to frame Rance this time, so they could shoot him down on sight!"

"Frame?" asked the oldster, to whom the word evidently was unknown.

But Rance himself, marveling at the swift change in Julie, who just a few hours before was denouncing him before this same old man, her father, waited no longer. Even then he was too late, however.

One glance from the crack at one side of the window curtain showed a man with a shotgun—a stranger who probably was the unknown Bitzi, brother of Louis Jacques. Back at the door-curtain Rance saw two more men. These were Jolo and the city fellow. Both held weapons at ready, watching the doorway. Not even a jackrabbit could have hopped out of

there, and completed a successful dash for safety.

"They know I'm here," said Rance grimly, turning back.

He gave the wrist of the frightened girl one quick clasp, instantly releasing it. Then he put his head down, hunched his shoulder and ran three quick steps.

His shoulder struck the rotten boards at the side of the leaning cabin opposite the place he had glimpsed Bitzi waiting. He had figured correctly. No one was posted where there was not even a window to offer egress.

With a splintering crash he burst through, scarcely halted in his stride by the flimsy resistance of the wall. Ducking low, he sprinted across five yards of bare red clay dooryard, and gained the shelter of an anise thicket.

Behind him sounded a wild yell, and the explosion of a gun. The charge clipped through the bushes high above his head, but did no harm. Rance ran as

The black mongrel, the demon who did the killing, pressed forward eagerly upon the scent.

swiftly as excellent condition and natural lightness of foot allowed.

Back of him there came a screaming, long-drawn protest of rotten timbers. Fortunately he did not guess what it was. His battering attack on the back wall had finished the leaning cabin of pine boards. Knocked loose from its china-berry tree support, the crazy structure tilted over still farther, then slowly collapsed as the six occupants threw themselves out the front doorway.

CHAPTER XI

REALIZING the instant of that shot from the Cajan guard outside, that the first man out the front door might

stop lead, old Nicholas Berlier was that first man. He was in time to look down the muzzle of a shotgun held by a rather frightened Mobile lawyer, and to see Jolo Anstey stop in his first strides of pursuit. Anstey turned upon the white-haired man with a scowl and bitter curses. Then Julie and the four Cajans who had been inside the cabin crawled out on all-fours, and ranged themselves beside the old man.

The Jacques brothers came; on seeing the old man, however, they did not approach close, but sidled about, palpably ill at ease. The wrath of old Nick o' the Woods was something they did not want upon their own heads.

"Put down those guns, strangers! Yes, you, Anstey; we know you too well!" was Berlier's command.

"Who the hell are you?" snarled Jolo. "We're here to grab a damn' robber, an' you done helped him to git away! I got half a mind—"

"Try to use what fraction you have," interposed Julie, "though I think you exaggerate!"

Jolo exploded. He swung toward the two Jacques brothers. "Git after him!" he yelled. "Don't let him git away!" He swung an arm, pointing them the command to take Rance's trail.

Bitzi stared, confused. His mind was slow. Louis, the brighter and cleverer of the two, would have liked to obey—but not alone! He had no taste whatever for encountering Rance Berlier again, unless the odds were big in his own favor. And then both Cajans were used to taking orders from the patriarch. Père Charlier and his three sons, who did not know what to make of what had gone before, looked at the Jacques brothers as though expecting instant obedience. Louis cursed and turned his back, lighting a cigarette, puffing furiously.

Old Berlier was saying something about not wanting Rance bothered or pursued, when Jake Casner interrupted.

"There is a misunderstanding here, I believe," he suggested in his oiliest courtroom manner. "Mr. Anstey is a duly sworn deputy marshal of the town of Blackjack. He has called on the rest of us for help in capturing a desperate criminal—a man believed to have held up a bank at Bay Minette, and known to have murdered one of the posse sent to look for him!"

"What? Why do you say Rance is a murderer?" interposed the old man, evidently startled.

"Nonsense! These men are framing him!" cried Julie contemptuously. "I overheard them say they had done it!"

"No doubt you misunderstood," said Jake with a shake of his head as though to reprove the folly of the young. "There is really no doubt about what happened. The entire town of Blackjack is scattered through the woods now, hunting Rance Berlier—if that indeed is his name—"

Julie gasped at that, the color draining from her cheeks.

"Berlier!" she whispered, staring at the old man. "You—"

"That is *not* his name!" said the patriarch sternly. "He may think so. I do not know why!" But he paled, and his hand shook.

"So it is our duty as citizens to capture this man, and take him back for trial," concluded Jake Casner smoothly.

Berlier eyed him in silence for a space of heartbeats. Then the lawyer's eyes shifted. The old man's mouth tightened as he saw the flaw in Casner's armor.

"If Mr. Anstey really is a deputy, I suppose he has some shadow of a right," admitted Berlier at length. "However, why not call on a sheriff? The town deputy marshal from another county does not have any real authority here."

"Oh, t'hell with the talk!" growled Anstey. "We'll git him! C'mon, you!" he waved to the pair of undecided Cajans.

"No!" denied Berlier sharply. "The Jacques boys will stay! So will the Charliers! This is not Cajan business!"

"Do you understand, Louis? Bitzi? In a few days I shall have real need for you, in a matter where there is no question of what is right and what is wrong!"

Jolo cursed and started ahead, the lawyer following. The two Cajans agreed sulkily, as the puzzled Charliers came up to them to begin excited questioning.

FROM almost the first minutes of his dash for freedom, Rance had been aware that some one followed him closely. Crouching, doubling on his tracks, waiting now and then behind a bush with pistol drawn, he tried again and again either to eliminate that lone pursuer, or find out the latter's identity at least.

Somehow, after a time, he began to believe that this was no Cajan. He was certain that it could not be the heavy-footed Jolo Anstey or the city lawyer, since this person moved around quietly enough and must have caught a glimpse of Rance once or twice. Still, there had been no shot.

Now, however, there came a hail—and the voice was that of a stranger.

"Hey, Rance!" were the unexpected words. "Don't shoot. I'm a friend. They aint after us now!"

"All right, come out and show yourself—friend!" bade the fugitive grimly.

There was the movement of a bush, and out stepped one of the most extraordinary creatures Rance ever had seen. Undersized, yet with a big head on which was a jockey cap with a long peak, he carried a chunky body clad in jacket and waistcoat of seersucker, white shirt with that modern oddity of apparel, a turn-down linen collar with a black bow tie about the width of a shoestring.

Below this astonishing head and torso were two short bandy legs clad in knickers, golf socks and crêpe-soled shoes. The legs worked fast, merely approaching at moderate speed. How they must have pumped to keep up to him, Rance thought, when he was running!

The newcomer carried no weapon in sight, though a bulge under the left lapel of his suit suggested a revolver there. Rance held on to his own gun, suspecting treachery.

BUT one straight glance into the guileless eyes and easy smile of the fellow who called himself Jinx Crawford, and Rance could not take him seriously any longer. Many a wrongdoer in Louisiana had made the same mistake; but this time Jinx Crawford really was friendly. In his own eccentric way he made that clear immediately, by taking Rance's arm and directing his steps toward a place where he had parked and screened his own machine.

"They'll wake up and come, give 'em time. But it gives *us* time! I got a puddle-jumper hid. 'We can be in Scotland afore 'em'!" he said jerkily.

"I'm Crawford, as I said. Searchlight Agency, N'Awlyins. Chief is Ahrends. Great man," he went on to elucidate. "Chad Christie hired us. We're on your side. You sure've gummed up the postage stamps this time, young fella!"

"I see," nodded Rance. "A detective—sent here to keep tabs on me. Did Christie think that sort of thing would help him?"

"Well, anyway," chuckled the little fellow, "*you're* no detective! But there's my sand-flea sittin' by the side of the road. Help me h'ist it back in the ruts—you shove, while I give 'er the gun. Then I'll spill everything you ought to know."

The job took several minutes. Then—"Right. Hop in," bade the little man, when traction was secured for the wheels. "This is one hell of a dangerous country to lallygag around in!"

Crawford could talk fast and succinctly. The gist of it was that Christie had not sent the Searchlight Agency man into the woods to shadow Rance, but to watch a lawyer from Mobile who appeared strangely interested in the younger man's movements.

Rance nodded at that. The city stranger with Jolo, of course. "What's the lawyer's game?" he demanded. "Unless he's interested in getting this timber for himself, I don't see—"

"Well, I don't know that either," admitted Crawford with an appearance of frankness. The car almost stalled in sand, and for a moment he was busy getting it back into the wavering ruts. Then he continued: "You'll come back to Mobile, if we can make it through that posse that seems to be laying for you?"

"No—stop a second!" decided Rance abruptly. "If Christie is in Mobile now, you can get through to him with my message. If I went with you, we'd be stopped sure as fate. And anyhow, I've a reason for wanting to be here."

Then he repeated the exact words of the old Cajan—still calling him Reynolds.

"Tell that to Christie exactly that way. Say that I expect him to come. There's some misunderstanding concerning a price. Frankly, I don't think it's a money price!"

Crawford shivered slightly. "I don't, either!" he agreed. "You say his name is—Reynolds? What's he look like?"

The second Rance described the white-haired patriarch, a look of understanding came into the detective's guileless eyes; but apparently this was something which Rance did not have to know, for he said nothing to change the idea.

ABOUT to descend, Rance suddenly jumped back into the seat. "They're coming! Hurry!" he cried.

Crawford shoved in low gear. The car lurched, but gathered speed. At the same instant, some forty yards back, Jolo Anstey and Casner suddenly appeared. Jolo flung up his shotgun and fired, though the range was rather great for effectiveness.

"Crouch, and give her the gas!" cried Rance. He would have liked to fight these two, but he wanted Crawford to get away with the employer's message.

A second shot came, probably from a full-choke barrel, for this one scored a hit. A back tire burst with a loud report, and at his side Rance felt Crawford wince.

"Hurt?" queried Rance, offering to help with the wheel.

"Naa," said Crawford disgustedly. "One of those buck seeped through and nipped me in the leg. Probably didn't even draw blood. Thank the Lord they're out of sight, just the same. I don't care for shotguns! I'll make it to Blackjack on that flat, and get the spare put on there."

Rance waited until there was a good mile between them and the pursuers, then took a look at the little man's leg. The hurt was trifling, as Crawford had said. A handkerchief bound around was sufficient.

So Rance repeated the message to Christie, thanked the detective for his help, and swung down into the shrubbery. The place he had nominated for a meeting, if Chad Christie would come, was that leaning cabin in the woods. Now he started a wide circle back in that direction. . . .

Crawford made it into Blackjack without mishap. As soon as he had the tire changed, he put through a call to the Mobile hotel where his chief, Inspector Ahrends, had established temporary headquarters for the duration of the case.

Ahrends heard the little man's report, couched in queer terms which must have puzzled the telephone operator if she was listening. Then the chief detective said that their client was even then hurrying from New Orleans, and told Crawford to come right in and meet him for a conference.

"I've just finished," Ahrends said with repressed exultation. "I confirmed that guess. Not the way the old man thought, however. The young fellow's mother was married!"

"Oh-ho!" answered Crawford with a falling intonation of delight. "Who was she married to?"

"*The old man's son!*" came back the grim reply, as Ahrends hung up the receiver at his end.

CHAPTER XII

RANCE underestimated the combined craft of his two enemies. They had followed the sandy ruts some distance, hoping against hope that the car would

stall. It was not such a forlorn hope, either, as few machines make ten miles through that sort of country without mishap. But the two men never did catch sight again of the machine, even though they knew it was running on a flat tire—actually something of a help in this kind of going.

The sharp eyes of Casner did fasten upon something significant, however. Down there in the sand beside the deep ruts were the prints of a man's boots, pointed toward the scrub and the tall forest beyond.

"Arrh!" snarled Jolo in exultant savagery, when Casner pointed down a shaking forefinger. "He come back, thinkin' we-uns'd miss it! Now we got to *git* him!"

"Yes, and sooner or later that—that other man who took him this far!" supplemented Casner, who was in the grip now of a deep-seated apprehension.

JOLO only grunted at that as they began to follow the footprints, keeping a wary eye upon the shrubbery ahead, and the reloaded shotgun ready. The woods began to darken with the approach of sunset, but until the last faint indication of Rance's footprints disappeared, neither of the pursuers noticed the increasing darkness.

Then Jolo rubbed his bristly chin and swore luridly. There was only one more chance, he explained to Casner: They would have to hurry and borrow the bloodhound and the big killer dog belonging to Bitzi Jacques. Even if Bitzi would not come with them for fear of the old Cajan, he would not refuse them the use of the dogs. And those dogs were infamous the length and breadth of the piney-woods. The bloodhound trailed, and the black mongrel did the killing. It was a partnership of grisly horror. This duo was known to have run down and slain at least ten negroes accused of various offenses. Bitzi had trained the dogs, and made an occasional small sum by renting out their services.

Now they hurried to the Jacques cabin, and found both the sullen-faced brothers at home. Louis wanted mightily to accompany them when he learned what they wanted, and he persuaded Bitzi, to let the two white men have the dogs.

Using his own belt as a whip, which he plied savagely, Jolo finally managed to get the black killer and the quiet, melancholy hound to the place where they last had seen Rance's footprints.

After that, when the bloodhound finally got interested in the scent, the black mongrel gave them no great amount of trouble, but pressed forward eagerly.

Rance encountered Julie only a short distance from the collapsed cabin. She had slipped back, as soon as the others had departed, fearing greatly that the shot fired at the supposed "damn-Yank" must have wounded him. Instead of having made good his escape, he might have crawled into some thicket and fainted from loss of blood.

Julie's ideas concerning Rance Berlier now were chaotic indeed. She had not any real idea of the possible relationship between him and the old man who had been her own benefactor. Yet some queer kinship there must be, if only to explain the strange manner of Nicholas Berlier.

BUT first glance at Rance's face, and Julie gasped, the doubts all submerged in instant sympathy.

"Oh, you're wounded!" she exclaimed, running forward to take his arm and help him to a seat on a fallen log.

Rance did not object, though he did not need assistance. The dried blood on his forehead and right cheek was the souvenir of a head-on encounter with a thorny strand of Choctaw rose, in his first few minutes of headlong flight. He had forgotten it.

