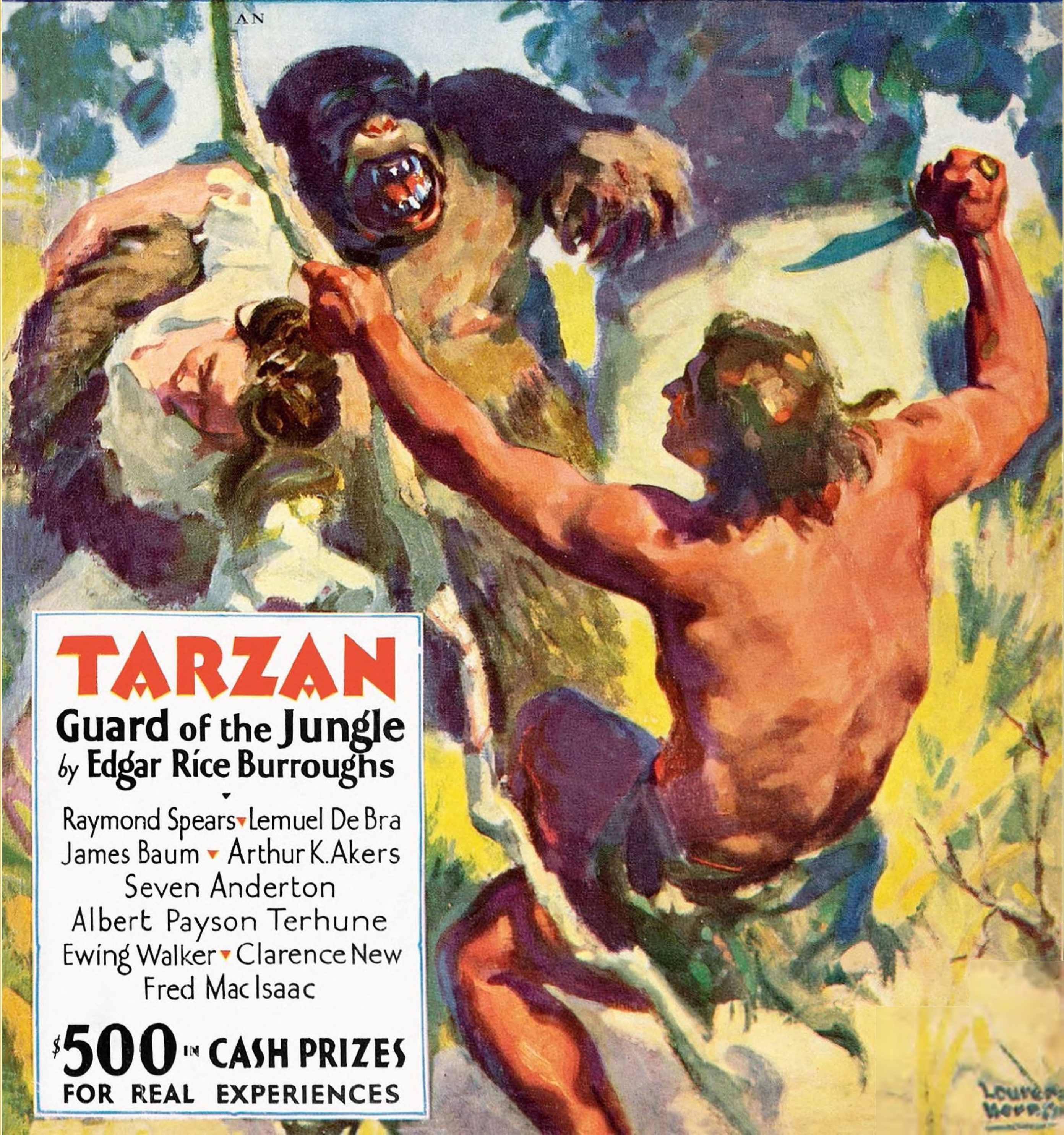
Price 25 Cents
Thirty Cents in Canada

JANUARY 1931

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

ILLUSTRATED



TARZAN
Guard of the Jungle
by **Edgar Rice Burroughs**

Raymond Spears • Lemuel De Bra
James Baum • Arthur K. Akers
Seven Anderton
Albert Payson Terhune
Ewing Walker • Clarence New
Fred MacIsaac

$500 IN CASH PRIZES
FOR REAL EXPERIENCES

The Blue Book Magazine [Vol. 52 No. 3, January 1931]
ed. Donald Kennicott (The McCall Company, 25¢, 136pp, quarto, cover by Laurence Herndon)
4 · The Pioneer Spirit · [The Editor] · ed
5 · The Black Stone of Tibesti [Part 1 of 2] · James Edwin Baum · sl; illustrated by J. Fleming Gould
23 · Fighting a Rep · Arthur Hawthorne Carhart · ss; illustrated by Allen Moir Dean
29 · Mystery on the Ship · Fred MacIsaac · ss; illustrated by Vladimir Chenkoff
36 · Nerve · Leland S. Jamieson · ss; illustrated by J. Fleming Gould
43 · Chris'mas Gif' · Ewing Walker · ss; illustrated by J. Fleming Gould
50 · Tarzan, Guard of the Jungle [Part 4 of 7; Tarzan] · Edgar Rice Burroughs · n.; illustrated by Frank Hoban
63 · The Cauldron of Gold [Captain Cormorant] · Bertram Atkey · ss; illustrated by Everett Lowry
68 · Grudge Battle · Albert Payson Terhune · ss; illustrated by Harry Lees
75 · Pirates of the Frozen Sea [Part 2 of 4] · Walto W. Putta · ar; illustrated by J. Fleming Gould; given as "Pirates of the Frozen Seas".
86 · Frogfront [Darktown] · Arthur K. Akers · ss; illustrated by Joseph Maturo
90 · Mississippi Magic [Part 3 of 3] · Raymond S. Spears · sl; illustrated by Frank Hoban
103 · The Croaker · Paul Deresco Augsburg · ss; illustrated by Vladimir Chenkoff
108 · Game of a Royal Pawn [Free Lances in Diplomacy] · Clarence Herbert New · ss; illustrated by J. Fleming Gould
116 · Unforeseen Rewards · W. A. Clouser · ts
118 · Mutiny · Capt. George H. Grant · ts
120 · A Timely Arrival · L. C. Maynard · ts
121 · The Arch Enemy · Robert Morris Burtt · ts
123 · A Saharan Battle · Philippe Beauvais · ts
124 · The Smugglers of Mad River Cañon · Lemuel de Bra · na; illustrated by W. O. Kling

The Black Stone of Tibesti

To conquer—and to forget—this American and Englishman plunge into the country of the Tuaregs, those "natural" men with the lawless ferocity of wild beasts.

By JAMES EDWIN BAUM

Illustrated by James Fleming Gould

YOU meet some queer characters if you knock about the fringes of the Sahara much. I'm thinking particularly of Henry Sydenham Lovering. He came to me in Khartoum while I was there outfitting for a trek over west into French territory after ivory.

He was fresh from England then and he walked up to me in Morhig's store. Morhig is a Syrian who carries the best assortment of camp supplies in town. He puts up your stuff in chop boxes any size and weight you want. If you're going with camels Morhig's boxes fit, one on each side, about one hundred twenty-five pounds, and the weights are even. If you want porter's or donkey loads, he makes them up accordingly. When you get out into the blue and open those boxes you'll find everything intact; not a tin of coffee missing here, a bag of beans or rice and a bottle of whisky forgotten there. You can depend on Morhig; so I always have him pack for me.

I was buying enough to last me five months.

"Put in one of those small meat-grinders, Morhig," I said. "Great contrivance to have along—a meat-grinder. Sometimes you run out of meat for days and the only thing you can kill quickly is an old bull waterbuck or hartebeest. Bull-meat, old bull-meat, is stringy and rubbery—you couldn't chew it with hyena teeth—but your 'boy' shoves it through the grinder and there you are: with onions, it's the finest hamburger you ever tasted. Handy rig! Put one of those in."

"Of a surety," mumbled old Morhig, writing it down on the pad. "You are an old Africander; you know what is best for the camping."

I'd noticed a young fellow about twenty-five years old, neatly dressed in whites and a pipe-clayed sun-helmet, making some purchases in another part of the store. He must have heard old Morhig, for he sauntered over and took me all in with a critical sort of stare. I was none of his business and I resented that impudent gaze. He stared too long.

"Lost a father or something around here?" I asked as his eyes traveled from my shorts and hairy knees to the bushy beard I was flaunting at that time. "Think you see in me a long-lost parent?" When I get out to civilization I hate to be stared at like a new animal in the Zoo.

"Beg pardon," said the youth, hastily bowing. "Beg pardon—conduct inexcusable. Sorry. Drink, Morhig!" he addressed the proprietor. "Two. Drink with me?"

"Busy," I said shortly, "and so is Morhig."

"Oh!" murmured the well-tailored youngster. "Oh!"

I went on with my buying. In about five minutes the youth again came over.

"I say," he interrupted, "could I have a moment's converse with you?"

I glared at him. "What's on your mind?"

"Jolly good outfit you're buying, I say. Must be going on a long trek, what? Mind if I went along?"

Notice, he didn't even ask where I was headed. Wanted to go, but didn't know where I was going. Queer!

I looked him over closely then and saw that he had been drinking more than was good for him—in the heat of the day, too.

"When did you arrive from England?" I asked, intending to warn him about drinking before sundown.

"Two days agone. Filthy trip! Dust, no end; heat; flies—little cold-footed flies that stick. Nasty, what?"

He was complaining about the comparatively harmless flies of Egypt and the Nile. I wondered what he would have said about the fever mosquitoes, guinea-worm, chiggers that bore under your toe-nails, the dysentery, and the heat where I was going—heat that would make Khartoum seem like an ice-box.

"Why do you want to go with me?"

"Don't know," he said. "Don't know any more than you do. Surprised, myself! Whim—mere whim."

I'd never seen anyone quite like him. He was a handsome lad when I took the trouble to look him over closely. An aristocrat, I could see plainly enough, and I could see also that his partiality for liquor was something new in his life. He had none of the earmarks of a habitual drinker. His manner was very cool and bored and in spite of his first impoliteness in staring, I judged him to be at heart a gentleman, raised in a rigid, conventional school. I put down the lapse to the liquor.

"Take the advice of an old hand," I said kindly, "and don't drink until sundown. Neither you nor anyone else can do it long in this climate and stay on the earth's top-side."

He looked more bored than ever. A faint smile with just a trace of superciliousness appeared at the corners of his mouth. He answered with the utmost formality:

"Thank you so much. You make the tenth—from Cairo. Awf'ly nice crowd in Egypt and the Sudan. Take fatherly—and motherly—int'rest in a fellow, must say. Awf'ly good of you, m'word."

The touch of sarcasm in his tone made me angry.

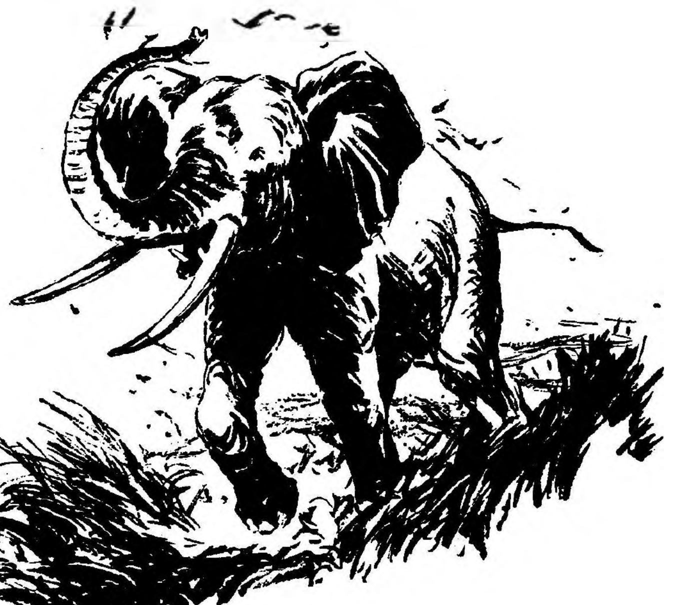
"Go to the devil in your own way!" I blurted, turning my back. "It's your privilege."

"Do you know,"—he advanced a step, eagerly, buoyantly,—"that's just the way I look at it! To the devil in my own way. Fits in absolutely with my own theory—dovetails, you might say—what?"

Copyright, 1930, by The McCall Company (The Blue Book Magazine). All rights reserved.

I went on with my ordering.

"But I say—I really mean it. May I go along with you?" he persisted. "Won't be any trouble. Swear it. Company for you; exchange of ideas in the trackless bush—that sort of thing. Beard the snuffy old lion on his native heath. Plunge over the top after the jolly pachyderm. Ivory, savages, saurians—you call 'em crocs, no doubt. Hands across the bush with the Grim Reaper. Meet the tiger, the jungle king, the ferocious hippo, blood-sweating behemoth of Holy Writ. Become a regular Mowgli. Keen for it! Assure you."



His trunk was raised high, covering the brain. The breast shot was the only chance.

"There are no tigers in Africa." I turned upon him disgustedly. "And the hippo is not ferocious and does not sweat blood."

"Ah, that disappoints me. No tiger in Africa? Very culpable oversight. Some one has blundered. Must manage to worry along with lions."

"Yes," I said dryly, "you'd have to worry along with lions—and elephants. And you'd do plenty of worrying too—if you were going. But you're not going."

"Oh, I say," he protested, and I could see he was seriously disappointed. "You might reconsider, you know. Approached you in the wrong way. Never should have stared as I did. Boorish; absolutely inexcusable. Sorry." I liked the smile he gave me then.

"You don't even know where I'm bound," I said in exasperation.

"Don't care," answered that surprising young man with a languid wave of the hand. "Cuts no ice in my back yard—you see how I know your American idiom? Picturesque, what? Follow where destiny leads. Motto. Anywhere over the Rim, anywhere. All one and the same. I say, can you spare Morhig half a mo'?"

"Get him his drink, Mohrig," I ordered. "He won't be quiet till he has it."

"Kind of you," he returned; "awf'ly kind."

He stood there with the whisky and soda Morhig brought, sampling it from time to time and watching me complete my purchases, but he said no more about going along. I finished and told Morhig that my cook Osman would be around the next morning with porters to carry the stuff down to the boat-landing. I was going as far toward my destination by the wood-burning Nile steamer as I could. Then I would pick up camels to carry me on my way.

I paid for my supplies, said good-by to Morhig and waved a careless farewell to the youth.

"Best of luck," he called after me. "May meet you in the bush sometime. Decided to become a bushranger myself, regular Mowgli. May see you—small world!"

"Good luck," I answered, "and remember—you're playing straight into the hands of the local undertaker with your midday whisky-and-sodas."

"Thanks," he called; "thanks awf'ly."

In the morning I saw my outfit loaded aboard the little wood-burning paddle-wheel steamer, *Slatin Pasha*, and with Osman, my cook, and Selim, my old gun-bearer, aboard, I sat down in my camp-chair on the forward deck, prepared to be bored to death for a week. The tiny wood-burners of the upper Nile make slow time against the current, and Malakal, where I would leave the river, is a long way south. There were three officers of the Equatorial Corps aboard on the way back to their fever-ridden, desolate posts after the annual three-months' leave out in God's country. Those, with the captain and a Greek or Armenian engineer, were the only whites.

JUST before we cast off, however, a donkey dray, piled high with chop boxes and other baggage, arrived at the landing. Parading in the lead, as spic and span as yesterday, walked that cool youth, Henry Sydenham Lovering. He had an interpreter at his elbow, a greasy-looking, smiling half-caste Greco-Sudani, I should guess, and through him the gilded youth gave orders about the stowage of his baggage.

"Topping day," he called cheerfully as he saw me seated on the deck. "Jolly old Sol blinking down from the ambient; gentle breezes, wandering zephyrs—all manner of things the heart could wish. I'm coming along on the boat, you know."

"So I see," I answered, not at all sorry to know that the boredom of the long, slow plod up the Nile would be somewhat relaxed with a person of his peculiarities aboard. On such a long monotonous trip anything unusual—good or bad, wild or tame, crazy or imbecile—is a relief; it helps to fill the vacuum. So I greeted him with considerably more enthusiasm than I had shown in Morhig's store.

"Glad you're coming. How far do you go?"

"Really can't tell, yet," he replied, from the bank. "Mere whim. But must get out into the Blue. Absolutely necessary."

I saw then that he was bringing along the oily half-caste interpreter and a scrawny, turbaned Sudani cook, probably a Beni-Shangul. I didn't like the looks of the interpreter, nor his soft, smiling manner. I have a natural aversion to interpreters, anyway. They have an unholy faculty for making trouble with natives. They're smarter than the common native and they've usually picked up the bad, but not the good, traits of the white man who taught them the little English they know. Thank goodness I can speak Arabic and Swahili well enough to get on without them.

Lovering had a great deal of baggage for one man and I noticed that about half of it was whisky. That was bad. I made a mental note that after I got his confidence I'd put in some good stiff remarks about that whisky-and-soda business. If he intended to keep up daytime drinking down under the equator he most assuredly would never come out alive.

WE cast off and got under way, and the puffing little boat dropped down the Blue Nile from the landing, passed under the new bridge and turned her blunt nose up the White Nile. I knew the route well. Day after day she would steam slowly to the southward against the current. There would be interminable shores of thornbush and rank, fifteen-foot grass—for the rains had not been over long enough for the grass to dry out and be burned off. It was early in November and there would still be plenty of water in the swamps and water-holes miles back from the river. So we could expect to see but little game to relieve the monotony; while the game can water at those potholes it seldom comes to the Nile. The boat would tie up at native villages two or three times a day to load up with wood. But those villages would be almost as uninteresting to me as the drab banks themselves; I'd seen their like too often. Tall, naked Dinkas and Shilluks, standing like cranes on one leg with the other foot resting upon the knee, a useless spear in one hand and perhaps the plume of a tropical bird waving from kinky, cow-dung-plastered hair. Women, children, dogs and flies. It was all old stuff to me.

In a week or ten days we might expect to see a small herd of elephants now and then along the bank—but without ivory worth the trouble of chopping out. For the big tuskers stay away from such arteries of travel as the Nile. Not that the upper Nile is at all crowded with shipping. Bless you, no. Small wood-burners like the *Slatin Pasha* are the beginning and end of all commerce on the lonesome upper reaches, and one of these passes a given point only once every two weeks. But even such negligible marks of civilization are too much for the wise old carriers of big tusks. They stay away back in the deep bush.

This time I intended to push west through the Bahr-el-Ghazal with its wilderness of thorn-trees and its broiling heat that settles upon your shoulders like a dead weight, and to hit the upper waters of the Shari River in French territory. French territory is the place for the ivory hunter. Over there they care little or nothing about game laws. You can do as you please. Anywhere in British territory you're up against pretty stiff game laws; you kill two elephants legitimately and perhaps a third "in self-defense," and that's all the ivory you get.

The British handle the natives pretty well as a general thing. Sometimes a half-baked district commissioner, fresh from home, primed to the ears with idealistic notions of racial equality, education and such rot, gives the blacks of his locality a false idea of their own importance and otherwise makes a fool of himself—but it doesn't happen often and then not for long. But the one big drawback to operating in French territory are the numerous half-castes, who attempt to live on something like an equality basis, and put on airs to match. When things get too insufferable and all authority breaks down, the French have to put the fear of God into them all over again—with the result that like spoiled children they hate their masters and won't turn a hand to assist a white man. And they'd murder you out of hand, if they dared. Sometimes in French territory when you need food for your men the worst way, not a village will sell you a calabash of *dura*. If you want guides or scouts to hunt in an unknown country, you'll often find that every villager but the old men and women, too old to walk, has disappeared in the bush. And they won't come back until you leave. But there are still some big tuskers and sizable herds roaming through French territory, which is the reason I had made up my mind to go there.

I had a talk with Lovering the first evening on the boat and I was amazed to learn that he really didn't know where he was going. Actually had no idea where he would leave the boat. Told me he had decided to become a "bushranger," as he insisted upon calling anyone who went into the bush. He'd read of bushrangers in Australia, I suppose; the term is never used in Africa. Well, he had set out to become a "bushranger" and of course had no idea what sort of an outfit to purchase—so he had told Morhig after I left the store to duplicate my order.

I tried to pin him down to something tangible.

"Are you out for sport, ivory, sight-seeing—or what?"

"Oh, anything," he answered indefinitely. "Hardly know myself. Bushranger. Range the bush. See sights. Don't care much about sights, though. Boring, frightfully boring, to see sights all the while. Sport? Good idea. Topping whim, sport. Yes, you may put me down as a sporting chap, keen to embroil himself with the roaring monarchs of the veldt."

I COULDN'T decide whether or not he was the simpleton he evidently took pleasure in making himself appear. I wondered a good many times if he was really one of the vacant-minded, bored, idle rich that he impersonated so successfully. If not, I asked myself, what was his game? I couldn't imagine what under-cover mission anyone could have in that part of the world. If I had met him in Thibet, Afghanistan or Turkey I think I should have connected him with intrigue of some sort. But in Central Africa—no, he must be just what he seemed and nothing more.

In spite of his drinking—and he did drink continually—I must say he did not get very drunk. He handled the stuff as well as any man I ever saw. But he was almost never without a drink within reach. In the evenings, however, when the rest of us white men were playing bridge in the screened enclosure of the forward deck, Henry would pull up a chair and sit quietly with his whisky-glass in the hole of the chair-arm and watch.

He seldom spoke at such times. His mind, in the evenings, appeared to be a great many miles away, for he was pensive and if he had not been carrying a preposterous load of whisky, I think he would have been downright unhappy and sad. He obviously had something on his mind.

The more he drank the more formal and polite he became. If one of us moved back a chair and bumped him—any little thing like that—Henry would rise at once, often a bit wabbly on his pins, and, bowing formally, beg

pardon for being in the way. But with it all he was not the least obnoxious and it wasn't long before we all agreed that he must have come from a fine old family. Liquor is very apt to show up a person's breeding, especially in the tropics.

He was strange with his liquor in another way. I've seen him sit for two hours watching a tight game and forget all about the glass on the arm of his chair. Then suddenly he'd remember that he had not touched it. And, as if to make up for that error, he would drink the whole thing down at a gulp and ring for the Sudani steward to fetch another.

One day, after we'd been almost a week on the boat, I said to him:

"Henry, you don't like that stuff,"—pointing to his glass,—"at least in the quantities you drink. Tell me—why have you set out to drink yourself to death?"

For an instant he looked into my eyes keenly. There was none of the rather childish stare that he usually affected. I saw from that quick look and the faint glimmer of a smile of appreciation for my insight that went with it, that I had hit the bull's-eye. But he quickly covered up and answered with his usual languid, careless air:

I called loudly but there was no answer. . . . . Our midnight promenade through the forest was anything but pleasant.

"Really, old top—such a surprising thing for you to say! The idea of a Lovering intentionally drinking himself to death! Silly rot—beg pardon—absolutely silly, though—'pon my word, it is. Why, I like it! Unconquerable craving for the stuff. Yes, that's it. Unquenchable craving!" And he took a long pull at the glass.

"Henry," I said, "I've been around some and I've seen drunkards, alcoholics—plenty of 'em. You're just naturally not one!" I thought if I could persuade him to be confidential, to get something off his chest, it might do some good. But he broke in before I could go further:

"Deuced nice of you! Thoughtful, no end. Save the youth from the Demon. Worthy effort—assure you; much appreciated. Honor you. Respect you. But useless, absolutely useless; gone too far—damnable craving."

"Bosh!" I commented, completely out of patience.

Through the long steamer-trip he held his peace and the secret that had sent him into the tropics to drink himself into an early grave never passed his lips. I liked him for keeping his affairs to himself. In fact, by the time we reached Malakal I liked him so much better than I had at first that I made up my mind to take him along with me. He had never mentioned the subject again after that first day in Morhig's store. The evening before we tied up at Malakal I called him out on deck. He stood there, leaning against the iron rail, with the after-glow of the red sunset in his eyes.