He explained this briefly, and let her wipe away the traces with his handkerchief. Then he told her how he had managed to send word to his employer—though not particularizing concerning the "passing motorist" who was acting as messenger.

"Until Christie comes, I've got to keep out of the way—or else go down and face it out at Blackjack. Of course their idea is ugly enough. I'm supposed to have murdered a half-wit boy who was one of the posse chasing me for a bank robbery I didn't commit. I may have trouble proving myself innocent. These town mobs get excitable sometimes. And Jolo Anstey would like to gnaw my bones, his own self!"

"I heard them say it was a frame-up!" cried Julie hotly. "I'll testify to that, if they ever arrest you and bring you to trial!"

"I don't think there'd be any trial," Rance assured her; but the thought in his own mind was far from light-hearted. Since Jolo and the Mobile lawyer knew there was this witness to their conversation, either they would shoot down Rance

without taking him into Blackjack, or would be forced to murder Julie herself!

But harming a girl simply is not done in Alabama. Rance saw that only in extremity would Jolo think of that. First would come every possible try at killing the ex-drudge of the lumber camp, Rance himself.

"Dad has gone somewhere to call a conference of Cajans. I think it's in regard to that idea you gave him. He won't be back for hours, probably," she told him. "I don't know where you can go later, but come up to the house now, and we'll talk it out. There are so many things about this I want to know!"

Rance nodded soberly. When she arose and held forth one hand, he took it and followed—forgetting to relinquish the hand.

Their way through the brush was silent; and ten minutes later they approached the two-story log house from the rear, entering a pleasant, well-lighted kitchen where all was spick-and-span. Julie brought six roasted quail out to place before Rance.

"These are stuffed and cold. Do you like them that way, or shall I heat them? There are mashed turnips, some hominy grits I'll fry with syrup, and half a sweet-potato pie I made yesterday—"

"I surely appreciate this, Julie," said Rance, conquering the constriction in his throat. "I'd forgotten all about meals. But don't mind me if I go right ahead. I don't want to stay here while you heat up anything at all. There may be trouble any moment, and I want you well out of it when it comes again. I—"

HE thought better of what words were about to burst forth, and dropped his eyes to the plate. Julie smiled slightly and went about packing a small box with sandwiches of sliced ham and strawberry jam. He would not lack for his next meal, either.

Into the room, as Rance began on the delicious quail, came a little black dog that still limped on his hind legs. The Scottie nosed up to the man's knee, and stood there with his black brush waving back and forth.

"Hello, little kiyoodle," said Rance between mouthfuls. "Able to walk all right now? You—"

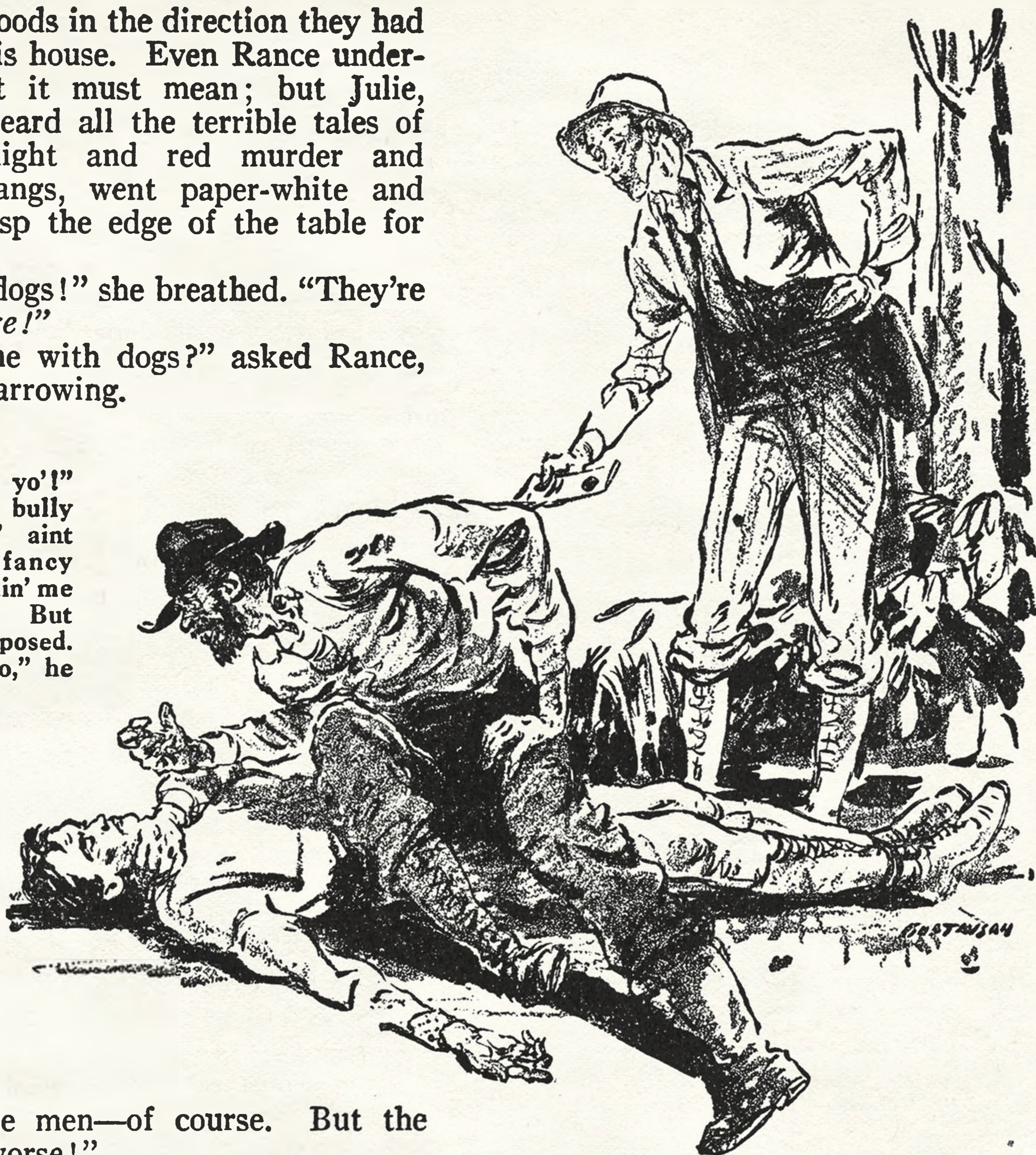
At that moment an interruption came which brought him to his feet, all the ease and hunger gone from him. Julie had cried out sharply in answer to a deep blood-curdling bay which arose

from the woods in the direction they had come to this house. Even Rance understood what it must mean; but Julie, who had heard all the terrible tales of hopeless flight and red murder and dripping fangs, went paper-white and had to grasp the edge of the table for support.

"Bitzi's dogs!" she breathed. "They're coming *here!*"

"After me with dogs?" asked Rance, his eyes narrowing.

"Now, damn yo'!" the woods bully snarled, "yo' aint pullin' no fancy tricks.an' gettin' me by s'prise!" But Casner interposed. "Get off, Jolo," he bade.



"Yes, the men—of course. But the dogs are worse!"

In a few sentences she told him of that horror of the woods, that black demon who already had killed at least ten men.

Rance saw the men, Jolo and the lawyer. Then from the window he saw one of the Cajans—Louis, he thought, who had finally got up nerve enough to defy the old man.

Rance's jaw tightened. He looked at the big black dog straining on the chain. No escape now! He turned and gathered the trembling girl in his arms.

"Be seein' you, Julie dear!" he whispered, and kissed her. "I love you, honey. Get away and find your father!"

Then he calmly opened the door and went to meet the men who hated him.

CHAPTER XIII

JULIE cried out in a choked voice, but stood paralyzed with fear for the space of long heartbeats.

But Anstey had given in reluctantly—and temporarily—to shrewd advice from his trickster-confederate Casner. The

Mobile lawyer had thought up an idea which at least would give them a defense in court against any allegation Chadwick Christie could bring—provided Rance Berlier died, of course. And provided that *before* he died, he was made to sign a certain paper which now reposed in Casner's pocket!

The Cajan, Louis Jacques, had not been told of the change in plan. That became a matter of importance now. From inside the kitchen, Julie saw Louis, skulking with a shotgun, and finally deciding that affairs in back had become so hot his approach would not be noted. He ran for the side of the building, and then crouched at the end in the rear, lifting the weapon as Rance came calmly out and was covered instantly by the lawyer, while Jolo sullenly looped the chain of the killer dog about the butt of a pine.

The bloodhound, being a mild-mannered animal never attacking any quarry unless led by a killer, came up and sniffed at Rance's leg, then turned as much as to say: "Here he is. Didn't I do well?"

Julie knew nothing of this that went on in back. She had not heard the expected shot blaze forth. No. But she *had* seen Louis Jacques—just in time!

She slid out of the window and dropped to the ground. As Louis raised the shotgun, a fiercely swung pistol butt descended on the crown of his head!

Louis slumped with a single whimpering noise; strangely, neither the pistol nor the cocked shotgun exploded.

The first tense second of his appearance passed, and Rance began to breathe again. Since they had not shot on sight, he might have some kind of a chance. And that chance would come to him when he was well away from Julie Reynolds, so she would be out of danger! He pretended that he did not guess the extent of their villainy; that the worst he expected now was some rough handling, and then to be taken in, captive, to face a charge he himself knew to be absurd.

"I have listened to the farce charge, brought probably by that idiot down at the bank in Blackjack," he told them. "And I am willing to accompany you two into Blackjack; but I know perfectly well you have no authority to arrest me. And I have no intention of submitting to a lot of manhandling!"

It was just bluff, and it was not going to work now. Jolo's face darkened.

Casner hastily interposed. "I'll guarantee your safety as far as Blackjack. Give over your pistol!"

Rance hesitated, then complied. His great purpose in doing this was to lead these men away from Julie. And so he handed over the automatic, shrugging.

Both captors were just as anxious as Rance, to put a little distance between themselves and this home of the Cajan patriarch. So they marched the prisoner a half-mile into the forest. Then came a sinister surprise to Rance.

Casner had fallen behind. He took something from his pocket, and whipped it free. The next instant a loop of braided linen tarpon fishline—the strongest line made—dropped over Rance's head and was yanked tight with its slipknot!

For an instant he struggled there on his feet, swaying, scrabbling with his fingertips in the vain attempt to get a hold upon the suffocating loop which sank into the flesh of his neck. Then he pitched forward to the ground.

CASNER worked desperately to loosen that loop; he did not want Rance to die just yet. He almost failed, so

deeply had his nervous pull sunk the fishline in the yielding skin. But at last he did free Rance's throat, and in ninety seconds more it became evident that the captive would live—a few minutes more, at any rate. His ankles were bound, but they had left his hands free.

As soon as he showed normality in breathing, Jolo squatted his big bulk down on Rance's abdomen. "Now, damn yo'," snarled the woods bully in triumphant anticipation, "yo' aint pullin' no fancy tricks an' gettin' me by s'prise!"

But again Casner interposed.

"Get off, Jolo," he bade. He brought a fountain pen and a paper. A pocket notebook furnished backing for the legal-appearing document. "Sign right here on this dotted line," the lawyer continued, when Jolo had heaved himself upward and again seized his shotgun.

"What is it?" asked Rance, simulating greater weakness than he felt—though that was bad enough. "I don't sign anything." He really was puzzled. Was this a confession of killing the half-wit boy? Or that bank robbery?

"YOU'D better sign and ask no questions!" snapped Casner, forgetting suavity for an instant. "I may point out that we are out of reach of the law up here, and I am having a hard enough time restraining my companion as it is!"

"Damn' right yo' are!" growled Jolo thickly. He could not keep from his features or voice the impatience which told Rance all he needed to know: The instant his name was appended to this mysterious document, Jolo would leap upon him, gouge out his eyes—and finally kill him.

"Well, perhaps," hesitated Rance. "I want to know what the paper's about, though. I'm not going to say I committed any crime I didn't commit. Why, the mob at Blackjack would tear me to pieces without ever letting me face the charges in court!"

That was a masterpiece of seeming dumbness: it convinced the lawyer that Rance had no real idea of what was in store for him.

"All right. It's no confession! We don't give a damn what crimes you've committed, because *we're* crooked too! This paper is a receipt for certain moneys which were supposed to have been expended on you. They weren't—but once you sign the paper, you can't prove it—and we can let you go. If not—" He shrugged, glanced at Jolo significantly.

"I'll sign, then—but tell me just one more thing," acceded Rance. "*Who paid that money?*"

This revelation had aroused him as nothing else could have done. The man who had paid money to a lawyer for Rance's subsistence and education must have been his own father!

"Never mind that now," snapped Casner. "Sign!"

"Then what will happen to me?"

"We'll let you go, of course. What interest would we have in you, once we are free and clear of this old trouble?" But the lawyer's voice had an edge of exasperation to it. Rance knew he could delay no longer.

He took the paper and notebook, and pretended to scratch with the pen. "The ink won't run uphill," he complained. "I'll have to sit up, or turn on my side."

Casner made no objection, so Rance sat up. Jolo moved closer, so the shotgun muzzle was within a few inches of the captive's head. Rance's attention had become fixed upon a certain feature he had scarcely dared to hope he would find on this pen: It was a filling lever, a small gold-plated piece at the side. Now if the lawyer only kept his pen well filled!

Unnoticed, Rance managed to insert his thumb-nail under the tiny lever. That second things happened—and so fast words fail in the telling. Flirting up the business end of the pen, the captive suddenly levered out the full load of ink straight into the face of Jolo Anstey!

Almost in the same motion he swung his hand, catching Casner on the side of the head and knocking him off balance.

Jolo yelled alarm, and involuntarily threw up both hands to his eye. He was completely blinded for a second, and the shotgun was grabbed by Rance, who had no chance to reverse it for use, however.

BUT he had one chance: jerking back the shotgun, he slammed it forward. The butt plate caught Jolo squarely between his black-smear'd eye-sockets. Frontal bone crunched sickeningly under the tremendous impact. Jolo slumped forward on his face, dead before he struck the ground.

Over at Rance's right, Jake Casner had crawled a yard, leaped to his feet and drawn a pistol. Now as he saw the fate of his confederate—one which caused him no grief whatsoever—he gritted his teeth and pulled the trigger.

But unseen, another figure had come within yards of him and the two men on

the ground. Pale, horrified, Julie nevertheless saw that she was the only chance for life left to the man she loved.

The snap of the little spitfire pistol came just one-fifth second before Casner's shot—and possibly deflected it just a precious inch or two.

Rance was hurled backward to the ground by the heavy impact of the .45 slug. But astounded, he saw Casner crumple at the knees and fall with that spread-out abandon, like a suit of clothes falling from a hanger, which means a bullet through the head.

And there stood Julie, a weapon in her hand.

Rance smiled weakly, trying to raise himself, then falling back again.

"Reckon you—came just—in—time—honey!" he whispered, and lost his grip on consciousness.

CHAPTER XIV

RANCE'S faint lasted only a short time. It had been caused not by loss of blood, but by the shock of a bullet through his left shoulder. He came back to consciousness, not in the bright moonlight of the glade where Jolo and the lawyer had taken him, but in a circle of Cajans—the Charliers—who carried fat pine torches.

Julie had done what she could for Rance's wound, though a surgeon's services were necessary. The Charliers had sent word to old Nick o' the Woods, and he in turn had dispatched a messenger for the nearest medico, a Dr. Turner. Nick Berlier had taken charge of the situation, directing the Charliers in the making of two blanket stretchers, and carrying both Rance and Jake Casner to the log house.

Casner had a frightful wound in his head, but for some reason was not dead. It was probable that the little bullet had not gone into the brain, but had been deflected and had lodged in one of the bony processes of the skull. He was moaning, and occasionally having moments of partial consciousness. A surgeon would be able to tell if he had any chance of living, but not these folk of the woods.

Rance listened to him a few moments, and nodded curtly. When that doctor did come, there would be a job for him that would have nothing to do with bone-setting or dosing.

Before the stretchers were put into use, another pair of Cajans appeared. They

said nothing, but picked up the dead body of Jolo Anstey and stalked away with it. Rance guessed that some swamp hole where the alligators were thick would be its final destination.

Rance just had been lifted to a couch in the raftered "parlor" of the log house, when Dr. Turner arrived. He had an extensive practice in the woods, but was reluctant to give more than necessary services to this wanted murderer Rance Berlier. News of the killing of Bunny Leary had reached him, and he looked grimly down at this patient whom he would save for the hangman.

Julie assisted with hot water, splints and bandages. Then after nearly an hour of hard work on the shoulder, Dr. Turner waved her away.

"I wanted to tell you-all," he said harshly, including Nicholas Berlier in his speech to Rance, "that I've done the best I know. But that's my duty. It's my duty now to go down an' tell just where this killer is hidin'! Good-by!"

"Wait!" Rance called. "You have another wounded man to fix up, Doctor. First, though, listen to something I want to say: That wounded man has framed all this on me, because he embezzled some trust-money my father gave him to administer! If you question Casner, he perhaps will admit it now." Then, as the medico gave a snort of disbelief, "Casner and Jolo Anstey are behind all this. I swear to you that I have committed no crime! If you *don't* ask Casner about it, I shall be hanged, an innocent man!"

The doctor turned from them, and sought Casner. Another hour dragged by. Then the medico reappeared, a queer expression on his features.

"I'm askin' your pardon, sir," he said quietly. "Mr. Casner may die—though his condition is not as immediately critical as I allowed him to believe. I may say that he confessed to the crimes you mentioned. I shall try to explain that to the people of Blackjack! Good-by, sir!"

And he held out his hand for a clasp which Rance accepted with a deep sigh of relief. This was exoneration!

WHEN Rance awakened from his first sleep, dawn was creeping through the pines of the forest. Julie had seized this chance to get some rest also.

Old Nicholas Berlier had not slept. He had left word with one of the Charlies, who watched through the night at Rance's bed, to call him as soon as the patient was awake. Now the grim old fellow

came. He did not seat himself, but paced the rug beside Rance's couch.

"You must leave here as soon as you are able, Rance," he said in a grim voice. "I have seen that you and Julie are beginning to care for each other, but that cannot be. . . . Wait!" he said sharply, as Rance would have made dismayed protest. "Your name should not be Berlier—but *Christie!*"

"Your mother was my daughter, betrayed by that damned Northerner! Now do you see the price I would ask from a Christie—and why I would not let Julie think of one in whose veins ran such blood?"

There was more to it, but Rance no longer heard. Utter horror and despair gripped him. Chad Christie had known! He was taking this roundabout way of attempting to square matters in some feeble degree—after finding out, perhaps, that the trust-money had been lost.

Or perhaps he did not even know that! He might simply have seen Rance himself there in the ring, discovered the secret kinship, and set himself to bring Rance close to him. Why, he might have had the brass to suggest an adoption some day!

RANCE cursed deeply, aloud. He had missed one or two references which might have given him a hint that he had made a few vital mistakes here, but he was weak from the wound. His head whirled, and a deathly sickness of despair fogged his faculties. If this old fellow was his grandfather,—calling himself Reynolds now,—then Rance certainly had to get out of here at once, without even as much as saying farewell to the girl he had come to love with all his heart and soul. He even believed now that Julie was his mother's young sister, Rance's own aunt!

In a sort of daze Rance heard the old fellow concluding. He had been saying something about the proposition of cutting the Christie timber in exchange for home-site deeds, and using Cajan woodmen. He approved the general idea.

Then the old man's voice rang out: "I will agree, when Chadwick Christie is dead! If he wants to come down here and pay a just price demanded, I shall get all my people to sign the contracts and agreements, and then fling them to his heirs!"

With that he stalked out of the parlor, more than a little majesty in his bearing. But Rance was too sick to see.

Julie had heard, and came running in now, face pale. Rance got one glimpse of her and turned his face away.

CHAPTER XV

DOWN in a room at a Mobile hotel, a seamed-faced old fellow with white hair, a man whose jutting chin and straight shoulders still spoke defiance to the fact of a seventy-seventh birthday looming close, listened to all Inspector Ahrends and Jinx Crawford of the Searchlight Agency had to say.

"Just summarize that again," he bade Inspector Ahrends. "It seems incredible that a hospital could overlook a thing like that!"

The detective nodded, flashing a glance across at his assistant.

"Your daughter-in-law registered at the hospital under the name she and her husband had been using—her maiden name, Berlier. It seems that your son had an idea of making good first, then coming back to show you the fact, and introduce his bride.

"At the hospital they took her effects, and put them away safely against the time some one might claim them. Later, the clothes and incidentals were given to charity. Only one thing remained there in the dusty room. That was a worn Bible with her name in it. Also, folded inside was her marriage certificate—something they knew nothing about at the hospital. She apparently had been so hurt and angry that she had not said a word. Or possibly she had been sick with some illness in addition to labor, and did not even think of her position and that of the boy she bore. I don't know, and I don't believe anyone will ever find out now. There are certain complications which bring on coma at that time, though; and to me, something of the sort is the most likely explanation. No woman able to talk or even whisper would let her son go into the world with the stigma of illegitimacy upon him!"

"I agree," said old Chad quietly. "My boy would have picked a real woman. I can see that—now."

There was silence for a few moments as he arose and walked to the window, looking down at the lights of Royal Street. When he turned back to the pair of detectives, all save calm decision was wiped from his rugged countenance.

"We will start up there at dawn, five o'clock," he said. "When we reach the

place, however, there is something I shall have to do alone. What I want you two for mostly, is to see that Rance is not further endangered by those two scoundrels.

"When I am sure of that—and one more thing—I shall take the greatest possible pleasure in bringing Anstey and Casner to book, like the snakes they are!"

But the way it came out, the presence of the detectives was no protection at all to Rance Berlier—to leave him with the name he had borne since birth—or to Chad Christie himself. Long before their toiling flivver had reached the depths of the forest, the white-haired Cajan patriarch knew it was coming, and that some one at the town of Citronelle had recognized the lumberman Christie as one of the three occupants.

So with a cold flame of almost incredulous exultation in his eyes, Nicholas Berlier made his preparations for the grim reception of the man he mistakenly hated.

THE early sun was shining smoky orange upon the rutted highway when Jinx Crawford, driving the little car, came up to a single pedestrian—the first one they had overtaken or passed since leaving Mobile. The pedestrian evidently wanted a ride, or to ask information, for he stood in the middle of the only track a car could take, and held up his hand as a signal.

"No passengers today, buddy," said Jinx, leaning out. "We're only going about a mile more, and—"

That was as far as he got. Six men with shotguns sprang out of the scrub, and covered the three occupants of the car before they could make a move toward their own weapons. The men behind the heavy-gauge guns were bearded Cajans in overalls, quite the most desperate-appearing band of men Chad Christie ever had seen—and he was no stranger to the lumber camps of the North. Each of these fellows was six feet or more in height, strongly built, swarthy, and looked at him with black eyes that smoldered behind a scowl. These were picked Cajans whom Nicholas Berlier knew would obey his commands to the letter.

There was no chance for resistance. Crawford shrugged and raised his hands from the wheel; Ahrends swore under his breath but did likewise. Chad Christie said nothing. He got out, and waited. Loss of the money he carried meant nothing to him.

But that was not the idea. Silently, efficiently, four of the seven laid down their weapons, took ropes, and bound the arms of the detectives. Now Christie protested.

"Look here!" he exclaimed angrily, as two of the men came to truss his arms. "This isn't necessary at all! Take what money or whatever you want that we have, and let us go! I have come up here to see a representative of mine, and also one of your people—I suppose you are Cajans? I want to find a man called Nicholas Berlier, but I don't want to be bothered with having to lie around all roped up. Will you take my word we won't try to do anything to you?"

That did not seem to be the idea, and when they had been started away through the forest, Crawford understood.

"I think they're taking you, Christie, just exactly where you said you wanted to go!" was his startling guess.

"Maybe it's Anstey," he added, as a more chilling idea came. "He and Casner might think they could rub us out, and be safe! I'm glad we left that deposition and affidavit for the D. A.—though what he can do in this county I dunno."

FROM then on there was no more talk. The trip on foot through the woods, over branches (or through them), through brush tangles, uphill and down, was a hard one on old Chad Christie.

Then they passed a tumbledown shanty, and out of it filed nine armed Cajans, sober-faced, to join the party. A half-mile farther on, four more Cajan men joined. No words were spoken.

Finally they came to the glade at one end of which stood the collapsed cabin in which Nicholas Berlier had pursued his catalogue hobby. Here were thirty-odd Cajans seated on the ground, waiting.

"My God!" whispered Ahrends in a shaken voice. "This looks to me like a trial! D'you suppose those Cajans who were killed, the time your men were here and fighting for their lives—"

That was all the talk. Twelve more of the woodsmen walked into the glade and took seats on the ground together at one side. One of them placed a straight chair back near the ruined cabin, before he sat down.

"Oh, my God, the jury!" groaned Ahrends.

Christie said nothing. At that moment he had caught sight of a figure whose appearance always wrenched his heart. It was that of a young man, pale of face,

brown-haired, blue-eyed, and who held himself erect in spite of the bandaged shoulder and left arm. A Cajan came with him, holding his right arm, though that seemed an unnecessary precaution.

The lumberman, made to sit with the other two captives, now struggled to his feet in spite of his bound arms.

"Rance!" he cried in a choking voice. "Come here, boy! I want you to tell these people—"

BUT the youth came steadily onward until he faced Christie. He said nothing at all; but his eyes glinted a cold fire of hatred. Even little Crawford shivered.

"Wh-what is this all about, Rance?" he asked. "We came up same like you said—"

But Rance turned away, still wordless, and took his place with the silent somber-faced Cajans. Old Nicholas Berlier, garbed in a black robe, came into the glade, took his seat; then in a moment arose. He spoke in a calm, quiet voice which reached every listener.

"This is the trial of Chadwick Christie for one of the gravest offenses committed by men," he began. "The other two city men are here only to see, hear, and know that justice has been given. They may carry back with them the whole story when they go. If the prisoner, Chadwick Christie, is acquitted, he will go with them unharmed.

"There is only one alternative to complete exoneration. That is conviction; it carries with it the penalty of death by hanging. —Mr. Rance Berlier, you will read the charge against the prisoner!"

Rance was helped to his feet by a Cajan. He swayed a moment, then lifted a small sheet of paper in his right hand. His voice was harsh but lifeless.

"The prisoner, Mr. Christie, is accused of the betrayal of Evangeline Berlier, of deserting her in extremity, and thus of causing her death!"

Out there where the three prisoners sat, all three started as though shocked with an electric current. But Cajans were there to smother their instant protests. They were forced to be silent for the time being, though each one squirmed with knowledge of the horrible irony of it all!

In a dull voice Rance went on to tell simply of his mother, the little he knew of her and her death, adding what he just had learned from Nicholas Berlier. This was the fact that Evangeline Berlier

had been educated in France, and had returned to America intending to take her father back to France with her again, as soon as he wound up certain monetary affairs here. For her sake he was willing to do this; there was no future for a Cajan girl in Alabama, no matter what her education or wealth.

But she had fallen in love, and she refused to go abroad again, even when her father urged her to do so—and did all he could to stop the love-affair. And then—tragedy.

Rance sat down. Immediately Nicholas Berlier arose.

"That is the charge. There will be no introduction of formal proof, unless the prisoner wishes to dispute some part of the allegation. *And he knows in his heart it is all true!*"

All this time something like strange knowledge had been knocking at the rather dazed consciousness of Rance himself. And now there came a smothered exclamation from his lips. He knew!

Julie Reynolds was *not* the daughter of this old fellow! She was not a Cajan at all, but the orphaned daughter of that painter who had died in Rance's boyhood! *That* meant—

What it meant had to await future realization. A Cajan with drawn blade had cut the arm-ropes of Chad Christie, and told him to walk forward to face his judge and jury if he had anything to say in his own defense.

ANYTHING to say! From his heart old Chad could have cried aloud a story which would have taken an hour to tell. But he was still the plunger, the gambler, who would cut red tape and spread his winning cards instantly. He gathered himself, and walked forward into the center of the glade, carrying nothing save a small book he took out of his pocket. A worn Bible. And inside its leaves was folded a certain document.

"Mr. Berlier and members of this court," he began in a quiet though vibrant voice, "I once had a son. His name was Rance Christie. He was a head-strong boy, and ran away from home to make his own living here in the South."