"What pearls of wisdom, O Bahram, mighty hunter, would you now impart to my immature ears?" he inquired lightly, fussing with a little pipe he carried.

"Nothing much, O whirling dervish of the jocund grape," I answered, adopting his own airy manner of speech. "Nothing except that I have taken counsel in this, my little secret heart, and the result of that *shauri* I would make known, if perchance you are not too far-wandering in the rosy labyrinths of intoxication."

He grinned with amusement at my unusual lapse from taciturnity and carried on with great gusto: "Say on, O Sun, and Moon, and Father of the everlasting Stars! Be it the secret lore of the vanished Pharaohs, an exposé of the crafty machinations of Shilluk witch-doctors or only a jolly temperance-lecture, mine ears will even attend unto thee. Say on, MacDuff, and cursed be he who cries 'enough!'"

"It has been borne in upon my consciousness," I pronounced oracularly, "that you are in the midst of a howling wilderness without a chaperon. And, rather than see you run amuck in the wilderness, I have laid aside for the nonce my natural abhorrence for the young of the genus *homo* and will invite you to share the mosquitoes, the chiggers, the guinea-worms, flies, fleas, and heat of my camps—so help me Gawd!"

He looked at me for a moment without speaking. I could almost swear I saw a watery glint in his eye. But he was careful not to show pleasure.

"What is written, is written," he answered, like some devout Mohammedan, baring his head as to the inevitable. "It is Kismet."

And thus it happened that Henry Sydenham Lovering and I left the boat at Malakal, bought eight "*hamla*" or pack-camels and a riding-camel apiece, and set out to the westward for French territory and the big tuskers of the Shari river forests.

CHAPTER II

At Malakal there were the usual endless palavers with the natives and other annoyances and delays that always attend the departure of a caravan—the dickering for camels, the arranging of loads, the hiring of men and buying their food; the hundred-and-one incidentals that must be looked after before an outfit is ready for the trail.

The District Commissioner at Malakal warned me to be careful of the natives in the Darfur country. There had been some trouble up that way; an Armenian trader had been killed and he had heard that the Darfur Arabs, always an intractable bunch, were carrying on a clandestine slavery traffic with the Tuaregs, or Veiled Men of the Desert. Small bands of Tuaregs, he said, occasionally came down from the great Sahara and returned with a few slaves. Because of this traffic the Darfur natives were intensely suspicious of any white man who might come into their country, for they knew that their lucrative business would come to an end if the British authorities found out about it. He advised me to take unusual precautions as we passed through and to have as little to do as possible with the natives and their chiefs.

But I gave little thought to the warning. The slave-trading was none of our business. It was a matter for the British authorities to stamp out and I didn't see how we could become mixed up in it.

The natives in the section of the Bahr-el-Ghazal where we then were, are primitive; tall, spear-carrying Dinkas with blank animal-like faces, muttering a staccato language that sounds like the gibbering of monkeys. They are so low in the human scale that I had thought the sight of them would intrigue any newcomer to the country. But Henry took everything as it came and showed no interest in new and strange people. The Dinkas he dismissed with a word.

"Children," he remarked, "black shiny children, popping about hither and yon in the wildwood, unbreeched, unwashed and without trace of a brain. They don't know what it's all about. Dashed lucky, I should say, without a brain; no worries and," he added half to himself, "—no memories."

That remark, careless as it was, confirmed me in my idea of what was wrong with Henry. The thing that had sent him into the wilderness was a memory.

To find out what sort of memory it was, I made an experiment. I was sitting my camel just ahead of Henry, for we were passing through a thorn-bush country along a narrow trail. I turned in the saddle and watched his face as I murmured a few bars from an old song, pronouncing the words distinctly so that he should not miss a word: "*She can both false and friendly be; trust her not*"—and the rest of it.

At the words Henry stiffened in his saddle. It was an involuntary movement and he relaxed almost instantly again, but I flattered myself that I had found out two things: First, the thing preying upon his mind was the memory of a woman. A woman, either intentionally or unintentionally, had sent him into the tropics to bury himself; and secondly, and more important—he was still in love with that woman! I passed the thing off in a careless way, switching the song without giving any sign that I had noticed his action.

A week after leaving Malakal, we camped one night by a small stream in a forest of *tebeldi* and flat-topped acacia trees. Signs of elephant were much in evidence; a large herd had been to water only the night before, almost at the place of our camp-site. Torn and ravaged limbs covered the ground. Great round holes in the mud at the water's edge showed where the big beasts had stood and sprayed themselves with the warm and smelly water. Henry showed some surprise when I drew his attention to the size of the tracks; they were as large around as the holes made by mammoth pile-drivers. But they were not out of the ordinary in size for elephant. And, at first, he could hardly believe the height of some of the larger bulls when I called his attention to the marks of mud from giant backs rubbed upon limbs fourteen feet from the ground.

"What jolly hulks they must be!" he remarked, and I saw him glance somewhat ruefully at the .425-caliber rifle in his hand. I knew well enough what was in his mind. He was a bit incredulous at the idea of stopping such beasts with so small a thing of wood and steel; it is the reaction common to us all upon our first elephant-hunt.

Four naked Dinkas from a village near by came that night and squatted with the caravan men at their fire. Osman reported to me later the gist of their roundabout conversation: Elephants had completely destroyed their crops of *dura*.

The deep grunts of a lion came from the bush.

"What are we to do," they had asked, "if an elephant does not soon blunder into one of our pitfalls? How then can we eat?" They were a thin and poor lot and I had Osman tell them that we would stay over a day and take a look at the elephant herd. There might be a set of worth-while tusks in such a large herd and anyway, I promised the natives that we would shoot one or two animals to keep the village from starving.

We were still in British territory, it is true, and I had no British license, but there was not one chance in a hundred that a Government man would pass through that locality for a year or two at least. We old-timers, it should be understood, do not hold with remorseless and indiscriminate slaughter of game—at least the decent ones among us. On the other hand, we refuse to look upon the game-laws as inspired. Game-laws are necessary, of course; the general idea is sound; but we of experience think we know at least as much about the game situation as the men who made the game laws and therefore we use our own discretion.

"Now," I said, turning to Henry, "the thing to do is to follow these villagers in the morning. They know where the herd goes into retirement during the day; and, more important, they know the location of their native pitfalls. Pitfalls in thick bush—deep holes with sharpened stakes at the bottom—are not to be taken lightly. These villagers claim to have seen a bull 'with ivory that drags on the ground.' How often have I heard that expression from natives! It means nothing. They will always tell you some such idiotic story to induce you to go after the herd. And, when close to elephants in high grass, they invariably point to the first patch of black hide they see and make frantic signs to suggest record tusks, urging you to shoot. The animal in question, nine times out of ten, is a small cow with worthless ivory, or even a calf with none at all. Local untrained natives are good for nothing but to find a herd and point out hidden pitfalls. Once in touch with elephant, we must see our own judgment."

Henry consumed his usual quantity of whisky that evening, drinking with that slow, steady purposefulness that was characteristic of him. Now if there is one thing in this world that demands steady nerves and cool, quick thinking, it is elephant-hunting. A nervous mistake or an ill-judged, hasty movement at a critical time may prove fatal. And whisky-drinking, in the quantities Henry consumed, is a great deal like reaching out a friendly hand to clasp the bony fingers of Death himself. My remarks upon Henry's drinking had had no effect whatever and I had for some time, held my peace. But that evening I could not refrain from putting in a word. We sat at the camp-table, reading. Henry frequently sampled his whisky and soda.

"Henry," I remarked, as disinterestedly as I could, "a herd of elephants in high grass is not the most soothing thing a man can go up against. How about bed and a good, nerve-steadying sleep?"

He had reached that stage of excessive politeness that followed the fourth or fifth drink. He rose formally from his chair and inclined his head toward me.

"Quite right," he answered, bowing again. "I hope you sleep well, I'm sure, Bahram. I shall read a bit longer, however. Not sleepy myself, as yet. I shall be along in a half hour." And he added a very formal "Good night."

"Look here, Henry," I said as I closed my book, "you've never crawled through high grass into the midst of a feeding elephant herd. You have no idea of the strain, the nerve-tension. You'll need every last ounce of nerve you've got. One or even two drinks the evening before won't hurt you. But a half dozen may cause strained nerves to break like fiddle-strings at the wrong moment. It's the most dangerous thing you can do. I know, for I did it once—just once—and I came within an ace of paying for it with my life."

He took refuge immediately in his usual banter.

"Bahram, mighty hunter,"—he bowed again,—"there

are no secrets hidden from you. The lore of elephants is as plain to you as the pages of the First Reader. The very crickets chirping so blithely in the heather impart to you a subtle wisdom. The ant, the drowsy bee buzzing in immemorial elms, the slithering serpent, the ant—or did I use the ant before?—all impart a cunning wisdom to your ears. All is known to you. And, no doubt, your advice is infinitely sound. But it so happens that I am not sleepy as yet and so I shall sit awhile longer and snuff in the smells and batten upon the night sounds like a jolly old poet."

I crawled beneath the mosquito-net in my tent and lay down. I could see Henry's face quite distinctly in the dim light of the lantern on the table. He pretended to read for a half hour and then, when he thought I was asleep, laid the book down quietly and just sat. He forgot the glass at his elbow and the expression of his face gradually changed. The young, sensitive face became pathetic. If ever a man's countenance told of a heart near to breaking, the features of Henry Lovering in the dim lantern-light revealed it without the shadow of a possible doubt.

THE night wore on and the men's fire burned low. Osman got up and threw more wood upon it. Henry straightened in his chair as Osman passed and reached for his drink. The usual slightly bored expression again made a vacant mask of his face and I knew that not for anything in the world would that mask have been allowed to fall if he had suspected for a moment that I was not asleep.

I did go to sleep soon after and then, in perhaps half an hour, Osman shook me gently by the shoulder.

"The young effendi," he said in Arabic, "has gone from the camp." Just then the deep grunts of a lion came from the bush a half mile away.

"The rifle of him, it is also gone," Osman added, by way of completing his information.

This would not do. An African forest at black midnight is no place for any man without the protection of a blazing fire and Henry had not taken even the lantern from the table. There was a half-moon and the forest was comparatively open. He could manage to walk through the trees without much trouble but that did not detract from the danger.

"*Banduk!* (Gun!)" I snapped, as I pulled on my shorts.

Osman watched my preparations with astonishment.

"The lion—master—in the dark," he ventured.

"I know! I know!" I growled testily in Arabic. "But we can't stay here and let that idiot walk into the jaws of a wild beast without an effort to overtake him while there may be time. Hand me the big gun—and wake Selim." In a moment I pushed the second gun and the lantern into Selim's hands.

Once outside the tent I called loudly and fired three or four shots. There was no answer.

Selim and I walked through the black thorn-trees with the fitful and altogether too dim light throwing monstrous shadows around us. In a few minutes the lion roared in deep, full-throated bass, the low reverberations shaking the warm atmosphere as the lower notes of an organ pulse through the heated air in an ancient church. But now the deep vibrations came from a greater distance and I knew with a feeling of relief that he was withdrawing from the locality. But even so, our midnight promenade through the black forest was anything but pleasant. There is a spookiness about an African forest at night that I find most unpleasant. It gives you a haunted feeling. The nerves are on edge and they have good reason to be. The great carnivora are then in their element and there is no limit to their boldness. Man is no longer the cock-of-the-walk. The great beasts hold the scepter—and well they know it. A man, helpless in the dark, is then no more than an overgrown and weaker baboon, not knowing at what instant he may find himself stretched upon the dusty earth, gasping beneath a quarter ton of hunger-maddened bone and sinew. Henry was without a light of any sort. Selim and I had the doubtful protection of the ghostly lantern. But—lantern or no lantern—for my part I want no more midnight forest marches in lion country!

In about fifteen minutes Henry saw our light, bobbing through the trees like a big-bellied firefly and in a moment more his tall, rather slouching figure entered the circle of light. He greeted me airily:

"*Salaam aliekoum,* Bahram! Frightfully sorry to see that you leaped from your dewy couch like a startled fawn and came searching through the forest primeval armed, as it were, with shield and buckler and lantern's red glare—but alas, without a shirt! Topping sport, night-hunting in the trackless—what?"

I was furious. "It's just the merest grace of hell that I find you all in one piece," I growled. "Why that lion didn't pile himself all over you like a landslide is more than I know. What *are* you thinking of—in the dark—what damn' fool idea—" I was too indignant for further words.

He saw how downright angry I was and at once his hand fell lightly upon my bare arm in the conciliatory gesture that an erring and repentant small boy might use to a beloved father.

"Apologies, Bahram. Your most obedient humble. Ghastly whim. Extr'ordinarily poor judgment. Hope to do better. Fearfully sorry." And I saw in his eyes that he really was sorry.

Without another word I turned and set out for camp. Henry walked at my side silently. And as we strode through the gigantic shadows cast by the swaying lantern in Selim's hand behind us, I knew, all at once, that Henry had not done this foolish thing through ignorance of the wilderness or because of a mere foolhardy "ghastly whim." He was not drunk, and no sober man, however inexperienced, could have been so brainless. No, I suspected that he had seen in that grunting lion a way out—a death more certain, less protracted and more to his liking than the whisky-and-soda route. It was a way too that could not have been reported as suicide, technically speaking. The realization that I was alone in the bush with a man seeking death, determined to go out of his way to meet it, was driven home to my understanding with startling force. So that was why he had come to me in Morhig's store and had asked to be taken along! That explained his indifference to where I was going. And that was the reason he was able to take the slow pace of camels so calmly; what could time mean to a man who was determined never to reach the end of the journey? The thought rather awed me. This would be a thing difficult to combat. Then suddenly I saw that, while he was deeply sorry for the foolish affair of tonight, he was sorry, not for the risk he had brought upon himself but for causing me to share it with him. A great desire to help this unfortunate youngster rushed over me in a flood. He was so completely bowled over by something about which he was gallantly close-mouthed; so bravely bantering in his attempts to conceal! I could not help slipping a hand through his arm in silent comradeship. Death is so uncompromisingly final.

CHAPTER III

HENRY was up and dressed before daylight, eager to be off on the spoor of the elephant herd. But I did not leave my comfortable cot until the sun filtered through the trees, for I knew that the bush natives, our guides, would not arrive until sometime after sunup. In lion country,

natives, armed only with spears, cannot be induced to leave their grass *tukuls* until broad daylight—and the village was at least two miles from camp.

I felt a keen curiosity to note the effect upon Henry of that most dangerous business, elephant-stalking in high grass. I had an idea, at that stage of our acquaintance, that the pellmell rush of giant bodies, the trumpetings and wild, falsetto screams of rage, the tremendous crashing, the earth-shaking pound of massive feet driven by tons of bone and muscle, the flash of curving ivory in the sunlight and the whole utterly indescribable pandemonium that takes place when elephants become aware of the hunter's presence, would drive from his mind everything but that strongest of all human instincts—the thought of self-preservation. I sincerely hoped this would be the case. For, I thought, if this happens—then the idea of self-destruction may never come back; if he becomes really terrified the terror itself may act as a mental purge and resurrect from somewhere in the depths of his tortured spirit the will to live.

But I did not know Henry Lovering.

SOON after sunrise the bush natives arrived. Their tall spears and naked bodies gleamed in the slanting rays of the early sun. They stood like statues carved in anthracite coal, watching our preparations with beady, curious eyes. They knew enough Arabic to understand my simple orders and, unknown to Henry, I explained that the young effendi was upon his first elephant-hunt and they were, under no circumstances, to lead him away from my side.

Henry watched my preparations without curiosity until I raked double handfuls of light and fluffy wood-ashes from the burned-out fire and crammed them into an old cotton sock. Then he asked his first question of the morning:

"I say, Bahram, what magic rite is this? What savage gods are propitiated by an old sock filled with ashes? Rather quaint, that!"

"My son,"—and I held at arm's-length the sock bulging with its load of ashes,—"this is the most marvelous invention of the age. In your infantile peregrinations about this mundane sphere, you have, no doubt, heard of other inventions. But this device is my own invention, in collaboration, that is, with one Jigjigga, a Wanderobo tracker who unfortunately was gathered to his elephant-hunting fathers two years ago. It was a big tusker that got him, down Uganda way. As to what this invention will do—Tell me, Henry, from which quarter does the wind blow this morning?"

Henry wet a finger and held it up with elaborate seriousness. "There is no wind, O Bahram, final resting-place of all wisdom," he reported. "No, there is not a breath stirring, O sire of science, patriarch of peradventure, morning-glory of the universe; there is absolutely no wind."

"Wrong!" I stated dogmatically. "There is always a slight drift of air. And you are now to assume that a herd of giants—giants most dangerous, are in the high grass some twenty yards from us. Should they receive the faintest touch of our tainted wind they may be upon us like the apotheosis of destruction. Try again. Which way is the drift of air? Your life depends upon a correct answer!"

Henry tossed up a handful of grass. It fell straight to earth.

"There is no wind, Bahram," he repeated positively. "Not even the gentle zephyr of the giddy poet toys with the encircling ambient. I defy you, O propounder of riddles, to prove me wrong!"

I shook the ash-filled sock with a sudden movement of the wrist. A little cloud of ash-dust filtered through the meshes of the cloth and drifted gently downward—and ever so slightly toward my left side. Then Henry saw.

"Ah! Quite right," he commented smilingly as he shouldered his gun. "Just the very lightest movement of air imaginable comes from the right. Salaams, Bahram! It is a triumph of mind over matter. A bit crude, a dirty sock filled with fluffy ashes, but so silent and so efficient. You shall have a gilded star after your name on the blackboard!"

We followed the local natives some four miles through the heavy grass, marching along wide elephant-roads, great swaths of trampled grass lined by the high thick stalks that rose above our heads, an impenetrable entanglement, into which we could see no more than ten or fifteen feet.

Henry's appearance, I noticed, gave little indication of the quantity of whisky he had consumed during the early hours of the night before. He was young and apparently had not been at it long enough to impair a naturally strong constitution. And his hand was, more steady, if anything, than my own.

We followed closely upon the bare heels of our guides. I was in the lead with my gun-bearer Selim at my heels. Henry, with his own gun-boy at his back, brought up the rear. Not a cloud floated in the brazen sky. It was as still a day as I remember ever having experienced in the bush. I do not like such days for elephant-hunting. With practically no air moving they can scent you just a little farther than you can see them in the high grass. The very slight movement of air constantly shifts and it is next to impossible to keep on the leeward or downwind side. The grass upon such a day does not wave and whisper and the slightest noise you make carries far beyond your vision. This was sure to be a day of the keenest thrills, of grave risks.

IN an area of trampled grass beneath a grove of thorn-trees, we soon came upon indubitable traces of elephant. Great limbs of trees strewed the ground, some as thick as a strong man's thigh; the herd had loitered here and browsed, not more than a half hour before. The havoc wrought by the feeding giants was eloquent of their power and destructiveness. It was a sight that might have been expected to inspire a young man new at the elephant game with the greatest awe and respect, if not actual dread. But Henry's face remained as impassive as ever.

The trail leading away from this feeding-place was broad and plain in the grass but the earth beneath the trampled stems was baked so hard in the sun that I could not estimate the number of elephants with much accuracy. I judged however, that there must have been thirty or forty. As I paused again to shake ashes from the sock and to note the drift of air, a low rumbling came from dead ahead and perhaps a quarter of a mile away.

Henry touched my arm at the sound and then it occurred to me that I had never happened to mention in our conversations on elephants, anything about that strange phenomenon—the rumble in the stomachs of the giant pachyderms. I knew from the sound that we were still far enough away to be able to talk in whispers with safety and I explained:

"Rumblings in elephant stomachs. We'll soon catch up with them now." As I spoke I glanced keenly at Henry's face. I expected to see a countenance somewhat strained and drawn, at least wearing an expression of suppressed excitement. I remembered my own first experience years before, when I had first heard those ominous rumblings—it had then taken all the iron in my blood to force myself to go on and close in. I expected something of the same mental struggle to be reflected in Henry's features. But I saw instead the face as of a bridegroom. And I knew the name of that bride was—Death. Henry Lovering hoped to meet his death in this encounter with the big tuskers.

Henry moved silently to my side and laid a hand lightly upon my shoulder as he whispered gently:

"Carry on, Bahram."

I sensed, somehow, that the hand upon my shoulder was his diffident way of saying what he thought would be a final good-by. That slow gesture almost unmanned me and my one desire was to get him away, to send him back to England before it was too late and to try somehow to unravel the cords of that unhappiness that were pulling him straight to his own destruction. But I knew that nothing I could do would cause him to turn back.

I turned and waved the savages on. We followed briskly at first, stopping now and then to listen and to check up on the shifting air. The herd was no longer feeding and consequently there was now no telltale crash of breaking branches, and we could not be sure of their exact location. The stomach-rumblings continued at short intervals, but this is an indefinite sound at best, like the vague rumbling of distant thunder, hard to pin down to a precise locality. But it proved that the elephants were not on the move.

As we arrived at a place that I judged to be two or three hundred yards from the herd I motioned to the savage guides to come back. By signs and very low whispers in Arabic I ordered them to stay in the rear from now on. They were glad to do this—as are most natives when elephants are in the vicinity. We left them standing in a silent group on the trail, the tall grass rising high above their woolly heads.

Although I had ordered them to stay where they were until we called and under no circumstances to rush forward at the first shot, I was practically certain that we would see them come leaping along the trail at the first shot, unable to restrain themselves when meat was there for the taking.

Henry and I, with our gun-bearers at our backs, crept forward a yard at a time, keeping to the elephant-trail to avoid the noise of crackling grass. The light ash-dust from my old sock, as I shook it occasionally, showed that the drift of air was still as slight as ever and most unreliable. It shifted sometimes from the northeast almost around to the southwest. It was extremely treacherous, and I admit I did not like it in the least. When I gave this disturbing information to Henry by making signs with my hands, the calm tranquillity of his face was only intensified, and I knew then how irrevocably he had steeled himself to go through with his suicidal intention.

We were now very close and that keen nerve-stimulation, that feeling of lightness and elation that comes to me always in a tight place, took possession of my faculties. I thought only of the giants ahead. I was no longer conscious of the blazing equatorial sun and the deadening heat in the high grass. The ceaseless drone of insects, the calls of birds and all the little sounds that never cease in the wilderness, went on unnoticed. Our gun-bearers were merely our black shadows and the local savages left behind no longer existed upon the earth. In the concentration and singleness of purpose nothing existed but ourselves and elephants in a sea of tall grass.

OF a sudden, a long, snaky trunk reared itself above the grass thirty feet from where we stood. It twisted and writhed in grotesque curves, sampling the air for a taint of any intruder. Nothing was visible but the questing trunk twisting like a monstrous snake in agony. We remained dead still. The slightest movement would have revealed our presence, and then, should the owner of the trunk have been a cow elephant with a calf by her side she would have been almost certain to plunge through the entanglement upon us, screaming with rage and forcing us to shoot for our lives. Cows, of course, we wished to avoid until sure that no large bull with valuable ivory was in the herd. But she did not get our wind and the trunk was lowered. We heard the ponderous body move away slowly with a muffled swishing of tall grass stems, a line of waving grass-plumes marking its progress.

WITH infinite caution I led the way forward, a step at a time; for all I could tell we might now be well into the herd. A dozing tusker or two might be concealed in the grass upon our right with others on the left. And then, as we lifted one silent foot a few inches before the other, we heard a dull stamp upon the ground a few yards within the grass wall on our left; a mammoth foot was shifted in its place.

I remember that at this moment I glanced behind me at Henry and was utterly astonished to see, still on his features, that same look of quiet tranquillity and peace that I have mentioned before. I was used to such nerve-wracking situations. Elephant-hunting was my business, but even so my heart was going like a trip-hammer and my face must have showed the strain and tension of my nerves. But here was a youth who had never seen a wild elephant and now he was creeping with me into the very center of a herd in thick grass upon a windless and most dangerous morning, and still he came along at my side as calmly as if strolling through a garden. I have stalked elephants with men of iron nerve, many of them, in my day, but Henry Lovering was the first and last I ever knew who showed no indication of the terrific strain.