"He was killed in a train wreck which occurred"—here he paused to clear his throat and square his shoulders—"which occurred twenty-five years ago this coming September!

"Down here in the South my boy met a girl, Evangeline Berlier—though I did

not know her name at that time. I know it now. Of course it was my *son*, not *I* who loved her! But *wait!*" he almost thundered as Rance leaped to his feet, and old Nick Berlier lifted both clenched fists as if to cry that the father then must suffer for his son's crime.

"My boy loved Evangeline Berlier. They were married at the First Methodist Church South, of Mobile. The boy, here, whom you know as Rance Berlier, is Rance Christie, and I can prove it!

"*Here is his mother's certificate of marriage to my son!*"

With that he opened the Bible, took the certificate, and thrust it as a challenge and a revelation into the trembling hands of Nicholas Berlier.

THAT was all there was to the trial—save realization and pandemonium. The black-gowned old judge, and Rance himself, were both so overcome and overjoyed that they scarcely could find coherent words with which to explain the situation to the waiting audience of Cajan men.

But then Rance stumbled over to the old man, Chad Christie.

"Forgive me!" he begged hoarsely.

"There is nothing to forgive—thank God!" said Chad. He let Rance urge him forward to face Nicholas Berlier. There Chad offered his hand for a clasp of friendship.

Quickly, impulsively, the other grandfather raised his hand to meet it.

With tears of happiness flooding his eyes, Rance himself turned from the milling, shouting crowd, and staggered a little from weakness as he went in search of Julie. . . .

She was not hard to find. Hypnotized with horror, she had crept up to listen. Then a sort of faintness had come over her, when she realized all this had been a tissue of tragic misunderstanding. Rance found her there leaning against a tree, face pale, but a wavering smile ready to come to her lips.

"You wouldn't speak to me—but now I know why, Rance!" she said in a husky voice. "Oh, Rance dear, will everything be all right?"

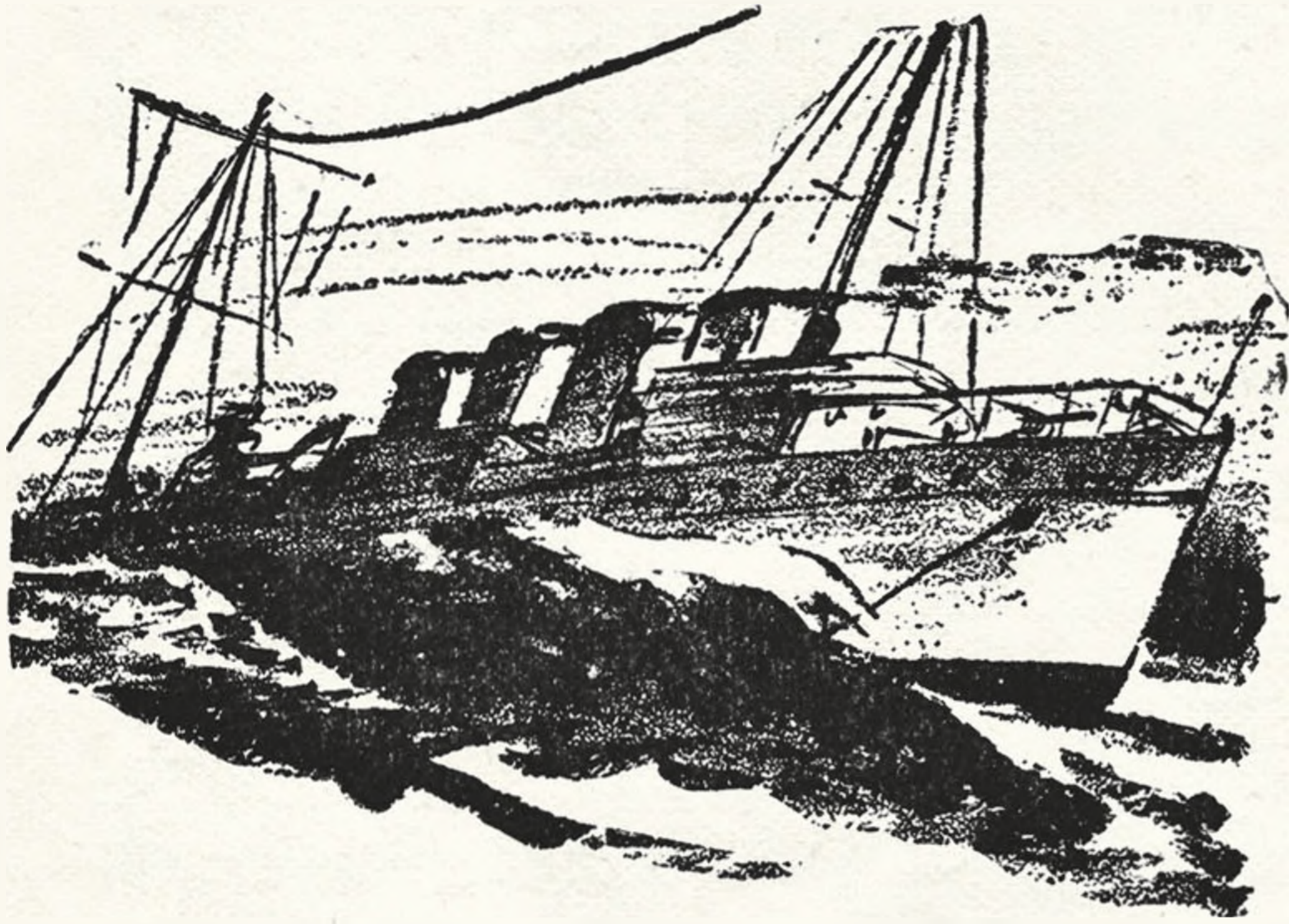
"Well," he said briefly, "we can leave the lumbering to those old codgers. It'll give them something to think about.

"For me just one word will make *everything* right! Will you marry me, Julie, even if I am half-Cajan?"

"I—I'd love to!" she whispered.

THE END

The First Trans-



WHEN the Armistice was declared in November, 1918, the United States Navy had just finished the largest flying boat ever built, and had arranged for the construction of three sister ships. These were known as the "NC" type, since they were the joint design of Navy and Curtiss aeronautical engineers. They were sixty-eight feet long, had a wing spread of 126 feet, and were designed and built to cross the Atlantic under their own power, there to join in the campaign against German submarines.

With the war definitely at an end, the United States, France, Italy and Great Britain turned their attention to commercial aviation. Plans were made, not only in Europe but in this country, to cross the Atlantic, not in seaplanes, but in land machines. The London *Daily Mail* even went so far as to offer a prize of fifty thousand dollars for the first plane to make a successful crossing, non-stop.

We in the Navy, of course, were not eligible for the prize. But we felt that this country, the birthplace of the airplane, could add to its prestige and give commercial aviation a boost by crossing the ocean in one of the NC flying boats. The Navy Department gave its approval, and the flying boats were completed as quickly as possible. Their hulls were forty-five feet in length, and from the stern there extended a frame-work for the support of the tail surfaces—which in themselves were larger than the wings of a fighting plane. It was estimated that the boats would cost, without engines, seventy-five thousand dollars each; actually they cost twice as much.

In the belief that truth may be as interesting if not more strange than fiction, we print each month these stories by our readers. (For details of this Real Experience contest, see page 3).

Only ten years before, Wilbur Wright had given his first public demonstration of the Wright biplane at Fort Myer. This machine weighed less than a thousand pounds; the NC boats, fully loaded, weighed twenty-eight thousand pounds. The designers and builders, with little experience and precedent to guide them in building a flying boat of such huge dimensions, had to overcome many difficulties. Changes and improvements were made during the period of construction, and these added much weight. Propellers were made of wood in those days, and were none too efficient. No suitable geared-down engines were available in 1918, so it was necessary to use the direct-drive Liberty of four hundred horsepower.

Designed for a power plant of three of these engines, driving tractor propellers, it was eventually necessary to add to each NC boat a fourth, which turned a pusher. Engines with high-compression pistons were substituted for those of low compression; yet with all these improvements, a careful calculation convinced the Navy-Curtiss engineers that a non-stop flight of more than fourteen hundred miles should not be undertaken. This was a great disappointment—but greater ones were in store. The *NC-1* was put temporarily out of commission by a storm which practically destroyed the wings on one side. We had no spare wings, and there was no time to build them, so we were obliged to start with three planes.

Two fires within a single week seriously crippled our naval base on Long Island. Then on the day before we were scheduled to start for Halifax, our first leg, fire further damaged the *NC-1* and also the *NC-4*, my own plane. The wings

REAL EX-

Atlantic Flight

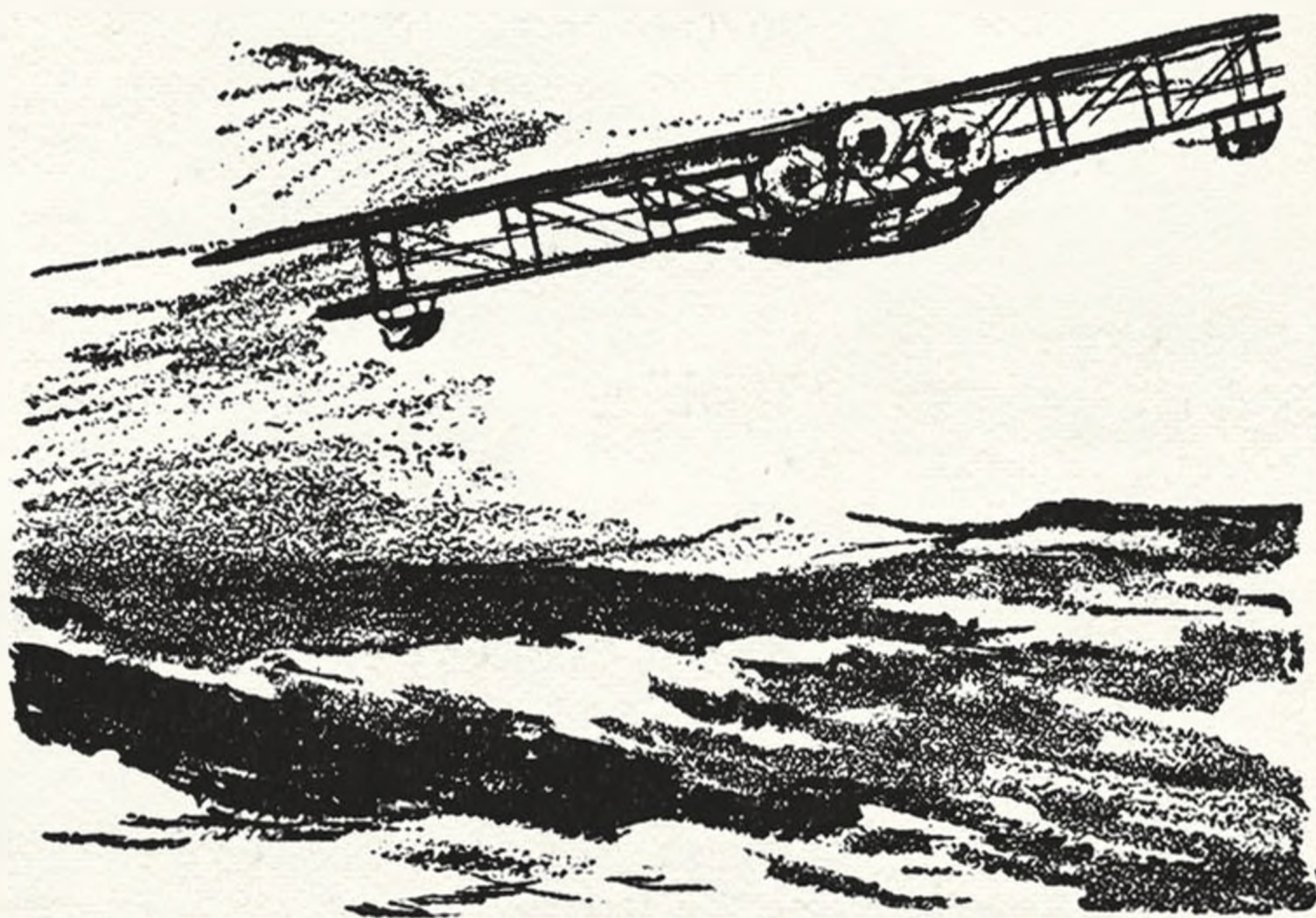
How American navy planes made the first air journey to Europe is here told to Burt McConnell—

By CAPTAIN
ALBERT C. READ

were transferred from the *NC-2* to the *NC-1*, repairs were made, and by daylight of May 6 the three remaining flying boats were on the beach, ready to start for Halifax. Meanwhile they had been regularly commissioned, and Commander John H. Towers had been placed in command of Seaplane Division No. 1. This was the first time, incidentally, that a naval airplane had been placed in regular commission. The ceremony was short but impressive. A bugler played "To the Colors;" the American flag was hoisted at the stern of each plane; and a message from Franklin D. Roosevelt, then Acting Secretary of the Navy, was read. Commander Towers was detailed to command the *NC-3*, which thereupon became the flagship; Lieut. Commander P. N. L. Bellinger was placed in command of the *NC-1*, and I was given the *NC-4*.

The shortest cut across the Atlantic required at least one hop of 1,330 miles—from Trepassey Bay, Newfoundland, to Horta, in the Azores. The longest non-stop flight that had been made up to that time was one of about twelve hundred miles—and that was accomplished under ideal conditions, in the immediate vicinity of a flying field, where the plane could come down at any time. British, French and Italian aeronautical experts were of the opinion that no seaplane could be built that would cross the Atlantic. British flyers were very skeptical of the ability of the Liberty engines to "stand up" on a continuous flight lasting between fifteen and twenty hours.

The Navy's plans were complete in every detail. A patrol of destroyers was established along the route to the Azores to lessen the dangers incident to a forced



landing, and to salvage the planes, if necessary. Base ships were placed at the different stopping-places to provide temporary quarters, mooring facilities and repairs. Battleships were stationed about four hundred miles off the route to report weather conditions by wireless. Each destroyer was equipped with starshells for night use and smoke bombs for day, to help keep us on our course. Each plane carried a radio operator and two sets. The crew of the *NC-4* consisted of myself, as commanding officer and navigator; Pilots Stone and Hinton; Ensign Rodd, radio operator; Chief Machinist's Mate Rhodes; and Lieut. Breese, engineering officer. Each machine was equipped with dual controls; the pilots sat side by side.

BEFORE the actual flight could be undertaken, it was necessary to make a dangerous and difficult journey by air from the Rockaway Naval Air Station, near New York City, to Trepassey Bay—a distance of one thousand miles. The *NC-3* and the *NC-1* made this distance in two uneventful hops; but engine trouble brought us down off Chatham, Mass., and we were obliged to taxi the *NC-4* almost a hundred miles to shore, using two engines. After installing a new engine and repairing the other disabled power-plant, we continued on to Halifax, and then to the quaint Newfoundland fishing village of Trepassey. The noise of the four engines made it impossible for the crew to communicate with one another. Each man was therefore equipped with a wireless telephone receiver, which was fastened inside his helmet. They were supposed to make

PERIENCES

it possible to carry on a conversation without raising the voice, but they did not work very well.

There were a number of British flyers in Newfoundland, waiting for favorable weather in order to make a transatlantic non-stop flight.

The first two legs of the flight—Rockaway Beach to Halifax, and Halifax to Newfoundland—were regarded as trial hops. On the whole, the planes behaved very well, making an average of seventy-two miles an hour. On our arrival, we loaded up with nine thousand six hundred and fifty pounds of gasoline, food, lubricating oil and fresh water. We also replaced the engine loaned us at Chatham with a new Liberty.

By the afternoon of May 16th the *NC-4* was ready. Weather conditions for the first half of the flight were reported good; in the vicinity of the Azores the weather was unsettled. The battleships, cruisers and destroyers were at their proper stations. The Navy was back of us—and the people of the United States were with us, if newspapers were any criterion. The *New York Times*, for example, gave the flight project four columns on its first page at a time when the German delegates to the Peace Conference at Paris were threatening to go home without signing the Versailles Treaty; they got a mere three columns.

LATE in the afternoon we cast off our moorings and taxied into the bay. Commander Towers was to get off the water first, Bellinger and I to follow.

With a total load of 12,126 pounds, however, this was not easy; Commander Towers failed on his first two attempts, and was obliged to lighten the plane by leaving his engineering officer and the batteries of one wireless set behind. We had considerable difficulty in starting the new engine on the *NC-4*, and I could see that Towers was getting impatient by the way he looked at his wrist-watch. At that, we were the first plane to get off the water. This involved a bit of dangerous and unorthodox flying—in short, taking off across the wind, instead of into it. And the wind was blowing at the rate of thirty-five miles an hour. When, however, we saw that the other planes were unable to get off the water, we came down, landed, and waited for Commander Towers to take the lead.

On her third trial the *NC-3* got into the air, and Bellinger and I followed.

On shore a few excited fishermen fired a parting salute with their rifles and shotguns. The huge flying boats shook the water from their hulls. More than a thousand miles away, across a white-capped sea, lay our first destination—a small island. Far below, the water was dotted with small cakes of drifting ice. The weather was cold and a little hazy. As darkness came on, the line of destroyers, fifty miles apart, began to fire star-shells at the heavens at five-minute intervals. It was too much to expect them to be exactly on position; but when our positions didn't agree, there came the question: was their navigation out of reckoning, or was ours?

We did not fly at top speed; that would have used up too much fuel and oil in proportion to the distance covered. Our position in space was changing every minute, so it was necessary for me, as the navigator of the *NC-4*, to figure out our position from time to time with all possible speed. We tried to fly in formation, with the planes about a mile apart, and succeeded at first. But each navigator realized that the time might come when it would be necessary for him to set a course independently of the others, so each of us worked out his own calculations.

Near the first destroyer we turned on our running-lights, and sent a radio to the *NC-3*, asking Towers to do the same. But their lighting system had been put out of commission by salt spray; even the lights on the pilots' instrument-boards were not functioning. Long ago we had lost contact with the *NC-1*, and about midnight we lost track of the *NC-3*. The moon finally came out, but the clouds nearly obscured it, so Towers climbed through the clouds to forty-five hundred feet, where the air was smooth and the night clear. Below (he said later) the clouds looked like huge fields of snow. Through this white, undulating mass, at five-minute intervals, came the star-shells. These exploded at four thousand feet, and ignited a parachute light of approximately eight hundred thousand candle-power, which lit up the heavens for miles in each direction. Towers afterward said this night flight above the clouds was the most impressive of his life.

THE engines of the *NC-4* were running beautifully, with all forty-eight cylinders spitting short purplish flames. This was most reassuring, for the planes

were flying with the biggest load ever carried by a seaplane, and the thought of a forced landing at sea was rather disturbing. As we progressed, however, our confidence increased. The pilots took turns at the controls, and brought out the sandwiches and coffee whenever they felt hungry. As we passed over the destroyers, we could plainly see the illuminated figures on their decks. Their searchlights were pointed directly into the wind, so that we could note the direction. Each destroyer would broadcast our passing, and the message would be picked up by the base ship at the Azores and relayed to the Navy Department in Washington.

SOON after dawn I remembered that I had eaten nothing since lunch of the day before, and so had some coffee and a sandwich. We wallowed around considerably in the unstable air, and therefore increased our speed a little. It soon developed that we were ahead of the other two flying boats, although at no time did the flight ever develop into a race. The weather was hazy and threatening, and at eight o'clock the three planes encountered fog and some rain.

Once, when the sun was entirely obscured, the pilot of the *NC-4* lost, for a few seconds, all sense of direction. In trying to watch too many instruments, he allowed one wing to drop below the flying level. I glanced at the compass; it was spinning like a top. The wind rushed past my bare face; we were in a sharp turn. Were we going into a spin? Was the pilot never going to regain control of the unwieldy ship? For a moment it looked as if our part in the flight would end right there, but the pilot finally brought the *NC-4* about.

We flew on, keeping between the fog below us and a layer of thick clouds above. Intercepted radio messages informed us that neither the *NC-1* nor the *NC-3* had been sighted by the destroyers for hours. We ourselves saw *No. 17*, but none after that until we flew over *No. 22*. Not one of us was certain of his position. Towers decided, when his engineer informed him that not more than two hours of fuel remained in the tanks of the *NC-3*, to land on the open ocean, stop the engines, take a radio compass bearing on the cruiser at Horta, and resume his flight. But when they were too near the surface to rise into the air again, they realized that the water was too rough to permit them to take off.

Before landing, Towers sent out a message, telling of his intention to come down, and giving what he believed to be his approximate position; he had been sending out messages, giving his approximate position, every half-hour. Now that they were down, it was possible for the radio operator to determine why they had been getting no replies to their messages: the ground wire was broken! That meant their signals had not been going out. No destroyer, therefore, knew where they were.

Their radio operator made the necessary repairs so that messages could be sent by running one engine, and spent an hour calling. They also learned that the *NC-1* was down in the fog and in bad shape; she had landed just before noon to determine her position. Late in the afternoon a Greek tramp steamer came along and rescued Bellinger and his crew. A destroyer was called to the spot, and tried to salvage the *NC-1*, but the plane was broken up, and it was sunk to remove a menace to navigation.

Compass bearings on the *NC-3* revealed that she was down some thirty-four miles southwest of Horta. Towers could receive messages, but his sending apparatus was weak. He could hear instructions being given to search for him and his crew between Destroyers *16* and *17*—and they were four hundred miles from that position. Later he heard a storm warning go out from Horta.

They made preparations for riding out the storm, and took stock of food; they had little, except emergency rations—and no fresh water. So the thirsty men drank rusty water from the engine radiators. They hoisted their colors upside down, as a signal of distress, and continued to send out radio calls. Their hull had been crushed above the waterline, and there was a bad leak under the pilots' cockpit. The hull was pumped out, and as darkness came on, those who felt like it went to sleep. They were wet and cold, and the *NC-3* was rolling in the heavy sea. All night they drifted before the wind. At dawn the storm broke—a gale with driving rain.

ABOUT seven o'clock that Sunday morning the *NC-3* began to break up. By this time the wind was blowing at the rate of fifty miles an hour; later it reached sixty. Seas were thirty feet high, and very steep. A cross-sea carried away a wing pontoon. This was serious, and in order to keep the plane

from capsizing, the men took turns strapping themselves to the opposite wing, so that the additional weight would keep the broken wing out of the water. It was necessary to keep up a continuous pumping; the leaks grew worse as the heavy seas battered the wooden hull.

At noon they sighted land—the mountain tops of Pico, of the Azores group. But they were drifting away from this island, not toward it. Night came on, and they could hear orders being given to search for them in mid-Atlantic. No one had any idea that they were still afloat in that raging gale.

LATE that night Towers was able to get observations of the stars, and fix his position. Being a line officer in the Navy, he was able to manipulate the flying boat so that it would drift toward Ponta Delgada. For two days and two nights they drifted, pumping almost continuously—cold, wet, hungry and exhausted. At last they sighted land again, and laid a course for it. And they made it! They were sighted, and a destroyer came churning out of the harbor of Ponta Delgada. But they started their three serviceable engines, and made port under their own power.

As for the *NC-4*—we tried to keep on our course, flying above the fog and below the clouds. Occasionally we would catch a glimpse of the water. Naturally, I began to wonder how we would come out of all this uncertainty. Was the fog going to last indefinitely? We asked Destroyer *19* for a weather report: thick fog. We called *No. 20*: Heavy mist. The minutes ticked by. We had seen no patrol boats in the last three hundred miles. Then suddenly I caught a glimpse through the fog of what seemed to be a tide rip. That meant land in the near vicinity. I followed the white line with my eyes, and just at the end there loomed a big rock; it was not a tide rip, but a line of surf.

It took less than two seconds to signal the pilots to come down. We were able to identify the island; it was Flores. Now, Flores was on the course from Trepassey to Horta, but we were forty-five miles ahead of our computed position. At any rate, there we were. We came down to within two hundred feet of the surface, found the fog had lifted just off the surface, and set a course for Destroyer *22*. As we rounded the point, a peaceful farmhouse came into view.

That scene appeared far more beautiful to us than any other ever will; we had plenty of fuel, but if a forced landing became necessary, we could at least get ashore.

We passed over *No. 22*, and set a course for Ponta Delgada, 250 miles distant. By this time the *NC-1* was down; no messages had come from the *NC-3* since she passed Destroyer *16*, hundreds of miles back. The eyes of the Navy and of the American people were upon the *NC-4*; we would have to come through with victory. Why stop at Horta, then? Why not continue on to Ponta Delgada? Visibility was improving, and we had sufficient fuel and oil.

But soon the fog shut in again, and we missed the next destroyer. When, therefore, we sighted the northern end of Fayal through a rift in the fog, we came down near what we thought was the harbor of Horta, where one of our base ships was at anchor. Discovering that we had made a mistake, we took off again, rounded the point, and saw an American cruiser. The landing was made near her stern at 1:23 P.M., May 17th, 1919, fifteen hours and eighteen minutes from Newfoundland. Our average speed for the entire flight was about eighty knots—much faster than the cruising speed of seventy-two knots we had anticipated. We had crossed from Newfoundland, which is a part of North America, to the Azores, which is a part of Europe. As we went up the gangway, the crew gave us a hearty cheer, and once on board we were treated like kings. Only then did it dawn upon us that our flight was a little out of the ordinary.

ON the 20th we flew on to Ponta Delgada, the hop consuming about two hours. Here whistles blew, ships in the harbor were decked out with flags, and thousands of people lined the shore to welcome us. Unfavorable weather and a balky engine kept us at Ponta Delgada during the next five days; we were too near our goal to take unnecessary risks. On the 26th we left for Lisbon, Portugal, arriving after a flight of nine hours and forty-three minutes. Here the warships anchored near the city gave us a twenty-one-gun salute—an honor usually reserved for the President or the flag of a foreign country. We were decorated by the Portuguese Government—for we had made the first transatlantic flight in history. . . . The *NC-4* is now in the Smithsonian Institution.

The Galla Guide

The author of "The Lair of the Leopard" and "Unknown Ethiopia" tells of a dangerous encounter with a primitive Abyssinian tribe.*

By JAMES E. BAUM

BEFORE leaving Addis we had planned to divide the party temporarily; Fuertes and Osgood were anxious to investigate the mysteries of the Jumm-Jumm forest, far to the southward in the province of Sidamo, while Suydam Cutting, Bailey and I were eager to strike eastward, cross the wide Arrusi plains and follow the course of the river Wabbi Shebeli to the lower, hotter country in the direction of the Somali border, for in that area we expected to find many unusual animals.

There were no roads, of course, for there was not a wheeled vehicle in Abyssinia outside of Addis, but the grassy surface was crisscrossed with innumerable horse trails—the cattle-raising Galla is primarily a horseman. The problem of water in that southern Galla country was of first importance. Looking through my notes I find this entry made on the fourth day after leaving the Wabbi:

"Last night, an hour before sundown, I was hunting about two miles from camp. In glancing back, I saw something duck behind a bush. It had been so quick that I could not see what it was. It seemed better in this new country, especially when alone, to investigate a thing of that sort rather than to have it behind. When I got to the brush, the object had disappeared, but there in the dust were the fresh prints of Galla feet. There had been two Gallas. Such occurrences happen daily in this uncharted section. Never having seen a white man, they are curious."

*A book recently published by Grosset and Dunlap.



Not one of the inhabitants of that remote valley could be enticed into camp that evening; and our Galla guide, one of their own breed, went through the trees to talk with them. He returned with the information that we had been ordered to leave the valley at once. He was agitated and alarmed, and we could see that he was no longer the dare-devil of a few days ago. And the next morning he had vanished—without his pay.

The guide's desertion put us in a serious position: We had every reason to believe that the country north—between the new river and the Hawash—was as waterless as the area we had just crossed. And we knew that an attempt to find our way through without a guide might easily mean loss of mules and baggage, and perhaps a tough time for ourselves and the men. From the hostility of the natives there appeared to be little likelihood of securing another pilot. Two days went by, with no headway made in overcoming the suspicions of the inhabitants. Then Ashagri and Abtul were dispatched upon a kidnaping expedition.

WE were still at breakfast when they returned from the bush dragging between them a young Galla about twenty-five years old. His eyes rolled; he writhed and twisted in their grip; and his face was a mask of terror. Straight to our table they dragged the victim.