In the next second that still, heavy air was shattered by a wild, falsetto scream of rage; a sound so shrill and high that it seemed to raise the hairy hackles of the neck and freeze the marrow in the bones. And before that shrill squeal had reached its highest note—even before gun could be brought to shoulder—chaos, pandemonium, broke loose! Black giants rushed this way and that. A young cow elephant, fortunately without a calf, burst from the grass wall almost in our faces. With ears standing straight out from her head like twin barn doors, and trunk held high, she clapped her eyes upon us as she stopped in the trail not twenty yards ahead and stared an instant as at a ghost. My heavy gun was on her chest but she wheeled and plunged back into the jungle of grass and there was no necessity to shoot.

Such sudden alarms were an old story to me. They are all in the game. But still—you never grow quite used to them. With a feeling of infinite relief, I saw her turn and disappear as I waited for a flash of big ivory to show through openings in the wall of grass. As suddenly as the pandemonium had begun, it stopped. Absolute silence fell upon that sea of grass. I knew that the main body of the herd were not sure of our exact location and had stopped to listen. A great trunk, higher and thicker than the other, reared itself above the grass upon our right. I watched that black trunk, fascinated. It groped about for a few seconds, then twisted rigidly downward almost horizontally straight in our direction.

"Here comes trouble!" I thought, in one of those flashes that pass through the brain with the speed of light in such situations. And almost with the thought came a massive body tearing through the clinging grass like a wild bull through a screen of cobwebs. Two curving tusks burst from the entanglement before us. The trunk was now raised high, covering the brain. He meant business, and the breast shot was the only chance. The two tusks flashing in the sun were so close that my gun-barrel was almost touching their points. Had the trunk struck downward it would have knocked the gun from my hands. I shot, and as I pulled the first trigger I was dimly conscious of an explosion from Henry's gun almost in my ear. The two shots seemed to have no effect upon that charging bulk. Without time to sight again I pulled the second

trigger of the double-barreled gun and dived, head-foremost, into the grass on the left. Selim leaped with me, like the shadow he was. I heard another explosion as I seized the second gun from Selim's hand, and with the roar of Henry's second barrel that towering mountain of black and wrinkled hide that loomed almost above me, stopped, swayed—and I leaped again to avoid the crush of the great body as it hit the ground in a crash of snapping brittle grass-stems and with a thud that made the earth shiver beneath my feet.

The crashing of the herd faded away in the distance. Again I heard the songs of birds, and the scrape of insects, and my nerves relaxed like bowstrings released. I walked out into the trail. There stood Henry leaning upon his gun. He had not moved a foot since the beginning of the show. The tusks of the dead bull, two gleaming ivory scimitars, were pointed directly at his feet and they were no more than three yards away!

"Jolly sport, elephant-shooting," he remarked, and I will swear there was a note of acute disappointment in his voice.

"Why didn't you jump aside after you fired that last barrel? It might not have stopped him instantly and I would have been ready with my second gun before he could have turned to follow you," I said, though I knew the answer well enough.

"I don't know, Bahram," he replied listlessly. "I suppose I didn't happen to think of it." But I thought I knew why he had remained there in the trail, as I knew the reason for the disappointment in his voice.

CHAPTER IV

THE Darfur tribe is a cross between the pure Arab stock of North Africa and the Bantu negro of the Central African forests. As everybody knows, the negro race crosses badly with any strain, and the result of the Bantu-Arab mixture is about the worst of all. The Darfur natives have been, for a thousand years, petty brigands, and slavers by profession.

The strategic position of their country, on one of the main caravan routes from Central Africa to the northern Arab states, has placed them in a peculiarly handy locality to carry on their business of robbery and plunder. Until the last few years, no caravan would have attempted to pass through the Darfur country without first making arrangements with the chiefs and sending ahead a substantial toll or bribe in cattle, goats, camels, ivory or slaves—whatever the caravan happened to have most of.

As warriors the Darfur Arabs are not to be taken lightly in spite of the fact that they are armed only with spears. They have good horses, for the Darfur deserts are dry and windswept, and the tsetse fly does not live in that area. They are also excellent camel-men, but most of their raiding and fighting is done on horseback. Through some peculiar chain of circumstances they have got hold of a great deal of ancient armor; I imagine it must have been brought into the country soon after Crusader times. Anyway, today you will see warriors in Darfur mounted upon horses clothed from head to tail in a sort of quilted mantle of heavy cloth with pieces of old horse-armor sewed upon it with rawhide; a steel breastplate, a neckpiece of fine Damascus, or a pair of the cumbersome sideplates so much in vogue with medieval knights. The riders too, sometimes wear thin steel helmets and shirts of mail. Often you see them carrying, strapped to the hip, a long double-edged Crusader's sword with its handle and guard made in the form of a cross. The men of Darfur are intensely proud of such relics.

I EXPECTED some difficulty as we passed through but no real trouble. A day or two after the elephant episode, Henry and I started through Darfur for the border of French Equatorial Africa, some two weeks' journey to the westward.

The large village of El Muluk, meaning in Arabic, "The Place of the Kings," lay in our route. It is the residence of the Sheik Gezzar, a name which means in the same language, "the Butcher." Osman and Selim came to me and suggested that we avoid El Muluk by making a wide circle through the open country.

"The inhabitants of El Muluk," they said, "are robbers and cutthroats, and it would be wise to avoid the village."

Their well-meant advice was only what might have been expected from the deliberations of the native mind; but it would have been the very worst thing we could do—for there was no possibility of slipping through the country without word of all our doings reaching the sheik; it is foolish to assume that you can travel through any part of Africa and not be watched by shy, half-wild natives who will promptly send word by runners to their chiefs. Sheik Gezzar would know of our presence twenty-four hours after we crossed the river Bahr-el-Ghazal and passed from Dinka country into his domains. Had we attempted to avoid El Muluk in a wide detour as Osman and Selim suggested, the sheik would have assumed that we were afraid of him.

"These Darfur people are bad medicine," I remarked to Henry that morning. "They have not yet been punished for the murder of that Armenian trader, you know. Delayed punishment is always bad for natives and from what I have heard these Darfurians don't need encouragement to do their worst. They are naturally cruel. I suppose that is why they used to make such excellent slavers. Bluff, swank, assurance, may turn the trick for us, but old Gezzar will take some handling. I don't expect serious trouble, or I wouldn't be here. But we must be careful to go at him in the right way. It is perhaps just as well for us that he has recently put to death a white man. That makes a hole in his armor that I shall play to the limit."

Henry brightened up at the prospect.

"Natives with at least some vestige of a brain will be an immense relief after the bovine Dinka with the artistic cow-dung coiffure," he remarked. "The festive Darfurian intrigues me, Bahram. From your description he must be a lad of parts. He is naturally cruel, you say? Well, then, I know I shall hate him with a hatred that passeth all understanding."

For a brief moment he became serious and added gravely:

"There is nothing in this world that seems to me more cowardly, more detestable and downright inexcusable than cruelty. A man may have a jolly good excuse for stealing; at least we can understand his wanting something that belongs to some one else. Or he may do murder under stress of strong emotion. He may burn and kill for hatred or for love—and we can partially understand him because we know that he is not himself. But a person who is coldly cruel to other persons—or worse, to dumb brutes that cannot resist—there is a person who has for-

feited the right to live, and I think I could shoot down such a man with jolly good will. Why, at home, Bahram, foxhunting—innocent enough sport, I suppose, and one that my people have gone in for since the year one—always gave me a feeling of disgust. It was so dashed unfair. So I refused to ride to hounds any more; gave it up, and that was—"

I listened intently, for I thought somehow that here perhaps would be a clew to his reason for coming out to Africa and for his determination to leave his bones on these wide and thirsty deserts. But he broke off in the middle of his speech, switched from the serious mood, and went on in the usual bantering tone:

"The lion, snuffy old king of the veldt, rolling his thunderous challenges through the wilderness, is another matter. To meet that gentleman on his own ground—that, to me, is cricket. And our recent show with elephant—ponderous Titans of the bush—rather spooky, that show, I should say, Bahram! But sport, no end. Eminently fair too. Never could take up foxhunting again after that. Good for the morale, elephant-shooting in high grass. Gives one a warm feeling in the pit of the tummy. Lets him know that he is not so hopeless as some one—as one might think—eh, Bahram?"

"It's good, I suppose, for anyone who may have lost faith in himself," I growled.

"I suppose there is good chance that the gentlemen of Darfur may attempt to seize our baggage, may even try to hold us. What do you think?" he added hopefully.

"There is always a chance of such things with barbarian chiefs in this part of the world."

"Then,"—there was a light of anticipation in his eyes,—"some sort of an incipient show may develop, what?

"The two bold white adventurers, standing back to back, surrounded by howling spearmen. The bloody fight to a finish, saving the last two cartridges for ourselves, as is always done by your American cow-herding gentry in the cinemas. Can't you see the report in the *Times* months later? I quote verbatim: 'Bahram, bearded elephant-hunter, home address somewhere on the equator between the Indian and Atlantic oceans,—and one Henry Lovering—were found by a patrolling troup of the Sudanese Camel Corps, speared by overwhelming numbers of savage tribesmen in the Darfur province. From the reports of local natives and the vast piles of dead about them, these two heroic white men must have given a sterling account of themselves before they received the *coup-de-grace.*' Not bad that, eh, Bahram?"

"The Darfur natives are no joke," I retorted warningly. "Remember, they have not yet been punished for the murder of that trader. We may find ourselves up against a tough proposition. The D. C. at Malakal, you know, advised against our going through the country. We have no standing with the Sudan government. We are mere nondescript, wandering ivory-hunters."

Henry nodded cheerfully.

A WEEK later we came to the mud-walled village of El Muluk. The main gate, a high affair made of solid timbers, was closed. We rode straight to it and as we drew near, it swung open on rusty, creaking hinges. Our dusty caravan passed within. The squad of spearmen in charge swung the gate shut again and dropped two huge logs in place with a promptness that seemed to me somewhat ominous, the result of special orders. We had not been called upon to give an account of ourselves before the great gate had opened.

I was not surprised at this, for I knew that we had been followed and watched closely by scouts of the Sheik Gezzar for several days.

I turned to the leader of the gatekeepers and asked in Arabic to be shown the residence of Gezzar the Butcher. The man, with a glowering look, grunted something in his straggly beard and set out, motioning for us to follow.

He led the way to a small and very dirty grass-roofed *tukul* near the center of the village and ordered us in a more authoritative tone than I liked, to dismount from our camels. This, clearly, was not the residence of the sheik and anyway, I did not like the man's tone. It was time to put on a bit of swank. I thanked my lucky star that I could converse freely in Arabic. Had my orders gone through an interpreter he would have been afraid to repeat the words literally, but would have toned them down, pulled their teeth as it were, and rendered the whole speech weak and innocuous. A display of confidence was the one thing needed. An interpreter would have spoiled everything and let us in for a bad time. I leaned forward on my tired camel and glared into the bearded face of the guide. With the appearance of fighting to control great rage, I said quietly:

"I told you—to the residence of the Sheik Gezzar, your master! Will you force me to request your master to have you tied up and beaten? To the house of the Sheik—quickly, O bearded son of the Shaitân."

The man was at a loss just what to do. This was evidently the place to which he had been told to lead us. He began to explain:

"The Sheik Gezzar—"

I cut him off in a low tone of cold fury.

"The hands and feet will be tied with strips of hide; the back will be bare to the sun. The whip will

"O bearded son, will you take us to the sheik now—or will you hear the whip sing through the air, later?"

be of many strands, made from the skin of the *karkadann*, the rhinoceros. Two strong men will wield it in turn. O bearded son, will you take us to the sheik now or will you hear the whip sing through the air, later? The thirsty earth will drink up the blood as fast as it drips—"

It was enough. He was convinced we were great chiefs or we should never have dared to speak so to the Sheik Gezzar's trusted captain of the gate-guard. The mar salaamed almost to the ground and again set out.

"I say, Bahram,"—Henry urged his camel beside mine,—"what sterling advice you must have given that old sportsman! He has a frightful case of wind up; the man's in a blue funk."

We rode on through the village. The inhabitants, men, women, children and dogs, watched us pass with plain hostility in their curious glances. A mangy, savage dog rushed forward and snapped at the heels of my camel. I reached down slowly and with an exaggerated air of disinterestedness, knocked him cold with the butt of my camel-whip. Straightening up in the saddle, I paid no more attention to dogs or men. The cool and unhurried handling of that menacing dog created quite an impression upon the onlookers, as I knew it would, and the guide was now more than ever convinced that we were people of great importance.

With extraordinary humility, he led on and soon brought us before a large round house built of sun-dried bricks and plastered with a smooth coating of mud, dried in the sun to the consistency of cement. The house was large for a native chief, one story high, of course, and covering perhaps an acre of ground. The sheik's favorite horse, a beautiful animal, stood beneath a shelter of green boughs in a mud-walled pen connected with the main structure. A large door in the center of the house stood open, but a gayly colored rug hung across the opening from the top, serving as a shield to keep out the terrific reflected heat of the baked ground in front. Women were filling earthen jugs at a deep well a short distance from the house and boys were bringing camels and a small herd of goats to water at the same place.

WE drew up before the door and the guide announced with a deep salaam:

"This is the place, O Star of the Universe."

As my camel knelt, a slave pushed aside the rug hanging in the doorway and two Tuaregs, in flowing white cotton robes and burnouses stalked forth. They wore the black Tuareg mask and without so much as a glance in our direction, strode past us and on down the pathway. They were big, tall men and every move they made was filled with tigerish, animal grace. Their high, haughty bearing, the piercing eyes above the black masks and the way the natives salaamed as they passed, caused Henry to remark:

"I say, Bahram, who are those two old lion-hearts? My word! What swank—what cheek—what dazzling, giddy side they affect! Floored me, absolutely."

"Those noble sons of Satan," I returned, as I tapped my camel again on the knees to make him go down all the way, "are Tuareg sheiks. They come from French territory. The tribe has never been whipped, you know. They are the real problem of the Sahara. The French don't quite know how to handle 'em. Born raiders, rovers, land buccaneers. Never in the same place two days. Can't lay hands on them. They still do a bit of slave-running on the side in addition to their regular business of brigandage. These two were probably arranging some details of their slavery operations with old Gezzar as we rode up. This is not a healthy moment for you and me to burst into this place."

Indeed it was not. Old Gezzar, if he was up to some slavery business with these Tuaregs, as I didn't doubt he was would be willing to go to any lengths to keep the matter hushed up. The American trader had been killed probably because he knew too much about that same subject. Henry and I were in a dangerous situation, one that called for exactly the proper handling. I was sincerely glad, as we walked together toward the doorway, that I had spent so many years among natives and had some understanding of the native mind.

THE slave outside the door barred our way as we came up. His scimitar was in his hand, held across his chest, the cutting edge toward me.

"Do nothing," I remarked to Henry in a low tone, "but look disinterested and as if the thing I do to this slave is an everyday occurrence."

"Halt! Stay where you are!" The black ordered in a garbled Arabic *patois*.

I paid not the slightest attention to the words but continuing forward in my stride, thrust a foot behind his bare heels, placed a sudden hand with the fingers spread wide over his shiny face and pushed. He went over backward beside the door, sprawling. Henry and I walked calmly through as if such rough exercises were all in the day's work. We had not paused in our stride.

I had been perfectly safe in manhandling the slave. I was taking no chances for I knew that no slave or even a free subject of the sheik would dare to kill a white man without the express orders of his chief. And I knew it was far too early in the game for Gezzar to have issued any such orders. Those would come later, if they were to come at all—after he had assured himself that our death would be for his best interests.

Several turbaned henchmen of the sheik sitting around the wall in the first room we entered, stood up, surprised to see us pass unhindered through the outer door. With my chin thrust out at an uncompromising angle and with Henry at my side carelessly swinging his camel-whip—for we had purposely left our arms on our saddles to make our gesture of confidence more convincing—I strode with the most military swagger I could command, on through the next door and into the presence of the sheik.

Gezzar the Butcher was light for a native, almost olive in color, big and somewhat fat, with a look of hostility on his features, an expression that I found later was chronic. A smooth, shiny steel helmet with a spear-pointed peak was on his head and a shirt of rusty mail covered the upper half of his body. His appearance was forbidding in the extreme. He leaped from the rug-covered divan upon which he had been sitting as we entered, and opened his mouth to begin a tirade against us for thus entering his presence without being sent for. I gave him no time.

"Is this the way you receive travelers—guests?" I shot out the Arabic words like the crackling of fireworks, looking him full in the eyes with the truculent stare of a man who has been grossly insulted and has now come to headquarters for apologies.

"Is this the way you receive guests? First, order your gatekeeper to lead them to a dirty sty of a *tukul;* then have your filthy slave, scimitar in hand, bar their way and keep them waiting? Is this the hospitality enjoined upon you by the Koran? You are an ally of His Britannic Majesty—" This was rank flattery. He was no ally; he was a subject, and allowed to rule his people only by sufferance of the British commander of the Sudanese forces at Khartoum—and he was well aware of this, even if his people were not. "We are subjects of your ally the British King." Henry was, but I wasn't. It made no

difference. "We want a good house to sleep in tonight, food for our men, fodder for our camels and a guide who knows the trails, to lead us in the right direction to-morrow."

"Is this the way you receive travelers—guests?" I shot out the Arabic words with the stare of a man who has been grossly insulted. "Is this the hospitality enjoined on you by the Koran?"

He was pretty well knocked off his pins by my attitude. He had heard from his scouts, no doubt, that we were a weak party, merely two roving ivory-hunters, men of no official standing; men who need be shown no consideration and who might be put out of the way, if occasion demanded, with as much impunity as the Armenian trader. Because there had been no come-back from that affair, I was sure that old Gezzar would by this time be convinced that Khartoum was too far away and British authority too weak to interfere—which is a grave mistake that powerful chiefs in the Sudan sometimes make when not jerked up short for any flagrant piece of mischief. I gave him no time to interrupt or to argue, but went on with critical and judicial deliberation.

"We in Khartoum have not yet heard that the murderers of the Armenian trader have been sent in for trial. The District Commissioner at Malakal does not know what to make of this. He assumes that your warriors are on the trail of the murderers. It has been some months, however, since the killing. Why has the District Commissioner not heard from you?" I went on severely, authoritatively. My words might have been those of the Kaid-el-Amm, the commander of all British forces in the Sudan. At least, General Huddleston could have put no more force and authority into his voice!

"It will be necessary, if the murderers are not quickly taken, for you to appear in person before the District Commissioner at Malakal and to explain why you have failed to govern your country as a strong ruler should. And to explain why you have allowed your young men to get so far out of hand that they should dare to murder a white man! However, the Government in Khartoum has decided to give you more time—another month—in the matter of the slaughtered trader. After that—I can make no promises." I bowed stiffly, turned on my heel and with Henry at my side playing up to the part in wonderful form, looking as bored and disinterested as you please, we marched through the turbaned crowd in the other room and, brushing aside the rug hanging in the doorway, with a gesture of impatience, mounted our camels.

As I had expected, one of the more important henchmen rushed from the house, salaaming as he came.

"The Sheik Gezzar," he blurted, "prays you will excuse his mistake. He did not know who you were." Indeed, I thought, and does his saddle-colored Highness think he knows now? The man led us to a clean airy *tukul*, fresh-plastered with mud; the sheik's regular guest-house, suitable to our newly acquired dignity. Fodder for the camels and food for the men were forthcoming in a jiffy and I knew then that we had forestalled old Gezzar and pulled ourselves by our bootstraps out of what might have been an embarrassing situation.

We spread our camp cots on the smooth dirt floor and made ourselves thoroughly comfortable. Osman lit his cooking-fire outside and the camel-men went off to the village well to water their animals. By a bold stroke the sheik had been put in his place. The Darfur hurdle had been negotiated in grand style.

CHAPTER V

"I SAY, Bahram," Henry began as we lounged in the mud hut after a good dinner, "those masked Tuaregs seemed to me like living specimens of the type of human animal our jolly old forebears must have been in the brave days of old. Did you note the tigerish grace of them; the proud, eagle bearing—and the eyes? My word! Never have I seen such downright burning eyes in a human head! Eyes smoldering with untamed passions, I suppose we should say if we had a mind to be rhetorical about it. I can't tell you how those two stimulated my curiosity!"

"Tough eggs," I grunted. "Make no mistake about that. Tuaregs were the lads who stopped the Romans, you know, after the fall of Carthage. Rome established quite a string of provinces in North Africa, Mauritania, Egypt, what is now Tripoli, and other places. You can see Roman ruins as far south as Timgad. But it was the Tuareg who stopped the Roman advance. Not even Rome at the height of her

power could cope with the roving Tuaregs. It was then as it is now; the Tuaregs strike here today and fifty miles away tomorrow. A punitive expedition cannot catch up with them.

"The French made a perfectly natural mistake when they took over the Sahara and added French Equatorial Africa to their tropical empire. They assumed that the Tuaregs, in ten or twenty years, would grow tired of fighting; that the hostile bands, exhausted, would come in, one by one. They overlooked the fact that a state of guerrilla warfare is the natural condition of the Tuareg. He has known nothing else for a thousand years, expects nothing more from life and is quite happy and contented to go on forever swooping down upon caravans, raiding outlying villages, running slaves from here up to the northern Arab states and allowing his natural bloodthirstiness a free hand.

"In the Tuareg, and only in the Tuareg, you see that all-but-extinct animal, the perfectly natural man. By that I mean a man who has never been hampered in the slightest degree by civilization, by religion—for they are not Mohammedans—and one who has no more idea of right and wrong and what we call justice, than the lions and the leopards of these deserts. They have no rules artificially supported by custom, creed or law. Their sheiks are sheiks only because they happen to be stronger or more intelligent than their followers. At a sign of weakness a stronger man steps in, and the pack, like wolves, pull down the deposed chieftain. I should like to know more of the Tuaregs myself. But I would prefer to crawl into thick bush after a dozen wounded lions than to trust my old carcass overnight in a Tuareg encampment."

HENRY became very thoughtful; his eyes found the thatched roof and rested there.

"'An absolutely natural man'," he repeated, musingly, "'one unhampered in the slightest degree by civilization; and one who has no more idea of right and wrong and what we call justice than the lions and the leopards of these deserts'."

As he repeated my words, they appeared to give him much food for thought. At length he turned to me.

"Let me tell you what I think, Bahram. I know from your remarks at odd moments on our treks that you have no patience with the usual weak attempts to 'convert' or civilize the African races. Missionaries, uplift societies and what-not are, in your opinion, bound to fail. And I quite agree. They never get anywhere—but why? I think it is because the tamer African races, the ones that these well-intentioned people work with, have been for ages so shot full of superstition, so hampered by their own traditions, customs and witch-doctors, and in the last generation, so contaminated by contact with our civilization, that the material left to work with is unworkable; and I doubt if it would be worth making over even if it could be done.

"But now consider the Tuareg. Here is a natural human animal. He is unspoiled because he is untouched by civilization. He is neither good nor bad; he is simply un-moral. He knows nothing about justice or law; he is only a healthy, bloodthirsty animal in human form, an intelligent animal, but, like the lions of his own plains, the prey of his uncurbed passions. He has been brought up as his father before him to follow the inclination of the moment.

"Wouldn't it be easier to make something useful—say, in a military way—from such unspoiled, unhampered, natural human animals than from the spoiled material of the more tame, and partially civilized tribes?"

"Would it be easier to make a wolf into a useful, fighting animal than it would be to make something useful out of a spoiled house-dog? Is that what you mean?" I asked.

"That expresses it, I think."

"I should say then," I answered thoughtfully, "that the outcome would depend upon just how untamable the wolf breed is. Perhaps that inherent wildness could be controlled; perhaps not. The only way to find out would be to make the experiment. But God help the man with hardihood enough to barge off and attempt any such thing with that crowd!"

Henry sat for a long time, thinking. At last he spoke with great seriousness and deliberation.

"Suppose, just for the sake of argument, Bahram, that you intended to make that experiment. How would you go about it?"

That question called for some thought.

"I think," I answered after a moment, "that I would first do my best to get into the good graces of some Tuareg sheik before I tried to go into their country—do him some good turn. Presents? Perhaps. But I wouldn't have much confidence in presents as a means of acquiring protection. No, I think I should wait until I found a chance to befriend a Tuareg of influence in his tribe. Then I should go with my friend, stick mighty close to him and hope for the best. But I would no more consider it than I would cut off my right hand."

Henry was silent for some moments. Then he looked up.

"Those two haughty old sons we saw today," he mused, "would probably have a great deal to say among their people. Judging from their swank they would have about all the say there is. If the opportunity arose and you could do either of them a jolly good turn the problem might be pretty well solved."

"Yes, I reckon it might," I observed sleepily. "But—to the devil with all Tuaregs! Let's go to bed. We should make an early start tomorrow."

The next morning Henry and I went to the Sheik Gezzar's house for another interview. We would, in all probability, pass through Darfur on our way back from French territory. It would be well to clinch our solid position with a little more advice in the matter of the slain trader. In a semi-hostile country it is always the part of common sense to leave no stones unturned, especially if you intend to pass that way again.

OUR second interview with Gezzar also went off in great style. We were passing through the doorway on our way out when it happened. No one was at fault—it was just one of those things that happens now and then when you brush up against savage men who fear neither god nor devil, and who have never been forced to place the slightest curb upon any of their emotions.

Henry, a step or two in advance of me, reached the rug hanging in the doorway. He thrust it aside with a powerful sweep of his arm. No man could have known that another person was about to enter; the hanging rug shut off all view. Henry's entire weight must have been behind that thrust for the arm, throwing the rug aside, took the man on the other side square in the chest with a suddenness and force that knocked him flat on the ground. And that man was one of the Tuareg sheiks! I heard Henry say politely, in English, of course, which meant nothing to the aggrieved party:

"So sorry! Beg pardon!"

The next second I too passed beneath the rug. And just in time. Like a flash the Tuareg was on his feet and a curved knife, snatched from somewhere beneath his white robes, was in his hand. How I happened to have my light gun with me that morning as I called upon old Gezzar, I don't know. Anyway, I had it. And as I saw that furious face, the flashing knife and the low half-crouch of the man, I cocked the gun with a yank that made the hammer click like the knell of doom. The rifle rested in the crook of

my left arm and I dropped the muzzle to the center of the Tuareg's heaving chest; had he moved one foot forward I most certainly would have shot him dead.

"Wakkif! (Stop!)" I roared.

TO the Tuareg's undying credit I will say that it was a toss-up for an instant whether he would spring forward and drive home that glittering steel—and take the bullet —or back down in the face of a cocked rifle.

"Go on!" I said to Henry, nodding in the direction of our temporary quarters.

The Tuareg slowly replaced the knife in his sash but the deep-set black eyes glowed with a steady flame of a Bunsen burner. I have seen that menacing glow in the eyes of the great cats when wounded, but never before or since, have I seen in the eyes of a man such concentrated hatred.

Henry was utterly dumfounded at the raw passion of the man. He looked at him coolly, without resentment, as he would have watched a ferocious animal in the Zoo, an animal clawing its bars to get at him. He made no move to pass on as I had directed. Instead, he turned to me.

"My word, Bahram! What a wild animal he is! Did you ever see anything like it? Undisciplined ferocity run wild, my sacred oath!"

The Tuareg burst forth in Arabic, biting off the words with a snap like the crack of whiplashes. Arabic is not the Tuareg tongue but many of them speak it fairly well.

"Pleasant, amiable old cutthroat, isn't he?" Henry remarked ironically. "How utterly silly to be so dashed upset over a little mistake! No insult meant, of course. He must know that. Such a temper is what comes of poor training in childhood's happy hour. My word, a few timely birchings in youth would have done him no end of good. He seems to want something. What does he say, Bahram?"

"The idiot has some crazy idea that you must fight him —with knives," I replied unthinkingly.

Henry knew but a dozen or two Arabic words, picked up around camp in the past few weeks. Before I could say another thing, he bowed slowly from the hips, facing the Tuareg and answered with the utmost pleasantness:

"Aywah, quies. (Yes, it is good.)" I knew then that nothing I could say or do would prevent that fight! I did my best, however. I argued and pleaded; I commanded; I threatened. I don't remember just what I said. Through it all Henry listened with one of his slow, rare smiles, shaking his head now and then.

I realized the uselessness of further talk. But I did accomplish one thing. I turned to the Tuareg and spoke in Arabic, lying like a shyster lawyer:

"My friend refuses to fight with knives. He dares you, if you are not *fazan* (afraid) to fight with rifles." That taunt, that word "afraid" had the effect upon the Tuareg that I hoped it would. The man had now regained control of himself but his eyes still smoldered and the ghost of a smile of satisfaction curled his lip.

"Quies (It is good)," he answered, as pleasantly as Henry had replied to him a moment before. I felt a surge of admiration go through me. That Tuareg was only a savage at heart but, my word! he knew the superiority of European rifles and the skill in their use that wandering elephant-hunters usually possess. But he was not daunted in the least.

I lied again, this time to Henry:

"This misguided old cutthroat," I stated, jerking a thumb toward the Tuareg, "evidently thinks something of himself as a rifle-shot. He now says that knives are too slow and not deadly enough. He suggests—if you are not afraid—that you fight with rifles. If I were you—now that a fight is inevitable—I'd take him up on that rifle suggestion."

"It makes no difference to me," Henry replied languidly, and I knew he spoke the absolute truth. I was more relieved than I can say. If that desert-bred wild man had ever been allowed to meet Henry on a level stretch of ground with knives—I shivered at the thought! Henry, with his calm, slow movements, his strangeness in the use of a knife, would have been no match for this human animal with the swift, natural movements of a leopard and the feline ferocity that was his heritage. He would have cut Henry to ribbons.

I arranged another detail that I thought would be in Henry's favor. I demanded that the fighting should be done on horseback. We had no horses with us but I would have no difficulty in borrowing a mount for Henry, and I would select a slow, sedate old nag. I knew that the Tuareg would use his own animal and I was pretty sure that animal would be a nervous high-mettled Arab curveting all over the place and taking his rider's attention from the main issue.

The Tuareg readily agreed to this horse proposal and we set the encounter for that same afternoon on a level plain two miles from the village. Each man was to mount, gun in hand, and with but one cartridge apiece; it was necessary for me to lie again to both parties to cut down the ammunition from a dozen rounds. I informed the Tuareg that in my country such affairs were settled with one shot. "My man," I said, "will consent to the meeting only on that condition." To Henry, I laid the burden on the Tuareg, claiming that he insisted on but one shot.

"He seems to consider himself a direct descendant of Annie Oakley," I said, "for he wants but one cartridge."

"Oh, that's quite all right," returned Henry carelessly. The details did not interest him in the least.

The village was soon at fever heat. Here was an entertainment dear to their barbarian hearts and I knew that we could count on an audience including every last man, woman, child and dog in the community. Regardless of the risk from a stray shot, every man jack of them from old Gezzar down to the meanest slave would be perched upon the hills around that level plain.

IN the mud-floored room of our *tukul* I sat down to clean Henry's .425-caliber rifle.

"I say, Bahram," Henry observed, in a tone that was a shade too careless, "I'll have a letter in a few minutes that I'd like you to post after you get to the outside—if this affair should go against me."

"It's hardly necessary," I answered; "but to be on the safe side you might as well leave it with me." I knew from the exaggerated carelessness of his tone, that that letter was of the greatest importance to him. He wrote the letter and sealed it in one of the few envelopes we had with us, addressed and handed it to me with the addressed side down. I thrust it into one of my leather bags in the corner of the room.

While cleaning the gun I studied Henry surreptitiously, to settle in my mind whether or not he planned to seize this opportunity as a way out—in other words, would he deliberately let that Tuareg shoot him down? I thought back over the early part of our journey together; Henry's rash action in going after the grunting lion in the dark; his conduct at the killing of the bull elephant. These two and a dozen smaller things convinced me that he would consider this affair a heaven-sent opportunity.

"Yes," I said to myself, as I watched him moving about with a sort of far-away, expectant light in his eyes, "that seems to be his intention."

And I thought further; if I was right, then any advice from me would, of course, be useless. However, there was a chance that I might be wrong.

"This affair ought to be a set-up, a bargain for you, Henry," I remarked confidently. "You have developed

into a fair game-shot. You are cool and never hurried—which is the main thing. You are not burning with hatred, as your Tuareg friend is—another thing in your favor. Now, whatever you do, don't shoot from your horse! Ride out slowly and dismount. Keep one hand on the bridle-rein and swing your animal at all times between you and old Bad News with the uncontrollable temper. Unless I miss my guess he'll come plunging out on his nervous, jumpy Arab steed, a beautiful sight to look at, but about as steady to shoot from as an ocean wave! And he'll shoot from that galloping, plunging horse, mark what I tell you! It's their way; they don't know any better. Right there is where Anglo-Saxon brains will turn the trick. Hold your fire. You have but one shot and if you shoot and miss, before he shoots—then, of course, he'll ride straight up to you and make sure of the job. Remember, he is the aggressor. He wants your blood and he wants it so badly that he can't hold in as long as you can. The chances are ten to one that he'll miss. After he shoots he'll be sure to wheel and dash straight away. There is your chance! And it will be as easy as shooting fish in a barrel."

HENRY listened quietly and his eyes, resting full on my face, held an almost tender light. He smiled slowly.

"Good old Bahram!" he said, so quietly that I could hardly catch the words, and his hand, for the fraction of a second, rested lightly upon my shoulder. For the second time in our acquaintance I had the feeling that this was his diffident way of saying a possible good-by.

The afternoon swung around at last. I had secured through the sheik an old, exceedingly quiet horse; one that would cause Henry no trouble or even thought in handling. And when we arrived at the level plain there, as I had expected, was the Tuareg superbly mounted upon a dark chestnut horse of pure Arab strain. What an animal it was! Short back, straight legs, cannon-bones and pasterns as small and slim as those of an antelope. The beautiful animal was caparisoned in the height of Arab fashion and his master sat the high-peaked, red leather saddle with all the grace of a panther on a swaying limb, for the horse continually fussed with the bit, capered and pranced.

The Tuareg carried the usual long-barreled rifle of Arab manufacture; probably made in the Arab stronghold at Tibesti in the center of the Sahara. The stock and the wood of the grip along the barrel were inlaid with ivory, gold and silver. It was a work of art, but as a mechanism for far and straight shooting I knew it was not one-two-three to Henry's plain and unadorned English .425-caliber.

We stood on one edge of the wide plain. I pointed to a small bush a half mile across the plain and told the Tuareg he was to ride out to that bush, turn and make ready. When he saw Henry start toward him from this side, that would be the signal; the fight was on. After that, both men were at liberty to fire at any time they pleased, mounted or dismounted; there were no more rules. I had already explained this to Henry, and before we had left our quarters I had handed an even dozen cartridges to Henry to be carried in his pocket—just in case his ferocious adversary should not play fair. I did not put it beyond the Tuareg to conceal a few extras in his cotton draperies.

"Don't use 'em unless you have to," I explained brushing aside Henry's horrified protests. "I don't intend to have you double-crossed by that veiled son of the Devil. Take 'em—and if you need to, use 'em!"

The second Tuareg—the other we had seen coming out of the sheik's dwelling the day we arrived, gave his fighting friend instructions in their own language—which is not Arabic and which I could not understand. Then he moved over beside me. His gun was in his hand as my light rifle was in my own. Evidently he intended to watch me like a hawk. He, like myself, was there to see that his man had an even chance. "These Tuaregs are not so slow," I thought, as I waved my hand for our adversary to ride out to the bush.

He dashed away in a cloud of dust and sand. The chestnut horse swung into a long stride that carried him over the plain like a whirlwind. The Tuareg's burnous, flying in the wind, his flowing clothes and the gaudy saddle-trappings made a brave show in the sunlight.

Henry, lost in admiration, watched him go.

"By the nine gods, Bahram," he exclaimed, "what a turn-out! What a glorious horse! Beautiful picture of the giddy barbarian on his native heath!"

Horse and rider reached the distant bush. The Tuareg wheeled his horse and sat for a moment, watching. Then Henry ambled slowly forward on his ancient palfrey. The crowd around on the hills gave out a murmur of surprise and disgust; they had expected to see another curveting, foaming steed plunge recklessly forward. The slow, sedate gait of Henry's mount was a great disappointment to their love of the spectacular.

All eyes were on the Tuareg. He dashed forward at a mad gallop and the well-trained horse weaved in a zigzag path that would have made his rider a difficult object to hit. He carried on until he reached a point two hundred yards from Henry; then, seeing that Henry did not even raise his gun, the Tuareg wheeled and dashed away as if a panic had suddenly overtaken him. This was an effort to draw Henry's fire.

I saw that Henry had no intention of taking my advice and dismounting. And this knowledge filled me with dismay. I suddenly realized that in the suspense of the moment I was muttering aloud in English, words of counsel and advice. I glanced somewhat shamefacedly at the Tuareg by my side and found to my relief that he was doing the same futile thing in his language.

But matters soon came to a head. The Tuareg reined in his horse after the last mad dash. He wheeled the nervous animal, returned part way and sat perfectly still, facing Henry, at about two hundred yards. Henry had now reached the center of the plain and there he too reined in. The duelists sat their horses facing each other across the intervening distance for perhaps ten seconds. The Tuareg raised his rifle with great care and deliberation—and I found myself shouting, although Henry was much too far away to hear: "Get off that horse, for God's sake!"

BUT the Tuareg did not shoot. His mount was too restless; he could not hold his sights still enough. He dashed away, circling Henry at a distance of a hundred and seventy-five yards, bending low over his horse's neck. Henry made no move to fire. The Tuareg soon tired of that useless maneuver, straightened in the saddle and suddenly turned his horse's head to the center of the circle where Henry sat upon his quiet animal. The chestnut horse leaped forward, the Tuareg let out a wild yell, an ululating and weird war-cry, leveled his long gun and shot when about a hundred yards separated the two duelists. Henry's horse made a spasmodic leap and sank to its knees. Henry swung off and stood beside the dying animal, his gun in his right hand. I heaved a great sigh of relief.

The Tuareg reined his foaming steed to its haunches but to my infinite surprise did not wheel and gallop from the scene. Instead, he calmed his mount gently with a hand upon its neck and held himself straight in the saddle. Even at that distance I could see the superb haughtiness of that gesture. His empty gun rested across the horse's withers. He simply waited there for his adversary to come forward and shoot him down.

Henry looked up, expecting to see his antagonist in full

flight. He must have been as surprised as I to behold him sitting there like a statue. And then I became conscious of low crooning on my right. The other Tuareg was standing with head proudly erect, but tears were rolling from his eyes.

Henry walked ever so slowly forward and I noticed a slight limp in his gait. The Tuareg sat perfectly still and watched him come. It was a maddening thing, that slow, deliberate and halting walk. My heart thumped against my ribs like a trip-hammer and the sad croon of the Tuareg beside me put my nerves on edge. I watched from a corner of my eye, every move the man beside me made, for I hardly expected him to stand neutral while his companion was shot from the saddle like a pigeon from a branch.

Henry walked straight up to the Tuareg and stopped not three yards from the chestnut horse. The rider sat like a carved statue—ah, he was a man, that Tuareg! I was too far away to hear what Henry said or to see his face, but I will gamble anything I own that he smiled into those savage black eyes and remarked: "Nice work, old topper. You stood the gaff like the game old son you are!"—or words to that effect.

The slave barred our way.

I could only see Henry come to a halt in front of the horse and raise his rifle with the utmost deliberation. The Tuareg did not move in the saddle. Still without haste, Henry pointed the muzzle of his gun almost straight above his head and fired into the air! The chestnut horse leaped at the shot, but his rider quickly quieted him. The villagers—numbskulls—set up a loud shout in Arabic:

"He has missed! He has missed!" They never suspected that Henry had done this thing intentionally. Such gallantry was entirely beyond their comprehension.

The Tuareg at my side leaped forward and went out across the plain like a deer. I was running forward myself before I realized it. By the time I got there, Henry had laid his gun on the ground and was sitting beside it.

"Little bit of all right, that show—eh, Bahram?" he remarked as I came up. "No end of sport watching that noble sheik circle. Silly tactics, circling about—what? Wish you would say that I am more than pleased to make him a present of his life. Game old rooster; none better. You might tell him so, with my compliments. Game to the core, absolutely—" And with the words he keeled over on the sand in a dead faint.

The Tuareg slid down off his horse like a flash. Together we lifted Henry. Blood dripped in a steady stream from one of his trouser-legs to the sand. I cut away the cloth and found that the bullet, before killing the horse, had passed through the fleshy part of Henry's lower leg, though the bone had not been touched. It was an ugly wound and must have been cruelly painful; much blood had been lost during his slow, halting walk forward.

Osman and the rest of our people arrived in a moment and I sent them for my cot. Henry was carried to our mud hut in the village where I undressed and put him to bed. I thought the affair was over and we were lucky to be out of it so easily. But it was to have consequences more far-reaching than I could imagine. Never again will I presume to classify in my mind any occurrence whatsoever and say, this thing is lucky for me, or that thing is unfortunate! The fabric of our lives is woven of so many interlocking strands that no man can judge where any one of them may lead.

Rummaging about through my bags after disinfectants I came upon the letter Henry had given me to mail if the affair had ended in his death. I took it out and noted the address carefully, for I had made up my mind in the past few hours that if he came through this situation, I would do something I had never done before. I would deliberately meddle in another man's private affairs. . . .

That night I wrote a letter.

"In the bush.
Bahr-el-Ghazal Prov.
Sudan.
December.

"The Honorable Miss Courtney Collingwood,
The Elms, Harrington Heath,
Surrey, England.

"Dear Madam:

"This letter is written to you on the slim chance that it may eventually prove to be of some benefit to my friend, Henry Lovering.

"At the present moment he lies wounded—not seriously, however—from a bullet in the leg. I met Henry in Khartoum and we came here after elephants. In our brief association he has told me absolutely nothing of you or of his people. My conclusions have been drawn from Henry's actions alone.

"Henry Lovering has had a blow, a shock of some sort. I suppose you would call it a spiritual blow. Whatever it is, it has completely bowled him over. I am convinced that he has come to Africa with the deliberate purpose of getting himself killed. It is unnecessary to relate in detail why I think as I do. You may take the word of an old ivory-hunter who is accustomed to risks when I tell you that Henry Lovering has missed no opportunity to put himself in the way of almost certain destruction. As you may have heard, such opportunities are not rare in Africa.

"So far, he has been extremely lucky. How long that luck will last no man can say. Today's wound—the result of a rifle-duel with a Tuareg sheik—is the first harm that has come to him. I suppose it was this that goaded me to step out of the province of a friend and to write this letter.

"If Henry knew I had meddled—or muddled, whichever you please—in his affairs it is certain he would sever our partnership and our friendship forthwith. He handed me a letter to mail to you if the affair of today should result in his death. In that way I got your name and address.

"Perhaps you have nothing whatever to do with Henry's determination to go out of his way to accept every desperate risk that offers. Perhaps there is nothing you can do about it, anyway. On the other hand, there is a possibility that you can. On the strength of that chance I am writing this letter. For I can no longer sit idly by while my friend continues until he finds the six-foot hole in the ground that he seems to be seeking with such resolution.

"If there is anything you can do—or care to do—in the matter, I advise you to write to him at Fort Bornu, Shari River Province, French Equatorial Africa. Mail goes in to that post once a month from the Congo. Your letter should be sent via Boma, Belgian Congo.

"We intend to cross the border into French territory as soon as Henry's leg is well enough for traveling and to hit the headwaters of the Shari River. We shall arrive at Fort Bornu, if all goes well, in perhaps three months.

"Yours very truly,
"Allan Redick."

"P.S. You will pardon me, if I remark in passing that I, personally, have never met the woman whom I would consider worthy to clean Henry Lovering's guns."

The letter was sent to Malakal next morning by one of old Gezzar's runners. I could trust the sheik to have it delivered to the District Commissioner, for I told Gezzar that it contained a glowing report of his hospitality to wandering white men.

CHAPTER VI

A NIGHT'S sleep did Henry a world of good. The wound, however, would need the best of care for another week and the leg would not be in condition for traveling in less than a fortnight.

Two weeks of forced inaction in El Muluk was not what I would have chosen, but in Africa you cannot always choose. Considering all things, the outlook was fair enough; our quarters were comfortable; old Gezzar was markedly complaisant; our *hamla* camels needed rest anyway.

Soon after sunup next morning the two Tuaregs rode up to the door of our mud hut. A pair of giant Nubian slaves, following at their heels like black dogs, seized the headstalls of the horses as the desert men dismounted and walked to the open door. The Tuaregs salaamed; then the duelist, much to my surprise, conferred upon me a dignified compliment:

"Salaam Saiyid, râni alim ktîr!"—which might be loosely translated: "Peace to you, O great one, rich is wisdom." A most cordial greeting, coming as it did from our late bloodthirsty antagonist.

Not to be outdone, I returned:

"Salaam aliekoum, rajjil la tkhâf. (Peace to you also, O man who fears nothing.)"

Henry was propped up on his cot. He smiled with pleasure as I led the two masked visitors into the room. They bowed to him with slow stateliness. It was plain to see that they had come to do him honor.

Henry turned to me in a tone of impatience.

"Deuced unhandy, not speaking their lingo! Regular Babel, all these muddy languages. There should be one universal form of speech. I say, Bahram, will you please tell these old sportsmen that I— Oh, you know, make 'em feel at home."

Henry's late enemy stalked to the cot, motioning for me to come forward and translate. In his halting Arabic he delivered quite an oration to this effect:

"The young Inglizi has spared the life of Hassan ben Zeluki of the Beni Azrai. That life lay like a small stone in his hand. It was his to cast away. All other men in his position would have taken that life. He did not. Therefore he shall have the greatest gift in the power of Hassan ben Zeluki to bestow; the chestnut horse is his."

Such a gift from a Tuareg was a real sacrifice; a good horse means more than a half dozen of his wives selected at random.

"A Tuareg's horse," I added to Henry, after translating the speech, "is his life-insurance. These lads are constantly on the raid. Often they make a mistake and tangle with a caravan too strong for them. It is then the horse, and the horse alone, that by his fleetness and staying-power saves his master from a well-merited lead slug between the shoulder-blades. The chestnut is a magnificent animal, but he could not live in the Shari River country. In fact, I expect to lose about half our camels down there, for the Shari is in the 'fly' belt. What a crime it would be to take such a horse to the dangerous country! I'll make clear to old Lion-heart that you appreciate his offer and explain why you cannot accept—"

"Wait a minute, Bahram," Henry interrupted. There was an enigmatic look in his eyes. He went on carefully:

"No, do not say that. First ask him how long he and the old chum expect to remain in El Muluk."

I found that they had intended to leave for the Sahara that morning but now would stay in El Muluk until the young Inglizi had fully recovered. I protested that this was unnecessary and explained that Henry's wound was slight. But the Tuareg would not change his mind; nothing could move him from the village, he said, until the one who had spared his life had recovered and was ready to resume his journey. I repeated all this to Henry.

"Topping!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "What a great old snuffer he is! Absolutely bursting with loyalty. I tell you, Bahram, I admire that ruthless barbarian no end, in spite of all his undivulged crimes. Tell him, please, that I shall be proud—overjoyed, frightfully keen, you know—to accept his gift—provided he will take me with him when he returns to his tribe in the desert."