Ashagri's broken English explained: "W'en we cutch this Galla, I say we are of Ras Tafari, we do no harm. W'en I say, 'Ras Tafari,' he yells: 'No! No! Menelik! Menelik!' Then I am mad. We drag him in here."

Looloo spoke Galla, and we had him explain to the wild-eyed captive that we had been unable to secure a guide, that we must have a man to lead us to the next water, and therefore had been compelled to resort to such rude methods. He added that we were not slave raiders and assured him he would be paid for guiding us to the next water, and would then be freed.

MULES were packed in a jiffy. The struggling guide was tied, arm and arm, to one of our strongest men and with another on his off-side we started. The valley was as quiet in the early morning as a peaceful New England park; and we thought—and hoped—that the kidnaping had been unnoticed. But we had been more closely watched than we knew. As we started, hallooing and the clarion Galla cries, with a rising inflection on the last syllable, echoed across the valley. We pushed on, urging the pack-mules to their best pace, winding through the dense brush. Soon little parties of spearmen came running toward the route of march. From all directions they came. We could see them dashing across openings in the bush, and the hallooing and calling increased.

It was a race. If we could urge the tired mules to greater speed and attain the northern open hillside, we could retain the guide in spite of his tribe; they would not dare to attack in daylight in the open. Our men had been instructed not to fire a gun, whatever happened, before we gave the order. And this would never be given, except as a last resort in self-protection; the captive would be freed before matters came to that point, provided we could control the situation.

But it was most delicate: We were afraid a savage would attempt to turn a pack-mule aside into the brush, or possibly let drive with a spear. If such a thing happened, we might not have been able to control our hot-headed Abyssinians—and we three white men could not be everywhere in the long line at once.

Black shadows coursed swiftly through the undergrowth alongside the trail and knots of spearmen concentrated upon knolls ahead; behind in the trail came the patter of many bare black feet; and then we rounded a bend, and a big throng of warriors stood in the path, in the brush on both sides—and more were arriving every second. We were in for it.

Fortunately, Looloo was right at hand. He was ordered to explain what we

were doing, and why we had been forced to do it. It was a moment before he could make himself heard. An ominous silence fell; Looloo's voice trailed on, but the set, lowering expressions did not change, and I knew the game was up: the captive must be set free instantly—before a battle could start. With a laugh—decidedly forced—I cut the ropes binding the captive to the arm of our strong man; and the frightened savage faded into the brush like a wraith.

This action had a decidedly good effect; it might not be too late to restore confidence. An old man standing directly in front looked more intelligent than the average. Calling Imar, Cutting's syce, I handed him a Maria Theresa dollar, and made signs for him to confer it upon the ancient. Looloo was told to explain to him that—as an evidence of our good faith—we were paying him in advance to guide us to the next water; that everyone knew slave-traders had no use for old and decrepit men, and our willingness to take him instead of the young man was proof that we were not after slaves.

The old fellow considered, turning the dollar over and over in his hand. It was vast wealth to him, and Looloo added that he would be given a dollar for each day he stayed with us. But the rest set up a howl of warning. They tried to prevail upon him not to go. We could understand clearly their meaning if not the words. We smiled genially; he thawed out; and finally, raising his hand for silence, made a long harangue.

"He come," Imar whispered; and my tentboy and gunbearer F'yeesa muttered something to the same effect in a tone of great relief. It was all over. The ancient, evidently a man of influence, ordered the warriors to return to their *tukuls*; and down the winding cattle trail he set out, the whole caravan following.

IT took nine days to cross the unknown country between the Wabbi and the main caravan trail to Hawash, and in all cost the lives of five mules and our one horse. The last three days we packed our saddle-mules—the cook's and Ashagri's had been packed several days earlier—and arrived at the village of Bidessa on foot, but with every specimen safe and our outfit intact.

The town of Hawash on the railroad lay but a few days farther along the main caravan route. Well-used and known trails are seldom interesting. But

at Hawash we heard reports of game to the westward. There were also rumors of a series of beautiful waterfalls in that direction, cliffs over which the Hawash River rolled in wild and spectacular flood. Our maps showed nothing of the kind, so we decided to investigate. The altitude around Hawash is comparatively low, about four thousand feet—a flat, open plains country, one that might almost be called a desert.

But our pack-animals had reached the limit of endurance; they could go no farther under load without many days of rest. Somali camel-drivers were therefore hired—thin, long-legged, silent brown men with their growling, roaring, discontented beasts. Selecting from our outfit all that would be needed on a week or ten days' trip, we stored the specimens and other baggage at the station—it would be shipped to Addis on train with us upon our return—and started the mules with nothing but empty pack-saddles, in charge of Agaboru and half the men, to Addis Ababa, while we prepared to set out westward over the desert with the camels.

THE reports of game and rumors of the falls turned out to be correct.

The upper fall is almost one hundred feet high. The Hawash, the second largest river in Abyssinia, pours over the edge in a tumultuous roar; the sound can be heard for a great distance; and spray, rainbow-tinted, floats away like gossamer on the wind. The river rushes on below through a deep cañon, sheer-sided and gloomy, wild and impassable. There are many game-trails winding through the thorn-bush and leading to the water above the falls. Almost any hour of the day kudu, waterbuck, hartebeest or herds of gazelle carefully and cautiously approach through the bush. The river is the one watering-place of the wild animals of the surrounding country. Hippos snort and flounder through the quiet water above the falls, and the river-banks are beaten flat where the huge animals pass back and forth from still pools to the open forest along-shore. Crocodiles bask on mud-bars or lie concealed beside game-trails waiting for a victim. With its diversity of its animal and bird life, the place is not unlike a zoo or an open air natural-history museum. The falls themselves are beautiful. And the wide valley of the Hawash, with its big trees, wild fig, acacia and many others, its high grass, criss-

crossed with game-trails; the bush-pig, kudu and bush-buck feeding in the quiet meadows in the evening and early morning, and the occasional bands of gazelle coming in from the plains to water, were fascinating. And we could not understand why such a country should remain without inhabitants.

BUT ten days later, at the town of Metahari, we learned why there are no villages in that favored valley; it is the dividing line—or deadline—between the Abyssinians and Gallas on the one side, and the dreaded Dankali savages on the other, a sort of no-man's-land. A few hours before we arrived at Metahari, Dankalis had raided the town and carried off thirty Galla women and many camels. The little cluster of *tukuls* was buzzing with excitement. All cattle, camels and goats for miles around had been driven in for protection. The plain was dotted with closely guarded herds. But the raid was over. Women and camels had been carried back to Dankaliland, and the Galla villagers were counting up their losses. One with whom we talked didn't seem so much put out at the loss of the thirty women—but was terribly upset about the camels. . . .

January thirteenth, upon arrival in Addis, we found that Osgood and Fuerter had returned the day before from their trip to the Jumm-Jumm forest in the province of Sidamo. It had been almost two months since we had parted upon the slopes of Mount Albasso. They had passed through Sidamo, Kambata and Guragwe, making a fine collection of birds and small mammals. More than two thousand specimens were taken by both parties on the first, the southern journey. It was better than we had hoped for.

Ras Tafari (Haile Selassie the Emperor now) sent for us the next day: He was very cordial, and inquired in French as to our luck.

Cutting's fluent French made the presence of an interpreter unnecessary, and we had a most pleasant afternoon. We were able to give information on conditions in remote districts that the Ras was very glad to get, and fortunately, we had met in the south certain recently appointed chiefs, of whom he inquired; they were new in their positions and he was not entirely sure of their fitness. The Ras assured us that we should have passports for our long trip to the northern country within a few days.



Rio Grande

A Federal officer waits in ambush for a dope-smuggler—and is wakened by a jaguar.

THE Mexican border stretches over a distance of almost fifteen hundred miles. In the days of which I write there were very few Federal agents to stop the smugglers, and every time our superior gave us a new assignment, it was up to each of us to work out the details. The particular stretch of country where I was detailed had a barren piece of land gently sloping to the Rio Grande. The wind had piled up a series of sand hills around a few isolated cacti. No brush or bush to speak of for miles. All indications were that the smugglers had brazenly used this stretch in transit to and from a settlement where I had been able to trace the smuggled "dope."

Tracks had been located in the sand. But they were in several different sections of the wide span, and for two days, I had watched here, waited there, never to get any closer to the solution. I decided upon both day and night vigils.

Rummaging around in my limited belongings, I found an old white pair of overalls, and added a soiled white cap and a shirt to match. Full moon was only a day or two off, so that I would have good nocturnal visibility. My white clothes and the white-shaded sand would blend well in the moonlight, I hoped.

A likely spot was selected for these vigils, between two piles of sand where I had a view of the slope all the way down to the river and far to either side.

But stretched out there looking into space—seeing nothing, hearing nothing, except an occasional cougar cry far down somewhere on the Mexican side—once or twice I found myself nodding. But I had to stay awake. And I did that first night, without sighting a soul.

The second night found me there again. If anything, the moon was somewhat brighter. I was sure that no dope-runner would show up on such a clear night. The spot where I lay was not at all uninviting as a bed, and I finally permitted my head to drop down until it touched the sand. . . .

A strange feeling gripped my muscles even before I awoke. Something rough,

but blood-warm, had touched the flesh in the back of my head just below the hair!

Slowly I opened one eye, just far enough to make out a form there by my side. It was fully six feet long, and it had short stocky feet with nasty claws. Its head was down close to my own cap. Opening that one eye a little wider, I caught sight of the light belly, with irregular spots of black. As it brought its head around where I could see the rich tan below the eyes, and the heavy rosettes farther up, I knew it was a jaguar and a big one.

My gun was on my other side. A lot of things could happen while I turned over in that hard sand, and now I found myself just as good as unarmed. If the animal ever sank one of those mighty claws in my face, the service would be without another border agent. If I had to fight the mighty cat with naked hands, those short stocky feet and that savage head would be everywhere at one time. In a rough-and-tumble fight, I would have just no chance at all.

AND yet, when my muscles seemed on the verge of obeying an impulsive desire to do battle, something inwardly held me transfixed and helpless. Like one in a cramp, I was unable to move. Yes, I scarcely winked an eye while that mighty cat placed its nose so close to my eyelids I could feel its living flesh. The animal sensed something different and foreign about my hair, about my face, about the shirt I wore. The big treacherous-looking nose sensed that tobacco smell in my pocket where I carried the makings for cigarettes. In another pocket was a bar of chocolate, wrapped in foil. The mighty claws succeeded in bringing this bit of candy out of the sand and ripping off the paper and foil, with little or no effort. Then it turned its nose over to my legs and proceeded to smell and inspect with a certain degree of caution, until I felt its tongue licking at my shoes. One great claw came in contact with my left shoe, and I was almost certain the battle was on. I real-

Moonlight

By W. W. BUCK



ized that here was my best chance to reach for the gun, to fire at short range where one could hardly miss.

However, maybe this was not a man-eater. Maybe this monster would not go too far. Had I even budged, the battle would have started then and there, one way or the other. But I did not reach for the rifle and I did not move one iota. And after two or three more scratchings at my shoe, and as many sniffings at the pigskins they were made of, the great cat moved away.

As the animal walked off, it stuck its nose slightly in the air as though scenting something from the Rio Grande. I could not help but admire its grace, its beauty, the moonlight playing on those dark rosettes and that rich tan of its fur.

My gun was now in my hands and I had the sights trained on that huge jaguar there in the moonlight. I speculated how near I could come to shooting it in the heart. For some reason I did not pull the trigger. After all Uncle Sam did not pay border agents to kill jaguars. That great cat walking out there was evidently not a man-eater after all. Instead, I watched it walk far off in the distant moonlight. I listened to its cry finally, in that deep and hoarse tone: "Pu, pu—pu, pu!"

Then I turned around to glance over that broad space between me and the Rio Grande. Up the sand was coming something else. It was not a quadruped this time; it was a biped, a very suspicious-looking one such as the border can always brand as a bad *hombre*.

He was dressed in a light duck suit, even lighter than the sand. The Rio Grande moonlight marked his every step as something characteristic between the clothes he wore and the land he was traversing. Had I not looked in that particular spot where he was, I would have never seen him pass.

He came on up the slope, circling slightly to my left. Had I not been summarily awakened by the jaguar, possibly he would have found me sound asleep. The moonlight disclosed too,

that he wore a gun, strapped high and handy on his right side. And chances are that he was one of the kind who would have emptied that six-gun into my body while I slept, then made his examination later. Smugglers took no chances on long prison stretches down in that country, if they could wipe out the law with such little effort.

MY gun was trained on him long before he reached the sand-pile where I was waiting. He came on steadily, until he was not more than fifty feet from the end of my rifle barrel. From that distance I could make out his dark features as those of a Mexican—a no-account *hombre* I had been suspecting all along, but heretofore had never succeeded in catching with the goods on him.

"Get 'em up," I commanded, almost at the same time as he went for his gun.

He turned quickly before he shot, and his fire went wide. With the aid of the ideal moonlight I winged him better than I could have in broad daylight.

He dropped his gun and both hands came up. A moment later, I had the bracelets around his wrists and shoved him down on the sand where he was searched from head to feet. A goodly amount of dope was found strapped under his armpits.

"I geeve you mooch money," he bartered in his bribe-habituated fashion.

"You'll look better to me doing a long stretch," I replied. "Come on," and I pushed him ahead of me, out across the sand and waste land toward my permanent camp where a horse was waiting to get us away from that assignment.

As we traveled farther and farther from the Rio Grande, my thoughts still centered around that great graceful jaguar, roaming there in the moonlight. There was a feeling of satisfaction in sparing its life—not so much because it had not harmed me, but more so because it would live on as one in all its majesty and grandeur, never knowing how it had assisted in the capture of a much-wanted dope-smuggler.

A War Correspondent

By GRANVILLE FORTESCUE

WHEN the telegram arrived, I was reading a featured news story in my Paris *Herald*:

SPANISH DISASTER IN MOROCCO
GENERAL PINTOS AND HIS WHOLE BRIGADE WIPED OUT. TRAPPED ON DESERT MOUNTAIN. HORRIBLE SLAUGHTER. PRISONERS MUTILATED.