It was not until then that I saw the drift, the real motive, behind Henry's former questions about the Tuaregs. He had been planning something of this kind since he had seen those two desert raiders emerge from Gezzar's residence upon the day of our entry into El Muluk.

"That I will never do!" I exploded with all the force I could put into the words. "I took you off the boat at Malakal and by all that's holy, I'll see you on that river steamer again—if it's in the cards!"

"I'm afraid, Bahram, that it simply isn't in the cards. There are reasons for this decision of mine, I assure you. It is no mere whim. My mind is made up. It would be very kind of you if you would pass on this request for me."

"It would be no such thing!" I snorted. "It would be conniving at plain murder—and probably torture into the bargain. No matter what influence these two men have in their tribe, they could not protect you from the ungovernable violence of their young men. Why, Henry, you would have no more chance than a snowball in an oven."

IT would be a waste of time to go into further detail. It became a war of words and I refused to the end to translate that reckless request. Henry made out the strongest case possible; he waxed enthusiastic over his scheme; it was a wild plan to join the Beni Azrai, the tribe to which these two men belonged, become one of them and finally by sheer audacity, nerve and intelligence to gain great influence if not leadership in the tribe. He must have been considering his plan since the moment of our arrival in El Muluk, for he had ready complete details of a unique course of training he would put those untamed horsemen through—an irregular sort of cavalry-school that would make of them a most effective guerrilla fighting-force. Although now they were nominally under French rule, he had discounted that unimportant fact and would eventually swing them into the Sudan Defense Force and present the finished product to the British commander in Khartoum. The one hole in the project was the natural ferocity of the Tuaregs. Some bad-tempered son of that ungovernable race would murder him out of hand before he could become established among them. But Henry brushed that objection aside as if it were nothing at all.

"Bahram, each man must do as he sees best; my life is, after all, my own to live as I see fit," he urged. "Now, best of all friends in the world, try to see the justice of my position." There was deep pain in his eyes.

Of course he was free to do as he pleased; I knew that. But he was going straight to his death. I could never have looked myself in the face again if I had neglected to use every weapon in my power to dissuade him from this desperate undertaking.

At last he realized that I would not give in. He said slowly, sadly, and with infinite regret in his voice:

"If you will allow me to do this thing only in this boorish way, old friend, then in this way it must be done." He turned abruptly to the Tuareg:

"*Ferass* (horse)," he said, pointing to the chestnut animal which now had its head almost in the doorway. Then he pointed to himself and nodded in acquiescence. Anyone could have understood that he was accepting the gift. He pointed again to the Tuareg and then again to himself, taking the Tuareg's hand in his. With his free arm he pointed to the center of the great Sahara and added:

"*Bîlad* Tuareg (To the Tuareg country)."

He had used but three from his meager store of Arabic words and the desert men understood instantly. Old Ferocity jabbered in his own language to his masked friend, and bowed in agreement to Henry's wishes. I realized that the arrangements had been completed over my head.

FOR the next two weeks while Henry's leg was mending, the subject was not once mentioned by either of us. I saw to it that Osman prepared the best of our food for Henry's meals. I dressed his wound regularly, sat with him at times and talked—or rather listened while Henry conversed pleasantly on every subject in the world except his coming journey into the Tuareg country—and his own personal affairs.

There came a day at last when the leg was healed and Henry took his first ride on the chestnut gift-horse. The Tuaregs had called upon him at least once and often two or three times a day during the period of our forced inaction. Toward the end of it, Hassan ben Zeluki, the duelist, had haunted our hut from early morning until sundown.

In the evening, two days after his first ride, Henry packed his things. Twice that evening he was on the point of speaking, but each time something stopped him and he got no further than the first halting word. He knew, as did I, that the chances were ten to one he was going straight to his death—and he could not bring himself to say good-by. Then, as he had done all through our acquaintance, he dropped his seriousness and took refuge in the jocular, bantering style of conversation.

"Well, Bahram—ancient offspring of a happy union between the sun and moon—after tomorrow you shall no longer be bothered, for I shall not be with you to plod on clumsy feet at the tail of your shirt, scaring the game and making the day hideous with my loutish jargon. The ceaseless claptrap, the incessant chit-chat which you have borne so nobly will perhaps never again fall upon your ears in unending din. You have borne your cross nobly, O sage of the wilderness, and I— Really, Bahram, I do appreciate all your kindness to me—" There was a catch in his voice, but he pulled himself up short. "Still, all trails in the Sudan eventually lead to Khartoum. How about spending a jolly Christmas there together next year?" In my opinion there was not the slightest possibility of his ever again reaching Khartoum, or any other city—and this he knew. But he went on:

"The two little brown brothers champ at the bit. For some unknown reason they miss the gritty sand of their natural habitat; so we'll be off in the morning. By the way, Bahram, I've made no end of progress in their guttural tongue in the past two weeks. I seem to be a giddy linguist by some happy conjunction of the stars—a fact that was never suspected by the most expensive dons at Oxford. I enjoyed some fame as a prize dullard in the classics there, you know—in fact it was more than hinted upon various regrettable occasions that even my mother tongue had practically eluded me. —Oh, I almost forgot to mention that I have a present for you; a thing which was never really dear to my heart, O dazzling mountain of wisdom, and now, alas, it has lost all its charm; my entire supply of spirituous liquors, vulgarly called whisky, is yours to have and to hold until death do you part." And with a grandiose flourish of the arm he indicated the whisky-cases piled in a corner of the hut. In spite of his frivolous manner I knew that he had quit drink entirely. He now had work to do in which he was extremely interested; but I wondered whether this decision to renounce the liquor was the result of interest in his new undertakings, or simply because in the Tuareg country he was sure to find a more-direct route to that six-foot hole in the ground. I did not know.

I thought a great deal of Henry Lovering and I too found it better to adopt his bantering tone:

"*Bishkur ajdalak!*" I replied. "Thank you, but one case, I think, will do me. You forget that in spite of my great age and undeniable wisdom I have not yet acquired the art of wandering through those chuckle-headed mazes of intoxication so gleefully recommended by our most serious and conscientious drunkards."

"Take along one case then, and pour the rest down a wart-hog's hole," he remarked. "You were right, Bahram, I never did like the stuff in anything but the most minute quantities." That finished, he dropped the subject abruptly and began counting out cartridges and packing them in a small bag. . . . .

At dawn the two Tuaregs rode up to the door. This time they did not dismount as usual but sat their horses waiting for Henry. The duelist was mounted upon the horse we had seen the day of our arrival in the mud-walled pen at the end of Sheik Gezzar's house.

The two naked slaves that usually followed to hold their masters' horses were not present and I thought:

"I'll bet a four-dollar dog they traded those slaves to Gezzar for the horse."

ONE of our men brought Henry's horse around, saddled and bridled and ready for the long journey before them. Henry tied a single blanket to the Arab saddle and mounted. He had only the clothes on his back, his rifle and a few dozen cartridges. He had explained to me that he would become a Tuareg in all outward appearance once they reached the tribe in the desert. He would adopt the gun, clothes, food, tents and everything else in use among the Tuaregs. He reached down and we shook hands as casually as we could.

"Good-by, Bahram, and the best o' luck. Khartoum, next Christmas—don't forget!"

"Khartoum next Christmas," I repeated, letting his fingers slip from mine. Henry wheeled his mount and rode away as fast as the graceful animal could go. The Tuaregs followed at a gallop and the three passed from sight behind a sand dune to the northwest. I watched Henry go as I would have watched him put out to sea in a sinking rowboat.

"That," I muttered to myself in a husky voice, "is the last I shall ever see of Henry Lovering. May the drifting sands of the great Sahara blow gently over his gallant bones! And whatever he may have done or left undone—Oh, hell! Osman! Pack up those grub boxes! Get busy there, Selim; lend a hand! Just because you're a gun-bearer don't mean that a little work will kill you! Hurry it up; we leave as soon as we can." I walked into the hut, wiped a drop of salt water from the end of my nose with a shirt-sleeve and rolled up my camp-bed.

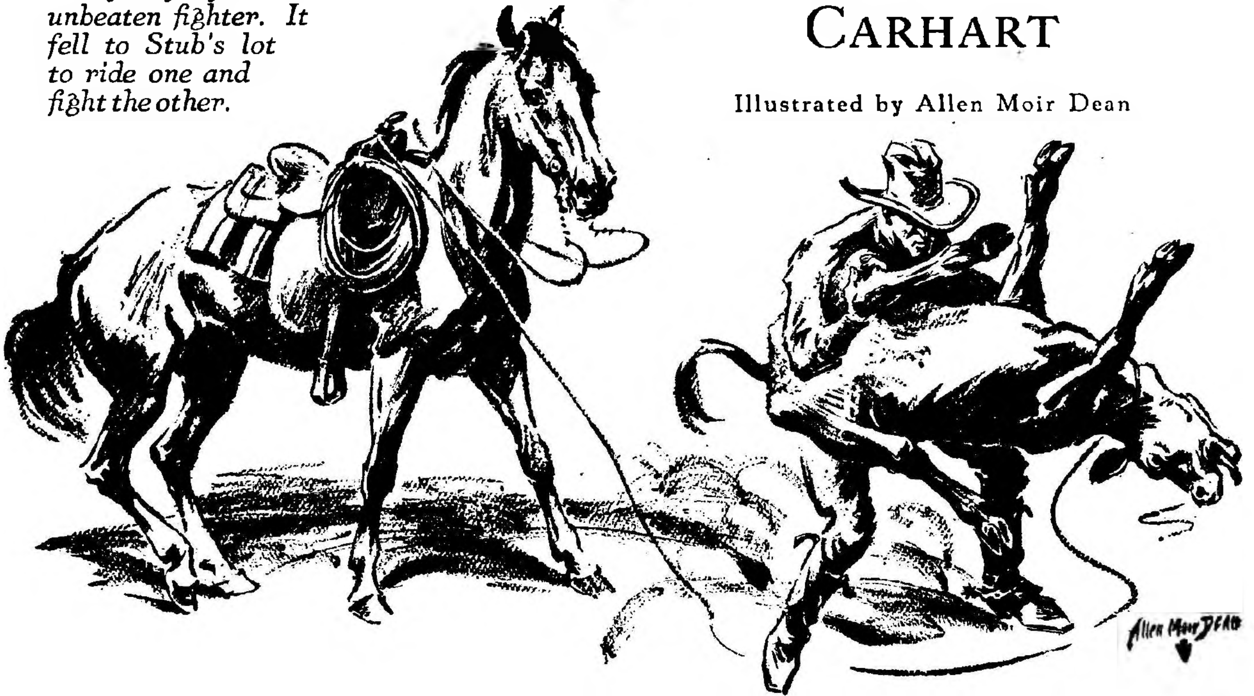
A stranger fate than Allan Redick ever feared entangled him and his friend's sweetheart as they reached the end of the trail—the black slave stone of Tibesti. Do not miss it—in the forthcoming February issue.

Fighting a Rep

Midnight Star was untamed, a horse no man had ever ridden. Jerdy Ryan was an unbeaten fighter. It fell to Stub's lot to ride one and fight the other.

By ARTHUR HAWTHORNE CARHART

Illustrated by Allen Moir Dean



STUB KINGERY shoved a fat puncher aside, elbowed another out of the way, crowded into the center of a tight little knot surrounding two men facing each other. One of them was a man, black-browed, scowling; the other was a scared, slim, blue-eyed kid of about eighteen.

"I didn't do it, honest," said the kid in a frightened voice.

For answer, the other drew back his fist.

With a jump, Stub threw himself into the center of the circle. Stub Kingery never could endure bullying. The husky turned with a snarl as Stub thrust himself between the two antagonists.

"Pick on some one yore size, *hombre,*" advised Stub, sticking his jaw out threateningly.

"My size, huh?" sneered the scowling man. He ran his eye over Stub's rather squat frame, from his bowed legs and scuffed cowboy boots to the top of his shocky sunburned towhead.

"Yuh said it!" snapped Stub.

"Sock him, Ryan!" yelled one of the crowd.

The man named Ryan lunged. He swung at Stub's outthrust jaw. Stub ducked, then struck. Noise began in the crowd. The man in front of Stub grunted and swayed.

Riders, ropers and bull-doggers, gathered in the high-walled room back of the Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce for the regulation evening's entertainment, quit their cards and rattling bones. They surged toward the fight.

"Give 'em room," shouted some one. "Let 'em fight it out!"

Loud talk started. For a moment, Stub poised. Then he met the rush of the angry man. Stub heard some one yelling the name of Ryan again. Evidently that was the name of his antagonist. But he did not recognize this fellow. At the moment, Stub was too angry to stop for complete and polite introductions.

The next instant they clashed. Ryan struck. Stub caught the blow. He reeled away and swung as he swayed. His fist found Ryan. Ryan lunged again. He smashed at Stub with both fists. Under his breath he cursed Stub as they came clashing together.

A blow rocked Stub's head. He came slashing back. They clinched. A cow-hand tore them apart. Stub tasted blood in his mouth; his lips were bleeding. He threw new fury into the battle. Their bodies crashed; they went careening into the crowd. Then they fell struggling for a hold as they struck the floor. Ready hands jerked them to their feet. Dizziness came fleetingly to Stub. He wondered for an instant why he had got into this fight. Then he remembered in a swift flash the scared kid. He threw himself furiously; his fists found Ryan's face. But a blow rocked Stub's head. New yelling broke over the crowd.

Fighting anger flamed through Stub. He leaped at Ryan. He flailed, struck, dodged, crouched, reached with his hands to jerk Ryan out of the edge of the crowd when he had battered him back, then went boring in with both fists drumming. Ryan, bewildered by the furious attack, put his fists up before his face. Stub battered them down. Then Ryan was on the floor. Some one held Stub back. Ryan got to his feet. He backed away. Stub lunged at him. Ryan scuttled into the crowd. Other waddies blocked Stub's way.

"He's got enough," growled a lanky fellow Stub recognized as big Bill Reardon from Yampa. "Yuh've done yore duty, cowboy; yuh've busted him. Don't slaughter him."

Stub stopped. Men crowded around him. He saw the slim kid that he had championed. The kid grinned. Stub smiled a battered smile.

"I'm sure owin' yuh a lot, *amigo,*" said the kid as he stretched out his hand. "That bird would have beat me to a pulp. I've seen that Jerdy Ryan in action before and—"

"Jerdy Ryan!" Stub gasped.

"That's the *hombre,*" said Bill Reardon. "Yuh licked him. With both fists!"

For a moment, Stub was dumb. Jerdy Ryan was one of the roughest, toughest, wildest man-bruisers that ever entered in a rodeo; a man with a reputation for winning all his fights. Suddenly, Stub felt weak and whipped.

"My gosh," he breathed, "if I'd knowed that was Jerdy Ryan—"

"Yuh didn't?"

"I'll say not!"

"Well," observed Reardon, "I don't think he'll trouble yuh again. Yuh called his bluff. He was accusin' Bob Newman here of cheatin' in the crap game. Ryan would have been too much for Bob. Anyway, the kid wasn't doin' shifty things. I was watchin'. Guess Ryan had one too many drinks."

"I'm sure much obliged to yuh," stuttered the kid Bob Newman. "I didn't want to fight, but he was goin' to make me. I've just got over an operation, or maybe I would've fought. But—I'm sure thankful to yuh, Kingery."

"Oh, don't mention it," growled Stub. But under his gruffness there was queer mixed panic and sudden triumphant feeling of conquest. He had licked Jerdy Ryan—he had whipped the toughest fighter among professional bronc'-riders!

No one had ever floored Ryan before. Most men avoided trouble with him. Stub had never seen him. But he had heard of his reputation for fighting from El Paso to Calgary and from Prescott to Pendleton.

"Yuh sure put up one swell fight," breathed Bob as they stood looking down on a group squatting around a crap game.

"I'd've run," confessed Stub, in a sudden burst of confidence, "ef I'd knowed it was Jerdy Ryan!"

Bob Newman looked at him with widened eyes.

"I don't believe—"

"It's truth," admitted Stub, now glad that he had told this to his new-found friend. "I could never have whipped that *hombre* ef I'd knowed. His reputation's too big!"

"Here, you fellows, draw for tomorrow's buckin' contests," bawled a voice from the crowd behind them. "Step up and take your nags' names out of the hat."

A tall man, wearing a green shirt and carrying a wide-brimmed hat in his hand, stalked into the crowd.

The drawing started.

"All right, Jerdy Ryan," called the tall man. "Come on, Ryan. Where are you?"

Some one dragged Ryan out of the washroom. He was swabbing blood off of his face.

"Something happen to you?" said the official.

"Oh, don't be funny," growled Ryan. He reached up and drew a slip of paper.

"Ryan rides Coaly," called the man with the hat. "Next fellow! Here, Stub Kingery."

"Draw for me," said Stub quickly to Bob Newman. "Bring me luck."

"I don't think—"

"Go on, I tell yuh," snapped Stub. "Yuh'll sure bring me a heap of luck!"

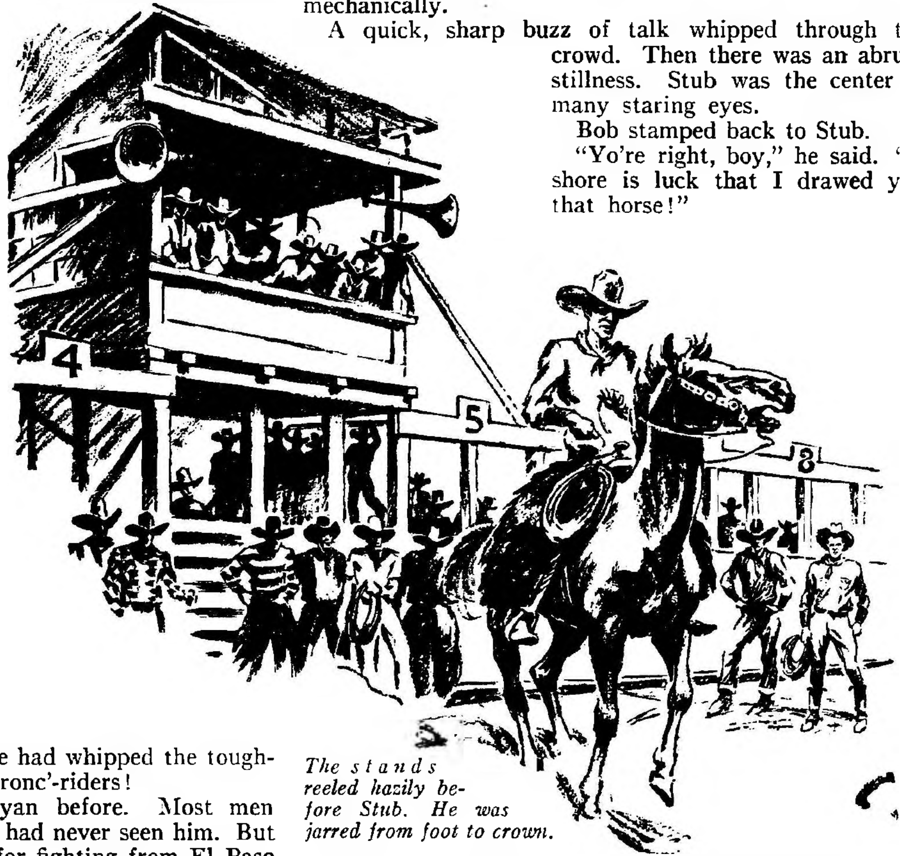
Newman reached into the hat. His fingers fumbled. He pulled out a slip of paper. He handed it to the man recording the drawings.

"Stub Kingery draws Midnight Star," said the clerk mechanically.

A quick, sharp buzz of talk whipped through the crowd. Then there was an abrupt stillness. Stub was the center of many staring eyes.

Bob stamped back to Stub.

"Yo're right, boy," he said. "It shore is luck that I drawed yuh that horse!"



The stands reeled hazily before Stub. He was jarred from foot to crown.

The man with the hat called to another contestant. The attention of the crowd shifted from the man who had drawn Midnight Star.

"Let's get out," whispered Stub. They shoved their way hastily through the crowd. Stub felt like a marked man.

In the hall, a tall tanned fellow reached out and took Stub's arm. It was Satterfield, who had been talking to Stub earlier in the day about signing up for the Chicago and New York shows.

Satterfield had seen Stub ride in the preliminaries. They had talked of terms, but Stub had not yet seen any contract.

"About that deal—" said Satterfield.

"Yeah?" replied Stub.

"It's off," said Satterfield shortly. "You'd have to do some world-beatin' bronc'-bustin' for me to sign you up after that fussin' with Ryan. He's already under contract, and I can't have two scrappin' fools in the outfit."

Satterfield turned back toward the big room. Stub went out of the hall to the roomy porch.

"What was the idee?" demanded Bob Newman.

"More luck," mumbled Stub. He refused to parade his disappointment even to Newman. He had wanted badly to go to those big Eastern rodeos.

"Gosh, I was sure lucky to get that horse for yuh, Stub!" said Bob Newman again. "With him to ride yuh'll go into the finals almost a sure winner. Why, just his reputation—"

"Yeh," drawled Stub. "That's it!"

"But yuh can ride him!"

"Like hell! No one kin ride Midnight Star."

For an instant there was tense quiet. Bob Newman for the first time realized that Stub Kingery was on the edge of panic and rout at the thought that tomorrow he must go leaping out of the chutes at Frontier Park astride the horse with the worst reputation for throwing good riders of any horse in the rodeo game.

"Look here," said Bob suddenly, grabbing Stub by the arm and whirling him so they faced each other. "Yuh kin ride the bronc'; if you *think* yuh kin, yuh kin. I've been watchin' yuh down at Greeley on that Rainbow horse, and I seen yuh last fall at Monte when yuh rode that horse Rail Fence, and I tell yuh, yuh kin ride this Midnight Star! He's got an action just like that horse Broken Axle, that yuh rode day before yesterday. First one side, then t'other, and then swish back. Yuh rode Broken Axle. Yuh kin ride Midnight Star."

"Yeh," said Stub. "Maybe."

"Yuh kin," Bob said again. "Yuh say if yuh'd knowed who this Ryan was, yuh'd been licked afore yuh started. Well, fergit it's Midnight Star—just think *horse.* Yuh'll ride him. Just like yuh licked Ryan afore yuh knowed who he was!"

His tone was urgent.

"Yeh," said Stub again as he spat into the darkness beyond the porch of the Chamber of Commerce building. "Difference is, I know this hoss, Midnight Star, and his reputation afore I climb on him."

Bob Newman in that moment realized what he had done to Stub Kingery when he had reached blindly into the hat and brought out the name of Midnight Star. He had blown up any chance that Stub had of winning through the finals and the money—unless Stub rode the Star.

He turned and left Stub staring into the dark.

"A hell of a way to repay him for what he did for me!" Bob told himself as he clumped down the wooden steps. He scowled into the dark.

The daddy of all rodeos was roaring and filling the arena of Cheyenne's Frontier Park with daring and hilarious turmoil as Stub Kingery climbed to the top of the corrals back of the chutes the next afternoon and cast his eye over the scene.

Out in the arena a man was grabbing wildly for the pommel of a saddle. The crowd howled. A pick-up man galloped beside the rider who had lost his chance at being in on the money but had saved his neck by pulling leather.

Another horse crouched in the chutes. A straight, sun-tanned man, wearing a blue shirt and sitting a fine black that pranced and danced, rode up just outside the heavy gate of the side-delivery chute. A cowboy was poised over the saddle cinched to the horse cowering in the cage of heavy planks.

"Now rake him up front, Corky," called the man in the blue shirt. "Rake him. Let's give 'em a show!"

"Pour 'im out! Pour 'im out!"

"The next, ladies and gentlemen, is Corky Davis out of Chute Number Three, riding the horse Timberline; Corky Davis out of Number Three!" roared the magnified voice of the announcer through the twenty loud-speakers.

"Rake 'im, kid! Rake 'im!"

"You buckin' fool!"