Followed a dispatch from Madrid giving details of the savage slaughter of the Spanish infantry surrounded by a force of Riff Moors on Mount Gurugu. Not one soldier escaped.

I opened my telegram and read:

CAPTAIN GRANVILLE FORTESCUE

HOTEL SPLENDIDE

AIX LES BAINS, FRANCE

ARE YOU GAME FOR RIFF WAR IN MOROCCO
QUESTION MARK LONDON STANDARD WANTS
CORRESPONDENT STOP IF SO MEET ME IN
MALAGA WHERE THE GRAPES COME FROM.

ASHMEAD-BARTLETT.

I caught the night express for Madrid. . . . I missed Ashmead-Bartlett in Malaga, but found another telegram awaiting me, and two days later I caught up with him in Melilla, the Spanish army base in Morocco. I had known Ashmead-Bartlett in the Russo-Japanese war—a tall blond Englishman with a sense of humor. He introduced me to a companion. "Meet Colonel Lewis, the *Times* correspondent. Served with the Egyptian army."

Short, thick-set, bronzed, in spotless uniform with ribbons, was Gippy Lewis. He sported a monocle; his boots you could use any time for a shaving-mirror.

Ashmead escorted me to headquarters to have my passes put in order. He had brought from England a letter appointing me special correspondent to the *London Standard*.

Briefly, the Spaniards and Moors were fighting for the possession of certain iron mines and a narrow-gauge railroad that ran twenty miles along the desert coast of north Africa. There were about forty thousand Spanish troops—infantry, cavalry, artillery and supply—around Melilla when I arrived.

Impatient to get to the battle-front, we correspondents bought our horses. I

purchased a pure white Arab stallion, big-chested, legs without a blemish, flowing mane and tail. Both Ashmead and Lewis were envious when I led in El Moro, as I named my mount. Ashmead had a horse that used to go to sleep on his feet, and Lewis bought a dun pony.

The Spanish army started its offensive the end of August. The objective was an Arab town, Zoco del Arbaa.

I suggested that we correspondents join the cavalry. During our two-weeks' wait we had made friends with a number of Spanish officers, among them General Carlos, Prince de Bourbon, in command of the cavalry division, and his younger brother, René de Bourbon, a captain commanding a squadron of the Princessa Hussars. The princes were cousins of King Alfonso, courteous to a degree, delightful companions and gallant soldiers.

A day's march brought us to Zoco del Arbaa—"Wednesday's Market Place"—and there we pitched camp. In order to prevent the Riffs from riding down our troops at night, a single-line wire entanglement was stretched around our tents.

THE first battle was a cavalry engagement. The videttes pushed out to scout some clay houses about a mile across level desert. Prince René's squadron—I was riding beside him—followed in the supporting line. The videttes came back galloping helter-skelter, spurred on by the "*puck-koo-o-o-o*" of the Riffs' ancient muskets. . . .

The scouts report the clay houses held by a large force of Moors. A bugle shrills—the Spanish bugles have an enchanting note. The rumble of wheels, the clank of harness-chains, the pound of horses hoofs, and a Schneider battery of 75's gallops into position. The gunners set up their range-finders, make their calculations. Blasts shatter the air. . . . More salvos from the guns, more shrill bugle calls and the second cavalry regiment—the Lancers de la Reina—mount. An orderly gallops up to report to Captain René de Bourbon that the whole cavalry brigade is going into action.

Some time passes before our Spanish cavalry aligns and trots into position.

in the Riff

An American who fought against the Spaniards in Cuba, fights on their side in Morocco.

The Moors pour long-range fire into the forming ranks. Horses and men drop under that fire. The charge is delayed.

Seeing this, I suggest to Prince René that he march his squadron—which was still in support—along the seashore below the desert level, then cut in on the Moor flank. From his brother he received permission to try this maneuver.

Hidden by a fold in the terrain, the Prince leads our column from the seashore straight back into the desert. When we are parallel to the enemy front, we wheel into line.

Sabers flash; bugles sound the charge!

I ride in the center of the charging line at Prince de Bourbon's left. The desert wind blows hot past our cheeks. I see the battle-line spread across the sands. Far on the right flank the lancers fight hand to hand against a horde of galloping Riffs. The soldiers of the Princessa regiment are fighting on foot. Horses run loose. The sands are spotted with bundles of crumpled uniforms.

Directly in our front a group of Moors hold a goat corral. Horses with high Arab saddles stand tethered at the rear while tribesmen crouch behind the walls blasting the Spaniards with rapid fire. Our charging line rides within four hundred yards of the corral before the Riffs discover us.

When they do see us, they shift to meet our rush. Bullets *ping-g-g-g* overhead, plow into sand before us. As we thunder on, the Riffs fire point-blank in our faces. Before we arrive within sabering distance they spring to their horses. Still firing from their saddles, they head for the slopes of Mount Gurugu. . . .

When we trotted back to the Spanish lines, we received loud congratulations from the general. Our maneuver had decided a doubtful pitched battle and sent the sheiks in full retreat. The Spanish officers knew I had fought against them in Cuba. That *faux pas* was now wiped out and I was warmly adopted into the Princessa Hussar regiment. . . .

During the next few weeks, the Spanish army was harassed by sporadic Riff



raids. One most interesting skirmish was staged during a sand-storm.

Early one morning when Ashmead-Bartlett, Lewis and myself are swimming in the Mediterranean, the heliograph flashes its warning that Riffs are on a raid. We hear the cavalry trumpets sound the "Call to Arms!" In no time we dress and canter to camp, ready to follow the fight.

The Moors had swooped down on a weakly defended sector of the railroad, and driven off the infantry half-company guarding it. Already they had dismounted and were tearing up the tracks, a game the Moors practiced day and night.

OUR squadron formed, we gallop across the desert. We are within a half-mile of the busy raiders before they discover us. Instantly they mount, fire a scattering volley, and ride off.

As we pursue, I feel stinging sand against my face. Then from a nullah flanking a spur of Mount Gurugu another band of Moors debouch into the desert. The two groups merge, rein their horses and dash around our flank.

At that moment the dust-storm breaks in all its fury. Scales of sand spiral up in front of our horses, throwing the squadron into confusion. Before the officers restore order, the Moors, dolmans whipping in the wind, sweep by, firing steadily into our ranks. As the enemy wheels, our squadron forms line, sabers drawn. The sand rushes past in clouds, shutting off the Moors from sight.

It is like galloping through brown fog. Horses cough and sneeze. Officers and men curse excitedly. Suddenly in the dust haze we crash into the loosely assembled formation of the Moors. Sabers hack right and left. Under the sting of those cutting saber-strokes the ghostly enemy turns and scatters. Lightning

spikes through the sand haze. Then a deluge of rain.

Early next morning when the sun turned the silica in the desert sand to diamonds, General Marina, the Spanish commander-in-chief, pushed forward his infantry and guns until his army again held the gully on Mount Gurugu where General Pintos had been entrapped.

We found many of the bodies of his ill-fated soldiers. The African sun had mummified them. It was evident the wounded had suffered a terrible fate; all were mutilated. The sight affected the Spanish soldiers deeply. Again and again I heard groups swearing to take an equally terrible revenge.

A WEEK later the Spanish army moved out for a general attack. The horse-soldiers, sabers and lances glittering, swept out to the front to "clear the ground." The foot-soldiers followed in battalion front, bayonets fixed. Guns, caissons and ammunition lumbered in the rear.

Ashmead-Bartlett elected to remain with the headquarters staff. Lewis and I rode with the cavalry patrols.

"Jolly sight, what?" said Lewis.

Just at this moment a squadron of sheiks, their white cloaks fluttering in the wind, galloped down on our patrols and let fly a volley from their saddles. The Spanish cavalry wheeled and rode off by the flanks.

"Come with me!" shouted Colonel Sandoval to Lewis and me.

"Not a bit like it," waved Lewis. "We're going to see this show, eh, Fortescue?" And I nodded.

Seeing a goat-corral some hundred yards distant, we rode to its shelter. These corrals are rectangular enclosures about a hundred feet deep by three hundred feet long. The walls are built of heaped rocks about three feet high. They are used by the Arabs to herd goats at night.

Lewis and I rode into the corral, dismounted and stood beside our horses, watching the Spanish infantry battalions open volley-firing. Lewis lit his pipe, uncased his binoculars and posed himself in the corner of the corral. I stood beside him. El Moro nuzzled my pocket for sugar while I searched for cigarettes.

"*Fuego!*" commanded the battalion commanders some fifty or sixty yards away on our right, and volleys blasted across the desert sands. The "battle" continued in this fashion for some twenty

minutes. Neither side seemed eager for closer action.

"If this is a Spanish battle," I complained, "I've seen a couple of *garçons* in a French bar put up a more exciting show over a ten-centime tip. When does the fighting begin?"

As if in answer, a volley crashed on my eardrums with the roar of a suddenly exploded mine blast. Thick lead slugs spattered against the rocks protecting us—*on the inside!*

Lewis' pony uttered a piercing neigh, leaped the walls and plunged headlong into the sand. I heard a grunting moan beside me. El Moro lay stretched on the ground, blood staining his white flank. It happened so quickly I stood stunned.

Another volley crashed. Again the lead slugs spattered against the wall. We crouched behind my dead pony.

A detachment of Riffs had cut in on the flank, crept across the desert unseen to the wall of our corral about three hundred feet away. We saw their turbans bobbing behind the rocks, their rifles pushed through openings. The rifles blazed. My helmet flew off my head.

After firing a few carefully aimed shots from his pistol over the dead horse's withers, Lewis remarked:

"I'm getting over the wall. Better come—"

"I've a little account to settle with those sheiks," I answered, affecting a calm I was far from feeling.

I had two clips of cartridges only. I crouched behind my horse, firing at the black eyes under the turbans bobbing above the distant wall. When I had fired my last cartridge, I crawled backward and scrambled after Lewis.

ONCE over the wall we were safe from the sheiks' bullets. When I joined him, Lewis began walking toward the Spanish lines where the battalions were still busy firing across the desert.

"Why not run a bit?" I inquired, wishing to get back to the Spanish lines. "Or is your heart weak?"

"Can't run," drawled Lewis. "British officer, you know. Can't let the Spanish Johnnies think we funk it."

"I'm no British officer; and here's where—"

But I got no further. The Riff bullets now fell among the Spaniards. Discovering this attack on his flank, the Spanish battalion commander wheeled to meet it.

"*Fuego!*" he commanded. *Bam!* came that volley right in our faces. I ex-

perienced all the sensations of a deserter backed up against a wall at sunrise. Crash! The Riffs replied with their old guns. We were caught between two fires!

The bullets *ping-g-g-ed* overhead, and plunked into the sand about us. It showered lead. Riffs and Spaniards answered volley with volley. Lewis and I lay stretched on the ground.

"Lewis, old man, you'd better get busy writing your dispatch. The *Times* will feature it, and maybe run an editorial about you writing dispatches while your life-blood reddened the sand."

"I say, spoofing aside, Fortescue, we can't stop here."

"I'm tunneling through to China," I replied, heaping up the sand head-cover I had already started.

Lewis suddenly stood up and shouted:

"Correspondentos! Correspondentos!"

He waved both arms above his head.

The Spanish fire slackened. I could see the company officers consulting. They

ordered a charge. With a huzza the men rushed forward. In a moment Lewis and I were caught up in their ranks. Three company officers kissed us in succession.

"Beastly Latin habit!" Lewis complained as the Spanish battalion commander joined us, asking questions to which I replied, explaining the situation.

"What did he say?" asked Lewis.

"He says correspondents shouldn't take such risks. We mustn't do it again."

"Not bally likely!"

"And I told him the British Government would give him a medal for saving your life."

"A medal! Why, the chap deserves the Victoria Cross," said Lewis, adjusting his monocle.

When we told our adventure to Ashmead-Bartlett that evening, he laughed.

"Live war correspondents are more useful to their papers than dead ones. Let's drink to your luck."

And this we did.

The Bullet Rolled Out

*Gun-man and his intended victim
go to the store together to complain
because the weapon misfired.*



By M. I. H. ROGERS

AT the time, I was first mate and one-fifth owner of a tuna clipper, fishing out of San Diego into Mexican waters. Five of us had built the boat and worked her on shares, one-sixth to the boat and five-sixths to us, evenly divided. I was the only Irishman in the crew. There was much friendly rivalry between the different fishing boats, and plenty of rather salty arguments as to the relative merits of the crews and clippers. Somehow I got tangled up in a two-man war with a little Portuguese named Tony.

It started in fun, but Tony got serious about it. If his boat was in port, he never failed to spot us when we came around Point Loma and to be waiting for me when we docked. If he couldn't taunt us because of a light catch, he'd address blistering personal remarks at me, and fre-

quently he was laced up with *vino*. I realize now that it wasn't spite. It was partly envy of my height—he hated being so short—and partly a subconscious desire to be friends.

Well, fun is fun, but I was getting fed up. One day I told him to beat it or I'd spank him. He came at me with a wicked-looking knife. Tony was too small for me, and I kind of liked the spunky little cuss; but a man has to protect himself, and Tony meant to slice himself a big piece of Irishman.

I took the knife away and threw it into the bay, but that didn't stop him. He was all over me like a bunch of wildcats with their tails tied together. The end of it was that I did spank him. He went home crying mad, and everyone on the dock knew that there was trouble ahead.

All the Italians and Portuguese in the fishing colony liked Tony, and some of them liked me too. One after another, they talked to me, shrugging and gesticulating, and I was more than ready to make peace. I said I'd let Tony alone if he'd let me alone; but I knew that we were either to be friends, or one of us would have to go out feet first. It was a cinch things couldn't go on the way they were.

Then it happened. I saw Tony on the wharf when we drew in at the cannery. His boat had been in port about three weeks for repairs, and he was spoiling for trouble. He started right in shouting at me, and this time there was something new in his voice. The captain suggested that I ignore him and stay aboard until he and his brothers could tuck him away somewhere, but I had a feeling that this was the showdown of our little war.

A crowd of curious men was forming when I jumped to the dock and started for Tony. I said something about smacking him in the lip to teach him respect for other men, when he pulled a gun on me: a blued-steel revolver, and I can tell you it looked like business. Tony's eyes were big and round as quarters, and he was aiming right at my stomach.

Naturally I hesitated and Tony began to taunt me. Then he pulled the trigger. The revolver said "*Pfutt!*" and a bullet rolled out of the muzzle. Tony looked at it in surprise, and I started for him, wondering if such good luck could continue.

He looked up from the gun, took a back step, and pulled the trigger again. Again it said "*Pfutt!*" His eyes were as big as half-dollars now, and he bore down frantically on the trigger.

"*Pfutt—pfutt!*" The last bullet kicked out onto my foot, I was so close.

THIS mix-up was about the same as the first, only Tony put his whole heart into it this time and damaged me considerably. I only wanted to smack him for attempting to kill me, but he wouldn't let it go at that. As he kept coming at me, I began to realize this was the wind-up, and I didn't like it any way I looked.

I began talking to him, low, so the crowd couldn't hear much. I reminded him that he had *bambinos* at home, and the prettiest wife in the whole colony. I told him I didn't want to fight him, never had wanted to—he was too good a man; that I'd like to be friends, and my wife wanted to learn how to cook *rissole* from his Maria. All the time I was trying to keep him from defacing me entirely.

I told him that he better stop fighting or he'd be arrested and fined, and maybe hanged if he tried any more gun work. He had run into my fist a couple of times, and one eye was closed. There was plenty of blood on his face, and a fall had taken most of the spring out of one leg. He sure was dynamite for his size.

All of a sudden, with the impulsiveness of his race, he quit and stuck out his hand. I got him down into our boat and doctored his eye. He looked like a jigsaw puzzle with half the parts missing when I finished sticking adhesive tape on him. All the time he talked about what a dirty trick the store had played on him selling him a bum gun.

"You're damn' lucky," I told him. "If that gun had been good, you'd be in jail right now, and I'd be in a box."

"Maybe-so you right; but they got no beesiness sell me no good gun. My fren', we go at once and get back my monee. Yes?"

I AGREED, and went with him to the sporting-goods store a few blocks from the waterfront. Tony tossed the revolver across the counter at the clerk, and it left an oily streak on the wrapping-paper. He shouted and waved his hands at the clerk, who calmly broke the revolver and emptied out the one unfired cartridge, meanwhile assuring him that the store would fix it.

"Feex eet?" Tony yelled. "Thees eye! Thees ear! Thees toot'! How you feex?"

"I see you took good care of the gun," the clerk said.

"Good care? Certainlee! Ev'ree day I oil and oil and oil heem. No damn' good. Geev back my monee!"

"Pipe down and give me a chance to see what's the trouble. This is a good gun, and good cartridges too." Calmly he pried the bullet from the one remaining loaded shell and tapped out the powder into his palm. It did not pour, but came out damp and lumpy.

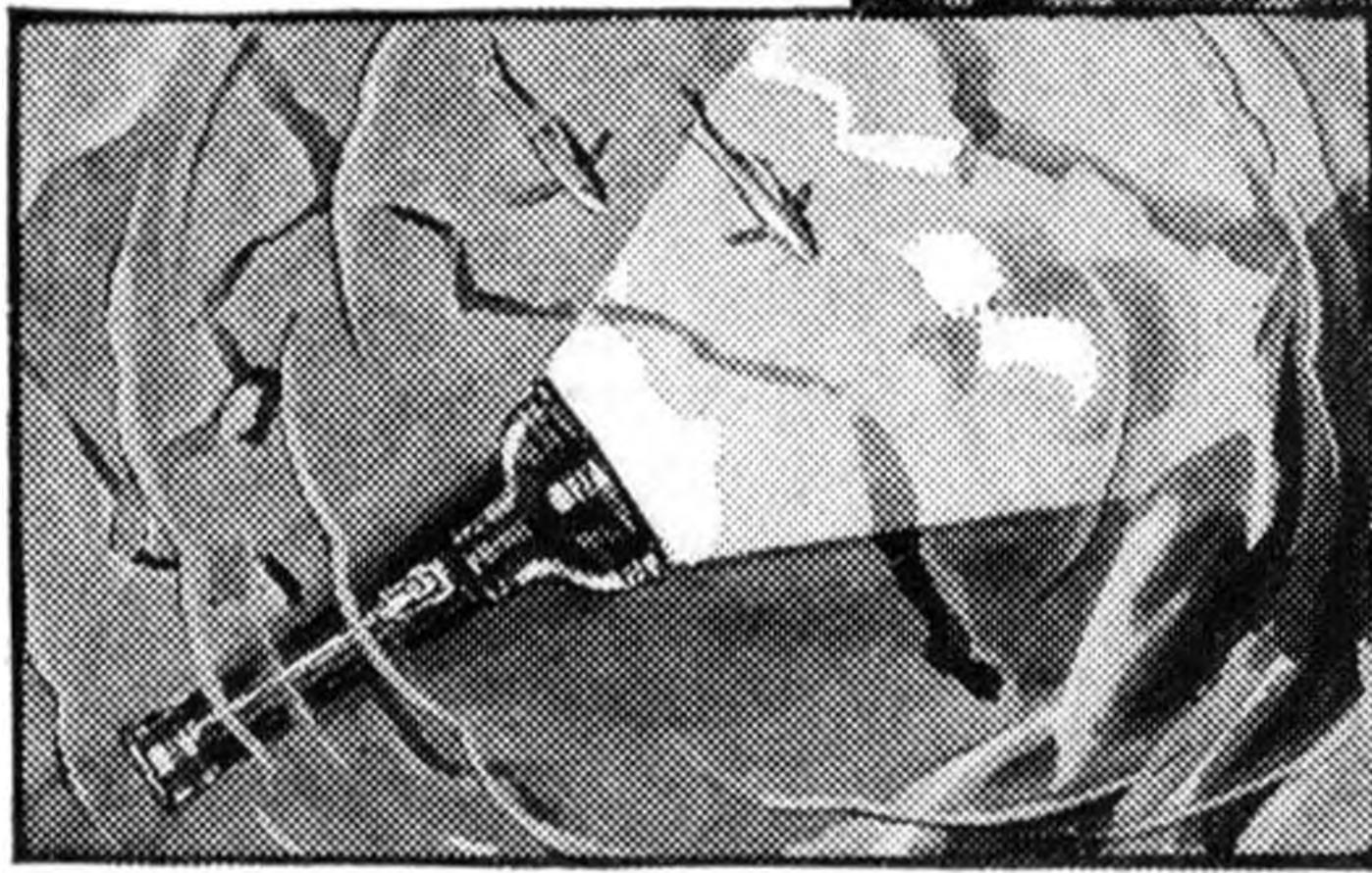
"There's your answer: too much oil. It got into the powder, and the priming charge was all that exploded. Just had about enough strength to kick the bullet out of the barrel."

Tony grinned sheepishly, but I don't mind saying that my stomach turned right over. If Tony hadn't been so hell-bent on killing me, and hadn't spent so much time oiling the new revolver, I'd have been lying in the morgue with a hole in my stomach, instead of standing with my arm around his shoulder.

FATE Led Them to a Living Tomb!



"The light continued to burn!"



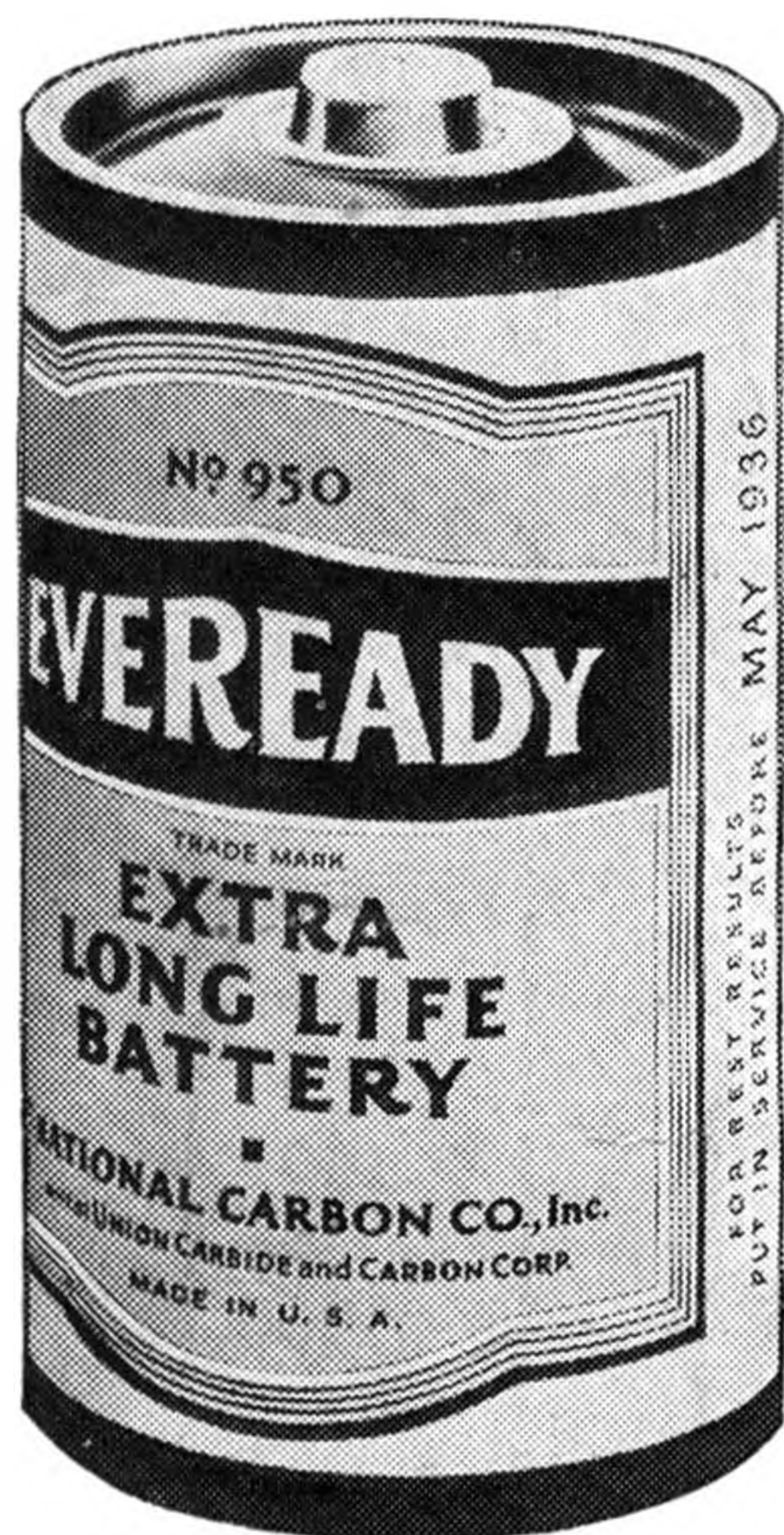
But Edward Eiskamp and Six Companions Cheated Death in Underground Maze

Edward Eiskamp who, with six companions, had this thrilling experience in the Sam's Point caves in the wilds of the Catskills.

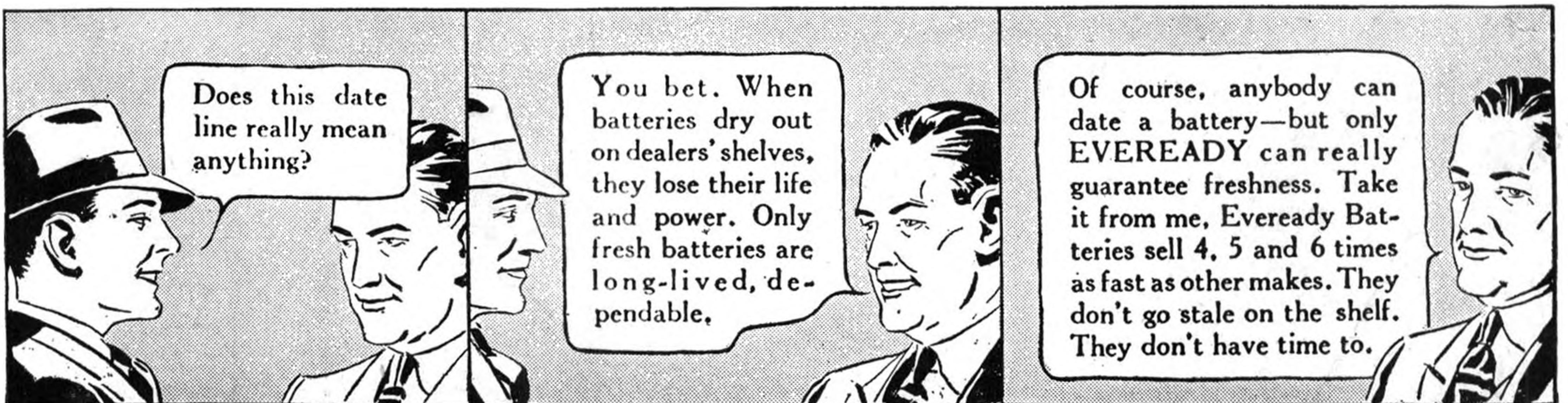


"Splash . . . our tiny rock-bound world went black! I had dropped our flashlight into a pool of icy water at the very bottom of that cavern-maze that burrows for miles in every direction under the Catskills. Without light, here was our living tomb. In weeks or months or years someone would find seven skeletons in this crypt.

"But the light continued to burn. Up through eight feet of water came the bright halo of hope. We fished up that flashlight, and those powerful fresh Eveready Batteries lighted our way back from Eternity."



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ONE REASON WHY THEY LAST LONGER



"GET A LIFT WITH A CAMEL"



"I AM A STEEL WORKER on the Triborough Bridge," says Ben Parsons (*above*). "When tired, I get a 'lift' with a Camel."

TUNE IN! Camel Caravan with Walter O'Keefe, Deane Janis, Ted Husing, Glen Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra. Tuesday and Thursday—9 p. m. E. S. T., 8 p. m. C. S. T., 9:30 p. m. M. S. T., 8:30 p. m. P. S. T.—over WABC-Columbia Network.



WINTER SPORTS TAKE ENERGY TOO. Says Margaret Lynam (*left*): "When I feel exhausted from a long day outdoors, Camels renew my flow of energy."

- Camels are made from finer, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS—Turkish and Domestic—than any other popular brand.
(Signed) R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO., Winston-Salem, N. C.