Out from the chute, horse and rider leaped. Swaying, side-swiping, one moment seeming to go straight in quick, short jumps, then swinging and swishing from side to side, they plowed across the open space between chutes and grandstand. A pick-up man went charging after them. The bucking horse swerved to avoid the fence at the racetrack. A pistol cracked. Corky Davis reached out welcoming arms to the pick-up man who yanked him away from the flying hoofs of Timberline.

A light of professional approval lit in Stub's eye. Corky had made a good ride. And then came back to him the appalling knowledge that within half an hour he would be on the back of the demon black with the little white spot in his forehead—and they would be going out like a tornado of flesh, bouncing, twisting, turning!

He followed the narrow plank walk at the top of the corrals around to where the outlaws were being kept. His eyes centered on the horse he was to ride.

Midnight Star milled away in the mess of outlaws. Other horses made way for him. Another black horse, almost a duplicate of Midnight Star, came crowding along the fence. This was Coaly, jet black. Coaly was the horse that Jerdy Ryan was to ride. Except for the bit of

white in the forehead of Midnight Star, the two horses were as similar as two bunches of gramma-grass. Stub knew if he had drawn Coaly he would have ridden his horse.

Stub turned as he sensed some one standing beside him on the narrow wooden walk at the top of the corral fence. It was Bob Newman.

"Looky here, Stub," he began earnestly, "yuh've got to get the idee that yuh kin ride that horse. I've seen yuh ride buckers jest as bad. Jest make up yore mind—"

"Yuh give me an earache," growled Stub ungraciously, as he turned and clumped moodily along the corral fence. He stopped and stared a little as he saw a small figure climbing to the top of the corral fence in front of him.

"Hey, sis, where yuh goin'?" he demanded, hurrying a little to get to the child before she got up where she might tumble into the corral.

The blue-eyed, golden-haired youngster looked up at him and smiled in friendly fashion. Stub's heart was won at once, for he liked kids and this eight-year-old girl, all togged out in cowgirl outfit, was his kind of chum.

"Say," she said, "will yuh show me that Star horse, Mister?"

The thought flashed across Stub's mind that even the kids knew this bronc's reputation.

"I'll show yuh Star ef yuh'll promise to watch yore step and not fall into them pens," answered Stub. "Here, gimme yore hand."

She reached up a little brown mitt trustingly, and it snuggled confidently in Stub's paw.

He pointed out Star where that outlaw plunged and pawed through the tangle in the pen. The youngster talked about her pony, her pa's ranch, her pet dog. Stub wondered how she had got away from her folks, whoever they might be, and clear over to the chutes. It was dangerous territory for youngsters—even ranch kids.

"I'll bet, Mister," she said, suddenly looking up at him with a cocky little pitch to her head and a smile on her face. "I'll bet *yuh* kin ride any of them bronc's there, even Star!"

"Gosh, I wish I thought the same," replied Stub.

"Here, you, Ruthie!" bawled a voice back and below Stub. "Git down from there! Hey, feller!" Stub turned. Jerdy Ryan was on the ground, looking up.

"Oh, it's yuh, huh," he snapped. "Where'd yuh pick up that kid of mine?"

"She clumb up here and I was afraid she'd maybe fall into them pens," said Stub somewhat apologetically. "So I took her in hand."

"Well, yuh kin just keep away from her," said Ryan. "I don't allow my kid to buddy aroun' with cheap bums and four-flushin' rodeo-riders. Come here, Ruthie!"

The little girl looked inquiringly, wistfully, at her new-found friend. Then she dutifully started to clamber down.

Stub Kingery clenched his hands, bit his lips. He turned away from Ryan and strode along the top of the corral. Only Stub's determination not to be a rowdy and pull a fight in front of dainty Ruth Ryan stood between Ryan and another beating at the hands of Stub.

Stub suddenly saw Bob Newman perched on the board in front of him.

"What yuh doin' moonin' around here?" snapped Stub.

"Thinkin'," admitted Bob. "Ef yuh'll jest think the same—"

"Git out of my sight an' hearin'," snarled Stub, venting some of his temper that had been pent up from his meeting with Ryan.

Bob Newman piled off the fence, talking to himself. He walked away glumly and stumbled into a man in white trousers, an outlander who had wandered in among the automobiles on either side of the chutes.

"Look where you're going, my man," snapped the dude. "See what you've done!" He pointed to a dusty black smudge on his white pants. "You crowded me against that auto exhaust!"

"Sorry," Bob muttered as he stared at the smudge of soot on the white cloth. He slouched away.

It was hell-for-sure to have to run Stub Kingery up against a horse that had him licked before the gate was yanked back! If he could just shift horses, or get Stub to think—

At the corral, Stub was having his bad moments. He could not get away from staring with fascination at Midnight Star. And his second clash with Ryan had upset him still further.

A man on a big horse came fogging into the corral, scattering the outlaws. The bronc's poured into the main driveway toward the chutes.

Stub started toward the arena to gather up his saddle. He paused, watching the horses crowding into the chutes.

Midnight Star was in the lead as the horses broke right and left out of the main drive. The Star stopped, backed, charged out. Then Stub saw a black horse crowding again into Chute Number One. He supposed it was Star.

The gates clanked back of the horses. There was one horse in each of four tight little cribs on either side of the main driveway. Back of the horse that Stub believed was Midnight Star, in Chute Number Two, was another black horse. This must be Coaly, thought Stub. If he had drawn that horse he would have stood a chance, though Coaly bucked almost as hard as Midnight Star.

Stub saw the lanky form of Bob Newman disengage itself from the crowd near the fence.

"I'll help yuh, Stub," said Bob eagerly. "Tony Maples, who had yore saddle, said he had to run around to the steer-ropin' chutes."

"*Bueno,*" growled Stub.

The next moment they were easing the saddle down on the black back in Chute Number One.

"Whoa there, cayuse," ordered Bob. "Now hold still, you Piute!" Some sharp confidence was in Bob's voice.

Jerdy was reaching wildly for the pommel; the next moment the black was riderless.

Stub looked at him curiously.

The black horse half turned his head. His wicked eyes showed white. He snorted gustily.

"Go on and talk about it," blustered Bob to the horse. The black snorted and shook his head. "I'll hold his head while you cinch up, Stub," Bob ordered.

The black horse suddenly reared on his hind feet, pawed at the side of the chute, came down, reared again. There was a scattering of cowboys from the top of the corrals. Bob headed the retreat. He looked back at the plunging horse and spat expressively.

"Jest don't accommodate hisself nohow, does he?" he remarked laconically. "All right, Stub, let's get this finished."

Another wild, plunging, pawing bundle of trouble broke loose in Chute Number Two right behind them. Again there was a quick scattering away from flying hoofs; Coaly, in Number Two, had caught the excitement.

Under his breath he cursed Stub as they came clashing together.

Slight quiet came again and Stub and Bob worked quickly and expertly.

"Bill Reardon out of Chute Number Five, riding Tammany," yelled the announcer. "Out of Chute Number Five, ladies and gentlemen. There he goes!"

The big bay, Tammany, went careening away toward the stands. Men yelled. Dust fogged. Pick-up men went stampeding after the bay. But they did not get Reardon. Tammany got there first. Reardon soared, then squatted in the dust.

"I could have rode that horse," mumbled Stub.

"Yo're goin' to ride this 'un," said Bob fiercely, turning on his friend. "How many times have I got to tell yuh that if yuh believe—"

"Go talk to the horse," Stub burst out suddenly.

"All right, you Stub," the arena director ordered. "Yo're out of here after we turn Jerdy Ryan out of two on Coaly. Come on there, Jerdy. Yuh ready?"

Stub glanced up to where Jerdy was easing into the saddle. Beyond, at the edge of a group of riders, Bud saw Ruthie Ryan. Her father had apparently left her in the care of some of his friends.

Stub realized that within a few more agonizing minutes he would be hovering over the saddle on Midnight Star. He wondered how many jumps it would take to eliminate him from this contest. It struck him forcibly that if Jerdy Ryan rode Coaly the next world's championship might go to Ryan.

The chute door opened.

"Pour 'im out. Ride 'im, cowboy!"

Coaly churned and dived. It seemed almost that he was another Midnight Star, thought Stub, watching every leap.

Then he saw Jerdy reaching wildly for the pommel. He saw daylight between Jerdy's body and the saddle.

The next moment the black was riderless, and Jerdy Ryan was hobbling clear. He had lasted only five jumps on that black. And Jerdy Ryan was one of the best!

If Coaly had thrown Ryan, what could Stub expect from Midnight Star?

Stub gritted his teeth. He turned to Chute Number One and the big powerful black in it. He saw Bob up at the horse's head, seeming to talk to the big black that walled his eyes and snorted at the lanky cowboy's approach.

"What in hell yuh doin' up there, yuh crazy galoot?" snapped Stub.

"I'm tellin' this bronc' that yo're goin' to ride 'im certain," declared Bob. "He's about ready to believe it."

"All right, Stub," called the man in the blue shirt. "Let's keep 'em goin'."

Stub climbed up above the back of the black. Within a few seconds he would be careening out, his body shaken, his bones jerking inside his muscles, his teeth clicking with the jolting plunges of the horse.

The horse turned his head. Bob held the hackamore close to the horse's head. Stub spraddled his legs over the saddle.

"The next, ladies and gentlemen, will be Stub Kingery riding Midnight Star, out of Chute Number One—Stub Kingery and Midnight Star out of Number One!" bellowed the voice of the announcer, sent out through the many giant-voiced horns of the loud-speaker system.

"All right, boy; rake 'im front, Stub. Let's give 'em a real show. Rake 'im front," ordered the man in the blue shirt.

"Get ready, folks," roared the horns. "Here comes Midnight Star. Out of Number One. And Stub Kingery is going to try to ride him!" There was a laugh among the riders in front of the chutes.

Stub heard the laugh; they knew what was ahead.

Bob put his head close to Stub's.

"Get down out of here," snarled Stub, turning on him.

The big black snorted. Bob, pulling on the hackamore, yanked the horse's head around.

"Look at his forehead, Stub," whispered Bob. "Look! Quick!"

Stub looked—and for a moment, he paused astride the saddle, speechless. There was no white spot in the forehead of this horse.

It must be Coaly! They had been mixed in the chutes.

Jerdy Ryan had been on Midnight Star! That was why he was dumped!

When they had crowded the horses into the chutes Coaly had got ahead of Midnight Star, and in the excitement no one had recognized the change.

And now under Stub was this horse without a white star showing in his forehead—a horse that Stub could ride!

Stub realized he should tell the judges about the mix-up. He hesitated above the saddle.

"Come on! Come on!" yelled the man in the blue shirt. "Jerk loose there! Pour him out. Come on, let's go!"

The gate creaked open. There was only one safe move for Stub. Automatically, he dropped into the saddle.

The gate swung out. The horse under him cringed.

There was a yell. The horse seemed to hesitate a moment and then he whirled out.

Stub instinctively threw his boots forward. Some quick, sudden thrill leaped through him. Whatever the mix-up, he would show them a whale of a ride!

The black hit the ground. Stub's hands flew up. The next moment man and horse were skyrocketing.

But Stub knew that he could ride *this* horse; it was that horse with the white star in his forehead that Stub had

feared. In his reaction he felt sudden strange assurance. He yelled. The black pitched, dived, came down stiff-legged, pitched, and plunged again.

The stands reeled hazily in front of Stub. Back of him he could hear the men around the chutes yelling. The stands roared. They thought he was on Star.

Something seemed to hit Stub with the impact of a sledgehammer. He was jarred from foot to crown. He quit raking the black on the shoulders, and started riding with all his might. There was new fight in this horse. Stub could hear the black grunting and snorting every time they hit the ground. He was riding his best: new confidence came as he stuck through that first series of shattering leaps.

The horse threw his head around, turning end for end. In one dizzy, drunken moment, Stub Kingery saw a white spot in the face of the horse he rode!

The truth came crashing, pounding on him. In some way Bob Newman

had tricked him into thinking he was riding Coaly. Now he was actually riding Midnight Star—*riding him!*

Queer fear, gigantic triumph, a deluge of confidence, came flooding into Stub Kingery's soul. He'd stuck so far—he'd stick the rest of the way!

Satterfield and the contract—Ryan jeering—the howling crowd—Bob Newman—he'd show 'em all!

The horse whirled, plunged, ducked, threw his body rocketwise, came down jarring, swaying, plunging.

Stub felt himself sway. He caught his balance again. The gigantic surging roar of the stands came to his ears. The bawling voice of a cow-waddy screeched the name of Midnight Star.

Stub felt the horse giving. Only a few seconds remained. Overwhelming knowledge that he was going to win this ride came to him. The pistol would crack in a few short seconds, and the ride would be over.

Midnight Star threw new strength into his next plunge. He started in quick, thrashing, deadly jumps directly toward the crowd at the chutes. Ahead of him, Stub saw scrambling forms, plunging bodies, men and women in rodeo regalia breaking from in front of Midnight Star like water splashed from under horses' hoofs.

New yelling, a scream, some one bawling at the top of his lungs, came to Stub.

Then a single short, quick scream—followed by deathly silence, with only the sound of the pounding sharp hoofs of Midnight Star, the hoarse grunting of the outlaw, and the creaking of the saddle.

Swimming into his vision, then clear, vividly clear, Stub saw, directly in front of the maddened horse, only a few feet from death, the winsome form of Ruthie Ryan! She had stumbled, fallen, could not possibly get clear of those crushing hoofs.

With a curse, with the flashing realization that he was grabbing leather before the pistol ended the ride—with the knowledge that the ride was lost now, and with it the chance at a world's championship, Stub Kingery pulled. He did not hesitate the flicker of an eye. The horse leaped. Stub braced—his arms tugged. The head of Star came stubbornly around as the man put all his strength into throwing the animal to the side away from the little girl.

There was a convulsion of horseflesh under Stub; there was an instant in which the whole thing was decided—the split second when there seemed an avalanche of black death poised above the fear-paralyzed child. Stub Kingery on Midnight Star leaped through the air, with Stub pulling, pulling, pulling!

There was a sickening split second again when Stub felt the impact as they crashed headlong into the chutes, an instant of smashing timber—after that, darkness.

Dizziness, headache, the sound of many voices and a hazy vision of men standing above him, then indistinct faces of Bob and Jerdy Ryan greeted Stub as he sat up. "He's all right now," he heard Bob say.

"That *was* Star I was ridin'," said Stub, incredulously.

"Of course it was," said Bob quickly.

"But when he turned his head around in the chute so I could see his forehead—"

"There was soot from an auto exhaust on the white spot so yuh'd think maybe it was Coaly," half whispered Bob. "It jarred out the first three jumps!"

"But I didn't finish the ride," Stub cried.

"The judges ruled different," said Ryan, speaking for the first time. "Time was up when yuh started for the chutes here—and after that everyone was too plumb ossified to be shootin' pistols to end the ride! Everyone's agreed yuh've got this contest herded home right now. And while I'm speakin', Satterfield says he wants to see yuh afore yuh sign any contrac's of any kind. And now I've got to go and quiet the missus and my kid. Both of 'em have been cryin' steady sinct yuh slammed into the side of the chutes. . . . . Hunt us up this evenin'. I want yuh, to meet the family. See yuh later."

Stub knew this was a full apology and an offer of lasting friendship from Jerdy Ryan.

"Ryan's kid safe?" asked Stub anxiously.

"Not hurt a speck."

"How about the Star?" asked Stub. "Hurt?"

"Skinned a little." Bob grinned. "I knew yuh could—"

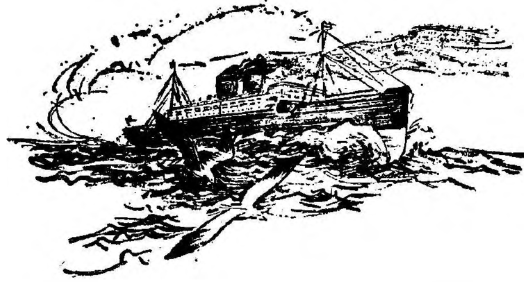
"Shut up," said Stub suddenly. "That's no news!"

Mystery on the Ship

The strange disappearance of a Wall Street financier on the high seas becomes even more baffling through the rivalry of the ship's detectives.

By FRED MacISAAC

Illustrated by Vladimir Chenkoff



TOM BURTON, the head purser of the mammoth express liner *Gargantua* invited John K. Masters, who had presented a letter of introduction, into his cabin, asked him to have a drink and endeavored to be sociable. Masters was a broad-shouldered, red-faced man with brownish gray hair, of hard blue eyes, a broad nose and a square heavy chin. According to the letter of introduction, he was a New York banker; and as the tenant of a suite de luxe with a private deck, he was entitled to much consideration.

Burton grasped at the private deck as a subject of comparison between the luxury of the present and lack of it in the past.

"When I sailed in the old *Cymric,* a quarter of a century ago," said the Englishman, "passenger accommodations were primitive compared to the present day, but I really believe a sea voyage was more enjoyable. We carried a couple of hundred first-class passengers whom we berthed in poky little cabins, fed at long tables in a badly ventilated saloon, crowded into tiny social halls and smoking-rooms, and made them realize that they were on a ship at sea. Did we have an orchestra? By no means. Swimming-pool or gymnasium? Absurd! Private deck? Unheard-of!"

"They must have been very uncomfortable," commented the visitor. "Well, glad to have met you, Purser. I came on board for a rest and I propose to keep to my quarters and take my fresh air from my private deck. Good night!"

"We want our passengers to please themselves, sir," replied Burton. "Good night."

Burton was a friendly little man, the most popular purser on the line. He didn't care much for the banker; he reflected that he didn't mind if he never set eyes again on John K. Masters. . . .

Nevertheless he was naturally horrified when he was informed that the rich man had been thrown overboard upon the second night out.

The disappearance of Masters was reported to Burton about ten o'clock on the third morning. The room steward had entered according to orders at nine-forty-five with breakfast, which consisted of a silver fizz, toast, and a pot of coffee. Mr. Masters' bed had not been slept in and he was not to be seen. The steward stepped out upon the private deck, a partitioned-off space about twenty feet long by ten feet wide, and found a deck-chair overturned and a pair of eyeglasses lying on the planking. One of the lenses had been stepped upon and crushed.

After a hasty visit to Suite C, the purser set the stewards' department in motion to make sure that Masters was not on board. In fifteen minutes, word was received that the man was in no other cabin nor in any part of the ship. Leaving orders for the steamer's detectives to report to his quarters he went above and told Captain Jenkins.

"Why pick out this ship to commit suicide?" the Captain demanded furiously. "I won't have it, do you hear?"

"He might have been murdered," said Burton blandly. "The overturned deck-chair and the broken eyeglasses suggest foul play, sir."

"Then catch the murderer—but keep everything quiet! Handle the affair in your own way. I have my hands full up here. Had fog, half the night."

"Very good, sir," said Burton.

When the purser reëntered his cabin he found the ship's detectives awaiting him.

The Green Star Line for several years had carried two detectives on their de luxe ships—an American and an Englishman. The American on the *Gargantua* was Thomas Grogan, former sergeant in the New York police department; the Britisher was Timothy Murphy, an ex-inspector at Scotland Yard. Each was supposed to be familiar with the criminals and the criminal methods of his country, and together were expected to supply one hundred per cent of protection to the ship's passengers.

Grogan was a solidly built, ruddy, keen-eyed little man who hailed originally from County Kerry. Murphy was a Cork man, tall, thin, solemn of visage, dark and saturnine. Twenty years on the London police force had grafted upon his native brogue certain cockneyisms, while Grogan's soft Kerry accent had been twisted by New York verbal oddities.

They had been assigned to the *Gargantua* six voyages ago and their labor had been very light up to the present. They listened now to the purser's story and exchanged understanding glances.

"Murdered," asserted Murphy. "Motive, robbery."

"Sure," said Grogan. "Let's have a look at Suite C."

Accompanied by the purser they entered the quarters of the late John K. Masters, which consisted of a luxurious bedchamber as large as a hotel room, and a beautiful drawing-room from which one passed through French windows to the private deck.

While Burton dropped into a chair the sleuths began their investigations in a curious fashion. Instead of dividing the work they moved about together, each determined that the other should make no individual discovery. The

purser grinned covertly. Very little on board ship escaped him and he was aware that here professional jealousy was augmented by personal jealousy. Both ex-policemen were sweet upon the head stewardess in the steerage department, a Scotch lassie named Mary Gregor.

While they went through the pockets of every suit in Masters' wardrobe, inspected the walls and bureau-tops for fingerprints, and crawled about on their hands and knees on the floor and poked their heads under the bed simultaneously, the purser finished his cigarette, pushed open the French doors and went out on the private deck.

Leaning on the rail he looked down upon the oily gray waters. Somewhere below reposed John K. Masters, who only yesterday had owned everything worth-while in life, yet had chosen to coop himself up on his private deck and avoid human fellowship.

Presently the detectives joined him.

"Well?" asked the purser.

"Murder," said Grogan. "Here was a rich man; no one who could afford accommodations like these would cross without a letter of credit for thousands of dollars and a large sum of cash or travelers' checks. But we find only three hundred dollars in his wallet, and no valuables."

"He could have carried his letter of credit overboard, and his checks and cash as well," Burton demurred.

"Though he might have deposited his stuff in the ship's safe," observed Murphy.

"He made no deposit," the purser said. "I am hoping it *was* suicide. Murder will give the ship a black eye."

"The steward tells us he found the stateroom door on the hook," said Grogan. "We think the murderer slipped in late last night, found Masters asleep out here, went through him and threw him overboard. Afterwards he searched the murdered man's luggage and took what he wanted."

"Indeed," said the purser satirically. "Then suppose you produce the murderer."

"Give us time," said Murphy. "It is certain he is still on board."

"And there are fifteen hundred passengers in the three classes, not to mention six hundred in the crew."

"It's just a matter of eliminating those who couldn't possibly know Masters was a bird worth plucking and those who could get access to his cabin," said Grogan cheerfully. "That don't leave many to bother about."

"If you make an unjustifiable arrest you'll have to bother about your jobs," warned the purser. —"What is it, Moore?"

The assistant radio operator had entered.

"I went to your office, sir, and learned that you were down here. I wanted to call your attention to something that may have a connection with this affair. Did you read the radio news this morning?"

Burton shook his head. "Much too busy."

"There was a tremendous crash in the stock market in New York yesterday, and a number of big failures."

"Yes?"

"The firm of John K. Masters and Co. of Wall Street closed its doors, sir."

"Ah," exclaimed Burton, "I'll say this is important! Let me see your news-sheet."

HE perused it rapidly and then beamed upon the detectives.

"So you're certain this was murder?" he asked softly.

"Bears all the ear-marks," replied Grogan.

"Bah! Plain case of suicide. Masters was heavily involved. He foresaw the panic in Wall Street but hoped it would be deferred until he reached Europe. It broke yesterday. Realizing he would be dragged back to shoulder his responsibilities, he jumped overboard. I may say I am relieved."

"Well," said Grogan thoughtfully, "I suppose he kicked over his chair and broke his glasses to make us think it was murder. Maybe he had insurance with a suicide clause in it."

"Proceed carefully," admonished the purser. "If this turns out to've been murder, we must catch the killer. But for the ship's sake I prefer that it was suicide."

Left alone, the detectives confronted each other warily.

"I'm thinking," said Grogan, "that if this feller was an embezzler, there may be a nice piece of change in it for whoever grabs the murderer and recovers the loot."

"I'm thinking the same," admitted Tim Murphy.

"The question is, do we split it?" asked Grogan softly.

Murphy looked down his long nose at the New Yorker.

"If I should happen to lay hands on the murderer, I'd feel disposed to claim the entire reward," he said sourly. "If we find him together, of course I will agree to a division."

"And very kind of ye, I'm sure," said Grogan sarcastically. "Now we know where we stand."

THEY now devoted their attention to the private deck. Murphy went down on all fours and inspected with the oak planking with a magnifying-glass in a futile effort to discover footprints.

Murphy rose and turned gimlet eyes upon the polished oak top of the bulwark across which the body of John K. Masters had slid on the way to a watery grave. He stooped to inspect the enameled pipe rails beneath it and was unable to restrain an excited gasp.

"What is it?" demanded Grogan.

"Nothing at all," replied Murphy, straightening up.

"Don't tell me that. *Ah!*"

One of the white enameled steel railings had two deep scratches about twelve inches apart upon its gleaming surface.

"That settles it," said Grogan. "Murder."

"Not a doubt of it," admitted Murphy.

"Well, boys, any developments?" asked the purser, returning. In his hand he held a wireless message.

"Ahem," began Murphy importantly, "it appears that Mr. Masters, while sleeping in his deck-chair was set upon—"

"By a miscreant who came up from the steerage deck by means of a rope ladder," finished Grogan.

"And how do you make that out?" demanded Burton.

"You see these scratches in the enamel of this railing," suggested Murphy. "The murderer stood on the railing of the deck below and tossed up a ladder with steel grappling hooks which caught here but slipped a little when he put his weight on them."

"That couldn't be done without several tries, and the noise ought to have awakened Masters," protested the purser.

"From the steward we learned that Masters drank a quart of champagne last night. He was in a stupor. Nothing would wake him," stated Grogan.

"There you have the crime in a nutshell," asserted Murphy. "The motive of course, was robbery."

"I congratulate you boys upon your acumen," said Burton gravely. "I have a long telegram from police headquarters in New York. It seems that Masters was tremendously involved financially and foresaw the crash in the stock market yesterday. He turned everything into cash, including funds entrusted to him by clients. It seems probable that he brought on board this ship half a million in Liberty and other negotiable bonds, and about one hundred fifty thousand cash.

"No doubt he didn't expect the panic to occur upon the heels of his departure. He planned to lose himself in Europe and be safe when the crash revealed his speculations. Headquarters suggests that, learning of the stock-market explosion, he realized he would be arrested when he stepped ashore at Cherbourg; he recognized that the game was up and went overboard."

"Did he go up to the wireless office to find out about the market?" demanded Grogan.

"No. He had no messages since leaving New York and the wireless men say he had asked them no questions."

"Then that theory is cockeyed," declared Grogan. "The man was murdered."

Murphy nodded.

"New York headquarters is mistaken in its theory," he asserted. "It is much more likely that some criminal learned that Masters was making off with a fortune, took passage on board, watched his chance, got up here, killed the swindler, collected the loot and then threw the body overboard."

Burton leaned over the bulwark. It was breast high and topped by a wide oak shelf. The rail of the steerage deck was only eight feet below.

"A man could stand on the rail down there and swing a rope ladder so that its hooks would catch on the inch piping here," he said. "If the murder theory is correct, that is how the killer made his entrance. He must have been a steerage passenger or one of the crew."

"You're sure Masters didn't deposit anything in the ship's safe?" asked Murphy.

"Nothing. He must have been afraid to let his stolen goods get out of his hands."

"Well, it's a cinch the thief isn't going to deposit the loot," said Grogan. "We'll go through the effects of every living soul on board, and when we find the bonds and the cash we'll have the murderer."

"Will you request by wireless the numbers of the bonds?" asked Murphy.

"Yes, though it is possible they won't be able to secure them. It doesn't follow that a steerage passenger killed Masters. A first-class passenger might have slipped down below very easily.

"Sure, there're more crooks in the first class than in the steerage, any time!" said Murphy. "We've got three days ahead of us. Time enough to find the loot without letting the passengers know we're peeking into their baggage."

"Did you learn anything else?" Burton asked.

"Nothing that I care to mention now," replied Murphy discreetly.

Grogan laughed nastily. "Which means he didn't learn a darn' thing," he observed.

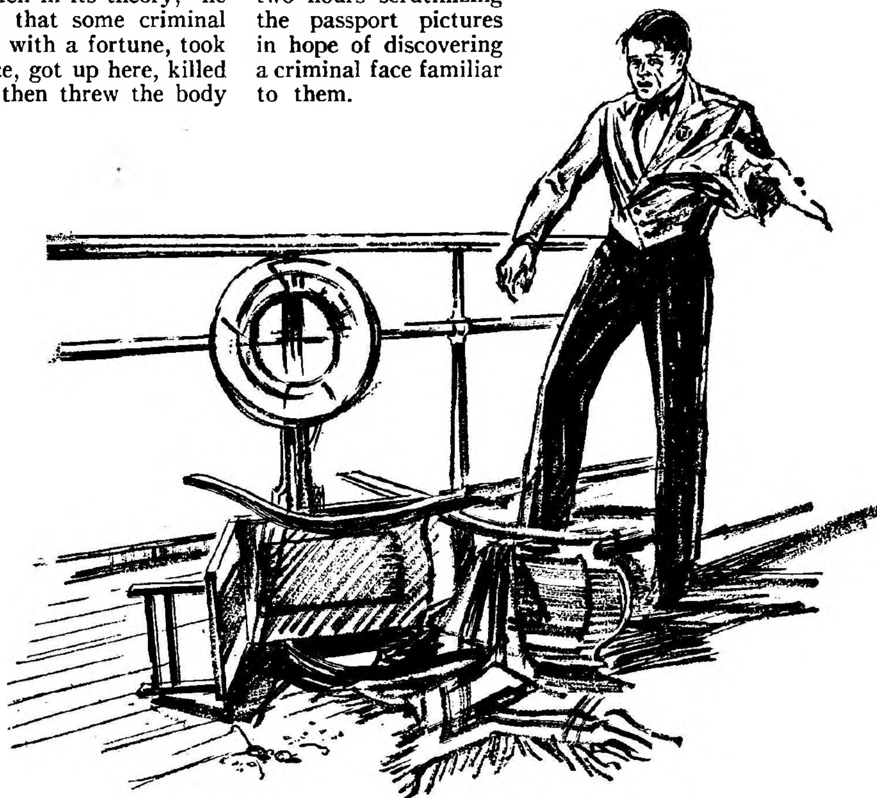
"Time will tell," replied Murphy sententiously. . . .

Despite the vast size of a modern express liner, it is almost impossible to conceal on board any object of interest to the ship's company. All cabins are constructed upon the same plan, and long experience has taught the stewards how to go over a room thoroughly and efficiently. They are expert in investigating baggage, and ordinary trunk and suitcase locks are at the locksmith's mercy.

A score of well-trained men began the search immediately.

Grogan and Murphy were agreed that the murderer was unlikely to be a member of the crew, because none of the crew was in a position to know that one of the first-class passengers had brought on board a fortune in cash and bonds which were practically cash. The killer was some one who knew all about Masters, some one who was aware that the banker was an absconder. He might be a clerk in the New York office who had followed Masters on board, or a criminal tipped off by an employee of Masters' bank-house—and he was likely to be a first-cabin passenger.

All passports were deposited in the purser's office and the detectives spent two hours scrutinizing the passport pictures in hope of discovering a criminal face familiar to them.



"The overturned deck-chair and the broken eyeglasses suggest foul play."

At five in the afternoon they were discussing the affair with Mary Gregor at the steerage main companionway.

Grogan and Murphy ate and slept in the second cabin, but were privileged to roam through all three classes in search of evil-doers. They had been spending much time recently in steerage where Miss Gregor welcomed them amiably but impartially.

The head stewardess was rather plump, with the high color of a Scottish country girl. Her eyes were as gray as the Highland skies, and her features small but well formed. As her age was twenty-six or seven, she was intelligent enough to appreciate substantial gentlemen in their late thirties, and she was not yet certain whether the Yankee or the Cockney Hibernian appealed to her more. Until she made up her mind, it was a fair field and no favors.

"There is ten thousand dollars for the man that finds him," said Murphy to the pretty stewardess. "The surety company in New York radioed the purser this afternoon that the return of the bonds was worth that much to them."

"And I suppose you gentlemen will split it," said Miss Gregor. "Ten thousand dollars! That's more than two thousand pun; it's a powerful lot of money!"

"We're not splitting it," Murphy replied, "unless we find the murderer together. I am investigating in my own way and Grogan is puttering about according to his lights."

"With ten thousand dollars," said Grogan significantly, "a man could settle down in a nice little cottage with the woman of his choice."

"He could that," declared Murphy with equal significance.

Miss Gregor turned a deeper rose-color.

"One gets tired following the sea," she said; "especially when ye must spend the voyage down in the bowels of the ship with only an hour or two in the evening to get a breath of fresh air on deck. —Good day to you, Mr. Findlay!"

She smiled at a man who came up from below as she was speaking.

"How are you, Miss Gregor?" he replied politely.

The eyes of the policemen followed him aggrievedly.

"Who the heck is he?" demanded Murphy.

"A steerage passenger, but quite a gentleman."

"And how might you know?" asked Grogan. "You don't be answering bells of men passengers!"

The sleuths began their investigations, each determined that the other should make no individual discovery.

"He's an American gentleman that I happened to get talking with on deck last night," she replied.

"A gentleman—and in the steerage?"

"I suppose *you* would be traveling first-cabin, if you had to pay for it!" she retorted.

"What time last night?" asked Murphy aggressively.

"Oh, it might be one o'clock. It was hot in my cabin and I went up on deck to get a breath of fresh air."

"At one in the morning? Maybe you had a date with this bird," commented Grogan jealously.

"And if I did, isn't it my business?" she replied tartly. "As a matter of fact, I was sitting on my bench and he came round the corner of the deck house and almost fell over me. He said 'Excuse me' and I said, 'To be sure,' and we chatted for a while."

Grogan and Murphy exchanged suspicious glances.

"Port or starboard side?" demanded Grogan.

"Let's see. Port, I think."

"Ah-ha," exclaimed Murphy. "And was he carrying anything in his hands?"

"He was not."

"Did he have anything under his coat?"

Miss Gregor laughed derisively. "Oh, you policemen!" she exclaimed. "To be sure he didn't, as well as a lady could see."

"Well," said Grogan indiscreetly, "your boy friend had probably just come from murdering Mr. Masters on his private deck."

"You ass!" exclaimed Murphy.

Miss Gregor rose. "In the first place, the man is old enough to be my father. In the next place, he is a gentleman and very pleasant-spoken and, in the third place, I consider your remarks insulting."

"Nevertheless," said Grogan. "We'll have a peek in his cabin while he is on deck. You stay here, Mary, and ring that buzzer three times if he comes down from above."

"The Lord give ye sense," she replied. "The master-at-arms went through his cabin two hours ago."

"A murder was committed at about one o'clock last night, Miss Gregor," said Murphy, "and everybody on deck at that time is under suspicion."

"And maybe *I* am under suspicion," said Mary Gregor angrily.

"No, because you're a bit too hefty to climb up to the private decks," replied Grogan with an exasperating grin. "Come on, Sassenach."

"Don't you call me Sassenach, you damned Yankee!" cried the angry Murphy.

Mary Gregor reseated herself, ready to obey what was actually an order, and kept her eyes upon the staircase. The detectives entered the small plain two-berth stateroom assigned to Mr. Findlay alone. They saw a cheap blue serge suit hanging in his locker and an imitation-leather suitcase unlocked on the floor. Two minutes convinced them that no fortune was concealed in those quarters, but Grogan's sharp eyes observed something which Murphy appeared to overlook.

While the blue serge suit was marked with the name of a ready-to-wear clothes shop, there were four shirts in the bag and each bore the imprimatur of a shirt-maker on Madison Avenue, New York. Grogan, being a New Yorker, was aware that as a New Yorker grows in affluence he shifts from ready-made suits and coats to the product of a good tailor—but not until wealth crowds itself upon him does he order shirts from an expensive shirt-maker. Grogan knew that about seventy-five per cent of American millionaires still wear ready-made shirts.

Here was a steerage passenger on the *Gargantua* who wore twenty-five-dollar suits, but ordered his shirts from a merchant who charged fifteen dollars per shirt! He glanced at the cuffs in search of a monogram, but they were unmarked.

Murphy also had observed the name of the shirt-maker but was unaware of its importance. In London most men in the white-collar class wear custom-made shirts; in fact he wore them himself. Thus his visit to the quarters of Mr. Findlay appeared to profit him nothing, though the New York detective was thrilling with excitement. In preparation for the voyage Findlay had outfitted himself with cheap ready-made clothes, but he had thoughtlessly thrown into his suitcase several of the shirts he was accustomed to wear in New York.

And he had been on the steerage promenade deck at one in the morning. On British ships the crew discourage passengers from remaining on deck by turning on the

hose at midnight. Findlay could not have found it comfortable to pace wet decks until one A. M. Why had he not turned in?

While there was no way of knowing when Masters had been tossed overboard, it was probably between midnight and dawn. And, as Masters had not retired, it was more likely to be about one o'clock than later.

Grogan saw with satisfaction that Murphy appeared to have dropped his suspicion of Findlay and had resumed his seat on the bench beside the stewardess. Much as he disliked to leave the Londoner in her company, he had things to do.

"I'll be seeing you later, when you're in better company," he said.

He went on deck and mingled with the steerage passengers. He was looking for Findlay, and found him in the smoking-room. The suspect was standing at the bar and as Grogan stepped up to order a beer Findlay selected a cigar—it was a brand which cost, on the ship, twenty-five cents. Suspicious! Steerage passengers smoked ten-cent cigars or stogies.

"Nice trip so far," he said as he sipped his beer.

Findlay looked him over superciliously, seemed about to turn away without a reply, then thought better of it.

"Not bad," he answered shortly.

"I'm from New York. Name of Grogan. Where are you from?"

"I'm a New Yorker," admitted Findlay. He walked over to a table and seated himself. Grogan took his beer to another table and studied him covertly.

The fellow had a deep tan. His hair was black. About his face there was something a bit familiar—probably the passport picture. He was a man who might have seen better days and retained expensive habits, such as the custom-made shirts and Havana cigars.

Grogan had really nothing on Findlay. His quarters were incapable of concealing the funds taken from Masters, and the stuff was too bulky to be carried on his person. It was obvious from the hang of his coat that his pockets were comparatively empty.

The detective left the smoking-room and proceeded to the steerage office of the purser. It was closed but there was a light inside, and he tapped on the door. It was opened by an assistant purser.

"I'm wondering if a man named Findlay deposited anything in your strong box today?" Grogan inquired.

"Don't think so." The assistant purser opened his book. "Nothing deposited by any steerage passenger since directly after sailing."

"That's all I wanted to know. Did Burton send back the steerage passports?"

"Yes."

"Dig me out Findlay's."

He opened the little red book handed him by the assistant and studied the photograph of the suspect. It was Findlay, all right. Born in America; age forty-eight; father's name John—his birthplace, Glasgow, Scotland; occupation, clerk, at present unemployed. Residence 569 Flatbush Ave., Brooklyn.

A clerk—he might have been employed by Masters and knew all about the murdered man. He had been lurking in the vicinity about the time the crime was committed. Unfortunately there was no shred of actual evidence against him.

Grogan sighed and returned to the main steerage companionway, where he found Murphy still with Mary Gregor. The Cork man scowled when Grogan seated himself at her other side.

"Been wasting your time," he sneered.

"I'm hoping you've been wasting yours," said Grogan significantly.

"Mr. Murphy was telling me how much he could do with ten thousand dollars," said Mary, smiling sweetly.

"If I had ten thousand dollars I'd put it in my wife's name—if I had a wife," said Grogan with supreme guile.

"And very sensible of you, I'm sure, if you had the right kind of a wife," said the girl warmly.

"The young lady I have in mind is the right kind," declared Tom.

"I may say that his prospects of ever having a large sum of money are very slight," Murphy warned the young woman. "This case is most mysterious. The ship has been searched thoroughly and nothing has been found. No ignorant New York flatfoot will solve this mystery."

"I suppose all will be discovered by a thick-headed London bobby," sneered Grogan. "Fearlessly I'll be leaving you in his company, Miss Gregor. There is work to be done aboard this ship."

"Where are you going?" asked Murphy apprehensively.

"Up to see Mr. Burton and find out what the wireless does be telling him."

"Well, I'll be along shortly."

"Good evening to ye, Mr. Grogan," said the stewardess.

Grogan, however, went no farther than the steerage purser's office, where he ascertained that the inside cabin upon the same alley as that occupied by Findlay was untenanted. There he planted himself. Having locked the door, he proceeded to bore a tiny hole in the flimsy partition, and waited in the dark for four hours before Findlay entered his room and prepared to retire. But there was nothing in his manner to arouse suspicion; Grogan crept out of his hiding-place about two in the morning and went disconsolately to his own bunk.

"Being a bit unscrupulous, Mary opened the envelope — and near fainted."

During all this time the *Gargantua* was moving steadily onward. While she cut through the waves the radio twinkled almost continuously, mostly in regard to the disappearance of John K. Masters, and what was even more important, the fortune that had disappeared with him. Burton was in receipt of a flood of instructions from both New York and London. Both cities agreed that it was preposterous to think that the money went overboard with John K. Masters. Somebody on board had it, either in his possession or safely hidden; it was up to the Captain and

purser and the ship's detectives to find it, and thereby lay hands on the killer. The widow of John K. Masters offered ten thousand dollars from her private fortune for the capture of his murderer.

Burton lay awake in his berth, too nervous for slumber. There were fifteen hundred passengers and six hundred members of the crew—and the dunder-headed detectives hadn't found a suspect among them.

Where could the stolen money be hidden? The search had been secret but thorough. There wasn't a place on the steamer unknown to the officers where a bottle of whisky could be concealed, let alone a fairly large package of money and securities, and the personal effects of every passenger had been carefully inspected.

Mary Gregor was lying awake that night in the unventilated little room allotted to the head stewardess in the steerage department. On the chair beside her bed was a folded slip of paper. Her light was on and occasionally she opened the paper and studied it and folded it again and sighed. It was hard for a girl to make up her mind when her whole future was at stake.

Tim Murphy was a fine steady man and he loved her. A woman could be sure that he would be faithful; but life with him would not be exciting. He was one of the "black Irish" and he had absorbed a lot of English ideas. He would get on in the world if he laid hands on a bit of capital, but he would never be liberal.

Tom Grogan, now, was a different kind of Irishman. He was rollicking and open-handed, and he liked his liquor too much. If a girl had to marry an Irishman, was it better to be the wife of a careless spendthrift or a dour but careful man? If the wife of the open-handed Hibernian happened to be Scotch and a strong character, much might be done. Oh, it made her head ache to think about it! She picked up the folded paper and pushed it under her pillow. There was much to be said for Tim, after all. In the morning she would ask him a question.

She came upon Tim Murphy about ten in the morning. He was in earnest conference with a steward named Smith and he merely nodded curtly at her pleasant smile. Mary bridled.

Ten minutes later he found her at her station. He was obviously excited.

"I'm going to show you a thing or two, my girl," he exclaimed. "You'll soon be learning that it's a head I have on my shoulders."

"I wouldn't be doubting it, Tim," she said. "Tell me something, Mr. Murphy. If by any chance you earned that ten thousand dollars we were talking about last night, would you give it to your wife as a dowry?"

"Eh? Give a woman ten thousand dollars to make ducks and drakes with?" he asked in astonishment. "I'd use it to keep a roof over her head and food in her mouth, and maybe a trifle for a hat or a dress now and then."

"And very kind of you, I'm sure," she said demurely.

He laid his hand on her shoulder. "I'll be telling you something. I'm going to get that reward, my girl."

"Good luck to you," said Mary, "and good morning. I've my work to do."

FIVE minutes later Tim Murphy burst into the offices of Purser Burton.

"I would like you to accompany me to the steerage, Mr. Burton," he said pompously, "and be present when I place under arrest the murderer of John K. Masters."

"What? You've found him?" exclaimed the purser, both astounded and delighted.

"Not a bit of doubt of it."

"Well," said Burton cautiously, "before you arrest anybody you'd better explain to me what evidence you have. Even a steerage passenger could make a peck of trouble for us."

Murphy explained in detail and at length.

"It's very circumstantial," Burton decided. "But we are in a hole and we'll take a chance."

The detective led him through the ship to the steerage quarters and at the main companion beckoned to the steward on duty.

"Is Mr. Findlay in his cabin or on deck?"

"In his cabin, sir. He has just finished his breakfast."

"What's up?" demanded Tom Grogan, bobbing up from nowhere.

"I am about to nab a murderer in his hole," said Tim with dignity. "You may come along to see how such things are done, Grogan, but I call Mr. Burton to witness that I am entitled to all the credit and the reward."

"I'll give you all the credit if you've actually got the killer," Grogan replied. "Who is he?"

"Findlay," replied Murphy. "Come on."

THEY plunged into the steerage passenger's cabin without knocking. Findlay looked apprehensive at their entrance and his eyes betrayed alarm when Murphy covered him with a pistol.

"I arrest you for the murder of John K. Masters," rasped the detective.

"Eh? I never heard of him!" stammered Findlay. "May I ask what grounds you have for such a charge?"

"I'd like to hear them myself," said Grogan dryly.

"You have been behaving suspiciously since you came on board," said Murphy. "The first two nights your bed was not slept in. And at a quarter of one yesterday morning you were seen to drop something over the rail of the port side of the steerage promenade deck."

"I don't remember having anything to drop," said Findlay calmly.

"Grogan," said Murphy, "you agree with me that Masters was murdered by a man who came up from the steerage deck by means of a rope ladder with steel grappling hooks on it."

"No doubt a ladder was used," admitted Grogan.

"Well, a deck-hand named Welch was standing in the shadow about twenty feet away and he said the thing looked like a snake. Being curious, he stepped to the rail and looked over as Findlay turned away, and he observed that the ladder had not fallen overboard but one of its hooks had caught on the hinge of the side port below. He got a rope, swung over the side and retrieved it. Then he turned it over to the fourth officer who put it in his locker. As the navigating officers were not told about the murder, Mr. Burton, the fourth officer thought nothing of it, but I dug up the deck-hand and I have the ladder in my possession."

"I deny having such a thing—and you can't prove it," said Findlay. "I was not on deck at that time."

"I can produce Miss Mary Gregor, head stewardess of the steerage department who was up there and talked with you, and the night watchman on this alley who saw you sneak in at one in the morning."

"But what was my motive?"

"The theft of a large sum in bonds and American currency from the quarters of Mr. Masters."

"In which case I would have them in my possession," said Findlay. "You are welcome to search. I protest against this arrest, Mr. Purser."

"I'm sorry if a mistake has been made," said the purser coldly. "But it seems to be proved that you were in the vicinity of the crime. A rope ladder was used to ascend to Mr. Masters' private deck."

"Put out your hands," commanded Murphy, as he pro-

"Put out your hands," commanded Murphy. "You are charged with murder and you might as well confess."

duced steel bracelets. "You are charged with murder and you might as well confess where you hid the loot."

"Hold up, Tim," said Grogan, smiling. "You can't arrest this man for killing Masters!"

"And why not, I'd like to know?" demanded Murphy.

"Because he happens to be John K. Masters in person."

"By George, he is!" shouted Burton. "He has stained his face and dyed his hair and done something to his nose, and shaved off his mustache—but I recognize him. Put away the handcuffs, Murphy. There is no charge against this gentleman—yet."

"But—but—how can that be?" gasped Murphy, crimson with rage, and shaking with astonishment and chagrin.

"I admit that I am Masters," said the supposed Findlay. "I am sorry if I have caused you a lot of trouble, Mr. Burton. I hoped that it would be assumed that I had committed suicide. By your leave I shall return to my own quarters, as I find these uncomfortable."

"I have orders to take possession of your funds, Mr. Masters," stated the purser. "There is a warrant out for your arrest in New York as an absconder."

Masters shrugged his shoulders. "I have been unfortunate," he replied, "but I am not a thief. I spent my last thousands in purchasing a ticket on this steamer."

"Two tickets," corrected Grogan. "First cabin for John K. Masters and steerage for John Findlay."

"And where do you get your information?" demanded Tim Murphy truculently.

Grogan grinned. "You'd be surprised! Mr. Burton, Masters came on board with a steerage passport, secured his quarters and went ashore. He came back in his own person, took possession of his de luxe suite, and presented a letter of introduction to you. He figured no attention would be paid to his absence in the steerage the first night, and the second night he made up as Findlay, went out on the private deck, turned over a deck-chair, stepped on his glasses and went down to the steerage deck by means of a rope ladder."

"You seem to be well informed, my man," said Masters.

"But why did he do that?" asked the bewildered purser.

"He expected an explosion in New York and wanted people to think he had committed suicide," explained Grogan. "He had the personality of John Findlay all ready to put on and he planned to go ashore at Cherbourg with no questions asked. Right, Mr. Masters?"

"I am very curious to know how you found all this out," Masters countered.

"Look here," said Murphy. "I suspected this man, Mr. Burton. Maybe I was wrong in thinking him a murderer, but I led you to the chap who is in possession of the stolen money. I'm entitled to have the reward."

"Aside from a few hundred dollars I have no money," said Masters coolly.

"And how did you expect to get along in Europe?" demanded Murphy.

"I don't think we shall go into that. May I return to the quarters in the first cabin for which I have paid?"

"Yes," said the purser. "But your private deck will be locked and there will be a guard outside your door. You are under arrest."

"Charged with theft? To convict me you will have to produce the funds I am alleged to have stolen," replied Masters confidently. "I am ruined, discredited, perhaps, but I am not an embezzler. So, since no murder was committed and there are no stolen funds in my possession, you will have to whistle for your reward, my very clever detective." He smiled ironically at Tom Grogan.

Grogan thrust a hand into his breast pocket and drew forth a slip of paper.

"Take a look at this, Mr. Purser," he requested, "but don't let the figures dazzle you. 'Tis only Frog money."

"Fifteen million francs!" shouted Burton. "A draft upon the Credit Lyonnaise for fifteen million francs, payable to John Findlay."

"Why, damn you!" shouted Masters. His face distorted with fury, he hurled himself upon Grogan. Tim Murphy pounced upon him but the man was insane with rage and it required all the strength of both detectives to subdue him and slip the handcuffs on him.

"We'll have to put him in the brig," said Burton. "The man's insane."

"You've tampered with the mails!" shrieked Masters. "I'll have you jailed for that."

"Lock him up, men," commanded Burton, "and come immediately to my office, Grogan. I want to know how you secured this draft, and how you discovered the masquerade."

"Are you going to split the reward?" demanded Murphy.

"I'm afraid my *fiancée*, Miss Mary Gregor, won't let me," replied the New York Irishman with an exasperating grin.

"It was like this, Mr. Burton," explained Grogan when he was closeted with the purser a quarter of an hour later. "When Masters came down on the steerage deck he dropped his rope ladder overboard, just as poor Tim discovered. He went around the corner of the deck-house and came upon Mary Gregor, the head stewardess, who was taking a bit of fresh air by her lonely. She was sitting

on a bench with her plaid spread out on it because the bench was wet.

"Masters had to apologize and then he had to talk to her so she wouldn't think it queer that he was roaming around. He sat down beside her and they chatted a few minutes and then went downstairs.

"Now both Tim and me are sweet on Mary and the next morning we sort of confided in her about the affair of the private deck. While we were talking Findlay came along and spoke to her, so, being jealous-like, we wanted to know about him. When we found out at what time and where he met her, both Tim and me got suspicious and we put her on the watch while we searched his room. I twigged he wasn't what he seemed, because he had shirts made by the most expensive shirt-maker in New York. I didn't think Murphy was wise—but he is smarter than I gave him credit for. We each kept our ideas to ourselves. I did a lot of prowling about but it didn't get me anything and I guess Tim had a little better luck.

"Now here comes the queer thing. Last night Mary picked up the plaid that she dropped in a corner of her cabin and what fell out but a letter addressed and stamped. It wasn't any letter of hers, so she looked at it and seen it was addressed to John Findlay at the Ritz Hotel in Paris. A steerage passenger going to the Ritz!

"Being a woman and therefore unscrupulous, and knowing that Tim and me thought he might have something to do with the murder, she opened the envelope and near fainted when she saw the draft for fifteen million francs. The clever kid got out her pencil and divided fifteen million by twenty-five, which is the number of francs in a dollar, and found it made six hundred thousand dollars, about the amount Masters was supposed to have swiped.

"She sat down and worked it all out, and this morning, when he was taking his bath, she sneaked into his cabin and examined his medicine-bottles and found that one was a skin-stain and another a hair-dye, and that proved her theory."

"But how did the letter come into her possession?"

"Masters had it in his pocket when he went down the rope ladder and his exertions probably pushed it up a bit. He sat beside Mary on the plaid and it fell out of his pocket. She rolled it up in her plaid when she went below and there it lay all day."

"Yet he didn't seem worried about its disappearance."

"Sure, it was a stamped and mailed envelope. It was a hundred to one that anybody finding it would drop it in the letter-box. And if it had dropped overboard from the pocket when he was going down the ladder he could send for a duplicate when he got to Paris."

"Then it was really Miss Gregor who discovered that Masters and Findlay were the same person."

"What a head that girl has on her shoulders!" Grogan agreed.

Burton laughed. "Then it is Miss Gregor who should receive the reward of ten thousand dollars."

"Well," said Grogan, "it's all in the family. But Mary wants me to have it, to show that swell-headed Tim Murphy who's the real detective on this ship."

The purser's eyes twinkled. "I think we should discharge both of you and engage Miss Gregor as ship's detective," he commented.

"She won't be available. We're marrying when we get to London," replied Grogan. "I'm resigning, myself. We're coming back first cabin, and then we're going to open a detective agency in New York."

"I'll send the good news ashore," Burton said. "When you return to New York the reward will be waiting."

"Have the check made out to Mrs. Thomas Grogan," requested Grogan.

NERVE

A grippingly human story of great courage—of death-defying risk undertaken without glamour or hope of glory, but with cool nerve and grim determination.

By LELAND S. JAMIESON

Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould

THREE thousand feet below, dotted here and there with mottled fields, the earth looked peaceful. It looked inviting, a thing of rest. Yet, even in his agonized thoughts, Larry MacDonald did not succumb to the urge to loose his hold and fall. It would have been so simple, hanging there to the wing strut of his monoplane, to let go—to fall, tumbling and rolling, until the surface of the earth enveloped him in sudden death.

Like a man on the verge of drowning, he wanted to relax, to rest his aching muscles. He would die, to be sure, but he did not fear death. It was for Walgren and Bobby Brennam that he fought, rather than himself. For should he let go, they too would meet death, and they would suffer more than he in going to it. They were helpless, dependent upon him.

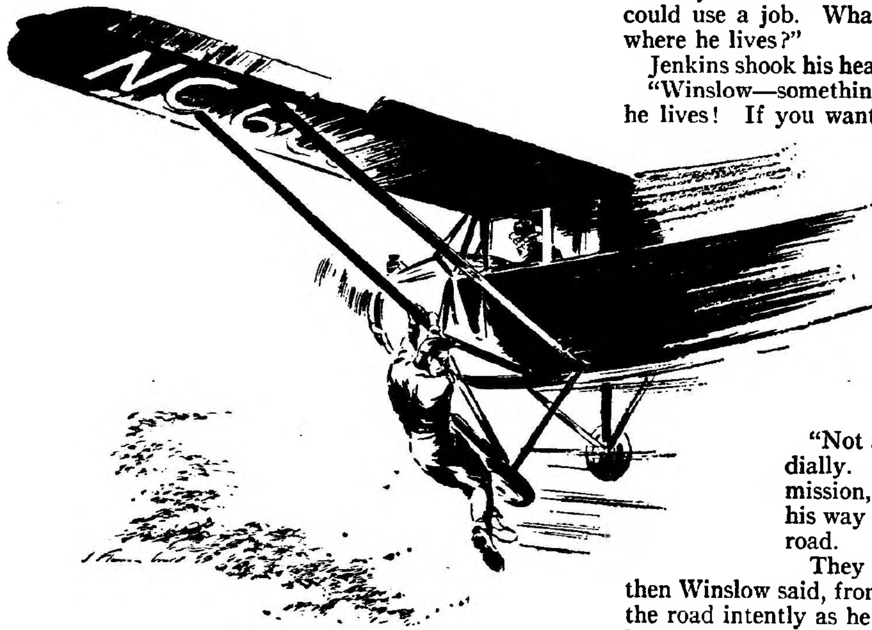
Therefore he must fight, just as he had fought in untold battles of the past; he must climb up that strut to a safe position, must get the ship down. He tried to think, but failed; tried to swing his thoughts away from the enticing chasm that threatened to suck him down. His arm felt as if it were being torn from its socket, his fingers grew weak from the continuous strain of holding on. Will-power, that was the stuff. Hang there a little longer, try to think, try to whip away the hand of Eternity that clutched so eagerly at his feet.

A brief thought of how he had got in this position came to him, and he grimaced. Yet he would not have retraced his steps had he been able. He would have avoided the thing that was going to cost his life now, but otherwise he would do again as he had done with Winslow and the experiment they were making. . . .

That was in keeping with MacDonald. He would bet his life on the flip of a coin, or his shirt against yours—so long as there was a point and a purpose to it. He proved that he was an active, aggressive pilot, afraid of neither man nor the devil, when he pushed the Kohkanen Expedition's plane up through the tractless, flooded wastes of the upper Amazon. He had proved it time after time. As a result of these proofs, he was scarred from crashes until a friend who had not seen him for ten years did not recognize him.

He was independent, a man's man, bowing to no one. His was a frame of mind that didn't care what you thought of him, whether you liked him or associated with him—and being so, he had the friendship of nearly every man he ever met. He had some enemies, but they respected him, which is all any man can ask of his enemies.

It was spring when Mac had come home to San Antonio, and the flying business was dull. The Rand people, operating mail and passenger lines, were losing money steadily; the photographic gang that worked for Tobin was putting in hours every day, but no additional pilots were needed.



Wildly, in an agony of fear, he clutched with the other hand, touched the wing strut—caught it!

The lack of a job didn't worry Mac, however. He had enough money already to start himself in business on the field, if he wanted to—which he didn't.

The fifth day after Mac returned, and while he was sitting in the office of the city's hangar with his feet on the manager's desk, a man, dressed in tweeds and wearing horn-rimmed glasses, was brought in by a mechanic. He unobtrusively took a seat by the office entrance. Mac was spinning a yarn of Guatemalan adventure, and Jenkins the manager was interested. Neither of them noticed the newcomer. A minute passed, and Mac talked on. Two minutes, then three. The visitor cleared his throat. Jenkins looked around.

"I'm sorry!" he exclaimed, rising. "Have I kept you waiting?"

"Not long. Winslow is my name, sir. I have a proposition that might be interesting to you."

The manager led the way into his private office, a cubbyhole set back in the lean-to of the hangar, and nodding soberly to Mac to wait, closed the door. Five minutes later he reappeared, shook hands with his visitor, and resumed his seat.

"A nut!" he laughed, when the other had gone. "A funny old bird who has an idea of fixing up a plane to use in taking some kind of serum to towns around here when people get bitten by rattlesnakes this summer. Wants me to get the ship for him. Phew—he damn' near talked my arm off! Couldn't get rid of him—wanted to argue with me all the time."

"Not a bad idea, that," Mac commented, but with little interest. "Probably save a lot of lives."

"It would cost a barrel of money," Jenkins demurred. "Couldn't do it."

"Why not? Some lives are worth a lot of money."

"To some people, yes; not to me."

Mac slowly pulled his feet down from the table. "How much is this guy paying?"

"Didn't ask him that—didn't get around to it. He's just another one of these modocs who's looking for a free ride in an airplane!"

"Maybe not." Mac arose and lighted a cigarette. "I could use a job. What's this guy's name, again? Know where he lives?"

Jenkins shook his head.

"Winslow—something or other. Hell, I didn't ask where he lives! If you want to see him, he's probably outside somewhere, ogling the ships. I'm telling you now, Mac, don't cook up a deal with him and come trying to promote one of *my* airplanes."

Mac laughed softly. "I'm going to promote one of my own," he said, and walked out.

When he came upon Winslow clambering into his car, he remarked casually: "Headed into town? Mind if I ride along?"

"Not at all, sir," Winslow murmured cordially. He fought the gears into noisy submission, turned the car around and threaded his way cautiously through the traffic on the road.

They rode in silence for a mile or so: then Winslow said, from the corner of his mouth, watching the road intently as he talked: "Connected with the field here, are you?"

"Pilot," Mac reported. "Not connected with anybody."

"Pilot, eh? Well, can you tell me why there should be any objection to my using a plane for transportation between this place and surrounding towns—when I need to get there in a hurry?"

"Don't see any. Why?"

"I work with snakes," Winslow explained. "I trap 'em and extract their venom for use in making serum for snakebites. It's important work, and I can save lives with it if I can get transportation by air from my laboratory to the victim—quick transportation, with no delay. I don't need a special ship, but I must be able to get into the air immediately when I get a call. This fellow at the field wasn't very encouraging. I'm on my way now to Kelly Field; perhaps the Army will coöperate." There was a determined set to his jaw, a ring in his voice that Mac liked.

"Why mess around these guys here?" he inquired. "Why don't you buy a plane? Then you'll have it all the time."

Winslow considered this, then slowly shook his head. "I couldn't afford it."

"Make it pay for itself—charge a price for this serum, or whatever it is."

"I hadn't expected to sell the serum. I'm doing that part of it for the lives it will save."

Mac laughed ironically. "Most people would pay to save their lives," he chuckled. "Tell you what, you figure out how many times you'll have to use the ship, and I'll figure what I could be doing with it while you're not using it. I might buy a ship myself and charge you a salary for flying it—plus operating charges."

"Would you consider a commission?"

"How much?" asked Mac, practical as always.

"We'll figure it out—whatever you think is right."

"I'm hired," Mac replied. . . .

The ship was a three-place cabin job that would cruise six hundred miles on a tank of gas and would fly at better than a hundred miles an hour all day long. It was a suped-up proposition, the building of which Mac himself had overseen in the Rand company factory. It was small, and could get in and out of little fields with ease—a necessary adjunct to the work at hand.

There was a small amount of surgical equipment in a specially constructed compartment in the rear of the cabin

Mac got the engine started and the plane was ready when the Doctor and Brennam brought the boy out.

—scalpels for lancing and cutting around the fang-holes in the victim's skin. Winslow had argued for a stretcher, but Mac had vetoed the idea. The plane was to be used for other things in addition to carrying rattlers' victims.

Some pilots on the field laughingly called it the "serum wagon." Others, more doubtful of its usefulness, and knowing Mac's past reputation for hard luck and crashes, put a time limit of one month before it would be wrecked. Regardless of these joking thrusts, the plane, with Mac and Winslow, and their object, received a large amount of favorable publicity. Residents in outlying rural communities were urged to make use of this new implement of science—to call on it when there was any need. In a businesslike way Mac notified doctors in towns and hamlets a hundred miles around his base, letting them know the things they could expect in a hurried call for help.

In May there was one call, a belated telephone message from a town more than a hundred miles away, and Mac and Winslow raced out of Winburn Field within twenty minutes after the word came in. But they were too late, and Mac, for the first time in his life, saw the victim of a rattler writhing in death.

There were five calls in June, and five lives saved. Larry MacDonald put his ship into impossible fields, up-wind, down-wind, in dry and in wet weather. There was constant danger in the work, for one misjudgment, one failure to estimate properly the speed of the plane in taking off or landing in the rutted, rocky fields in which it operated, meant disaster—not for Mac or Winslow, but for the helpless man or woman or child who awaited aid.

It was always a race, a struggle against time from the minute the call came until the victim was out of danger. It was interesting work, for it was an effort to use new methods against the ravages of an age-old menace. Mac had lived his life in struggle, and he liked it, grew to love the suspense of waiting just before he reached the field on the outbound trips.

It was part of Winslow's chosen work to capture live rattlers; it was from their venom that he made the precious serum. He worked at it constantly, crawling under houses, into caves and crevices where the snakes were apt to be. In doing this he had never been bitten—until the last of that June.

The snake that got him was coiled on a girder of a house floor. Winslow was after another one close by. The first warning he got was a slight rattle near his shoulder; almost instantaneously the big reptile flashed out and sank its fangs into Winslow's arm below the elbow—not once, but twice—before the man could move.

Winslow captured that snake too, and came crawling out with both of them. He shoved them into the wire cage he carried for that purpose, and placed a tourniquet around his arm. Then, as calmly as if taking a tablet of medicine, he slashed deep into the wound and made a cross above it. The blood spurted out, trickled down his arm.

He knew it was a serious case, and he wasted no time in getting to a hospital and to medical attention. A shot of his own serum stopped the fermentation of the blood, but he was to spend days in the hospital, he knew, before the effects were completely gone.

An hour after the accident, Larry MacDonald, who had left the hospital only a few moments before, was in Winslow's office getting some papers for the older man. The telephone rang. Mac answered it, then grabbed a pencil for his notation. The connection completed, the voice came clearly over the wire.

"This is Max Brennam—twelve miles south of Tilden. My boy just got hisself bit by a copperhead. He's pretty bad. Can you bring some of that there serum down?"

"Wait a minute. Let me get a map," Mac said into the instrument. He stepped quickly to a cabinet near by, and located the town of Tilden, seventy miles due south of San Antonio. "You're twelve miles south of Tilden?" he verified. "Near the river?"

"Jest a mile beyond the river—that's right."

"How about a landing-field—got one down there that I can get into with an airplane?"

"Use my potato patch," the man replied. "East of the house a little piece."

"Put a sheet out on the ground," Mac directed, "so I'll know the place."

"You'll be right down?"

"Fifty minutes," Mac promised.

He left the phone, grabbed the satchel that Winslow kept in the office and used on calls, and hurried toward the elevator. The hospital was five minutes by car. He sped there, and asked Winslow quickly what to do.

"You'll want a surgeon, of course," Winslow considered. He called a nurse, gave quick directions. The woman left precipitately, and a moment later a tall, broad-shouldered man, in his early fifties, came into the room. "Doctor Walgren, Mac," Winslow introduced him. "Wally, Mac needs you to go out with him on a snake-bite case—right now. You'll only be gone a couple of hours, probably." He explained the things to do.

"I'm ready," the Doctor said. "Let's get started—speed's the main thing now."

They reached the car, got in and drove madly through traffic toward the field. Mac had called the hangar before going to the hospital, and when they got there the ship was on the flying-line, warm, ready. Mac shoved Doctor Walgren in, climbed in himself and took off in a running turn.

They roared out of San Antonio at a hundred and twenty miles an hour, flew across vast areas of cotton, and on into

the mesquite and sagebrush lands beyond. The motor was purring sweetly, the propeller beating a pulsating song against the wind. Mile after mile slipped behind them—mile after mile of unmapped, unpopulated land. Here and there a flock of sheep scurried through the brush at their approach; now and again a few head of steers stampeded as they flew over, wheels almost touching the highest trees.

Tilden, Texas, sits in a little valley on the Frio River. Beyond it to the south is a low ridge, and beyond that is the ranch where Mac was going. It was a typical ranch—a low house, scattered buildings, a wind-mill and a water-tank. To the east was a clearing in the brush; garden truck and vegetables were planted there.

Mac passed Tilden on his left, and bore on. He looked ahead now for the cluster of buildings and the white marker which he sought; and as he flew he checked his time. Twelve miles—ten minutes, at the speed he now was making.

Then he saw a spot of white against the dark gray of the earth, and circled quickly around the place, estimating it carefully. The rather strong wind was in the south, and the field's length was east and west.

He came in slow and low, holding the plane up with his motor until he cleared the north boundary obstruction; then he cut the throttle quickly and flopped the ship down. It struck hard, rolled roughly, and, responding to the brakes, stopped within thirty feet of the south fence.

Mac jumped out and ran quickly to meet Brennam. Doctor Walgren followed.

"He's bad," Brennam said worriedly. "Awful bad! I didn't have no whisky in the house, and there aint a doctor this side of Tilden. My wife's got the automobile and I didn't have no way to get in after the Doc. He don't answer the phone at all."

"Where is the lad?" Doctor Walgren asked.

"Inside." Brennam turned and led the way at a brisk trot. "I got his laig tied up as good as I could make 'er," he explained on the way, "but it seems like that poison's working awful fast."

As the trio approached the rancher's house, Mac heard a low moan. "Thet's him, Doc!" Brennam exclaimed. "I tell you now these here snake-bites is serious. Don't spare no expense to take care of my boy, Doc."

Walgren muttered some reply, assured the man that there was no great danger. Mac, however, knew the true value of these words of consolation: he had seen a man die from snake venom not a month before!

BOBBY BRENNAM was lying on a worn cot in a back bedroom of the house; he smiled weakly when Doctor Walgren entered the room, followed by the other two. He was about twelve, as brown as tanned leather—a tough little lad. Mac saw that he was game, but he also saw from his experience with Winslow on similar cases, that Bobby had but slight chance of overcoming the effects of the deadly poison.

The boy had been wearing overalls which, rolled up, had left his legs bare up to his knees. The snake had sunk its fangs into the fleshy part of the calf. The leg was now twice its normal size, and badly discolored. The lad did not complain, but moaned slightly now and then, and watched Walgren.

The physician worked with his instrument-bag a moment, pulling out a scalpel and several small bottles of stuff that Mac knew contained serum and permanganate. Then he turned to the boy.

"This may hurt a little, sonny," he said. "But we've got to do it—quickly. Get your hands tight on the edge of the cot, there, and hold on. That's the boy!"

He made a deep incision into the wound; then another, crossing it. These cross-like cuts he made at intervals surrounding the point where the fangs had entered, and into each he placed crystals of permanganate. Bobby Brennam sobbed a little at the pain, turned pale, and tears rolled from his eyes; but he did not cry out.

"That oxidizes the venom," Walgren explained, adjusting a tourniquet just below the knee. "Now for an injection of this serum, sonny."

The boy submitted once again. "It cain't hurt any worse'n the other!" he exclaimed.

DOCTOR WALGREN worked for fifteen minutes, then called Mac and Brennam into another room.

"It's pretty late for me to do much good," he stated quietly. "The thing we've got to do is get this lad to a hospital—where he can get the right attention. He's in a bad way."

"You cain't fix him up?" Brennam questioned. He was shaking, the leathery tan of his face was pallid. "I thought I'd get me some whisky from Tilden soon as the old lady gets back. There's a good still back in the hills near there, and a big shot might help out some."

"You can't save your boy's life with whisky," Walgren said gravely. "He may die from the effects of the poison; even if he doesn't, there's danger of infection—complications—later on. We'd better take him in."

"All right, Doc; I guess you know best."

Walgren nodded to Mac, and the latter proceeded to the plane. He got the engine started, and was ready by the time Walgren and Brennam brought the boy out, carrying him between them. They put him in the cabin. Walgren got in, and Mac was ready. Brennam stood at one side, sober, apparently stoical; but he was actually almost on the verge of hysteria.

Mac had come into the field into the wind, but he could not get out that way. He had used his brakes and the soft ground to stop his roll, and the condition of the ground would work to his disadvantage on the take-off. He taxied back to the east side, turned around in the far corner, and tested his engine for the last time. He had a thousand feet of field before he reached the fence, and the ship would use it all. There was a considerable doubt in his mind about being able to make it, but he had no time for vacillation.

He gunned the engine, and when the ship did not start rolling, because of the softness of the ground, he walked his rudder and rocked the wheels out of the ruts they had made for themselves. The plane picked up speed slowly, but it did accelerate enough so Mac believed they might get off.

He was taking off cross-wind, and the wind was blowing at a velocity of twenty miles an hour. Therefore it was necessary that he hold the ship upon the ground as long as possible before pulling it off, so that when it did come off and started drifting with the wind, it would not settle back and smash the landing-gear.

But halfway down the field there was a hummock that rose two or three feet in the air. At a slow speed it would have made no difference in the take-off: the ship would have rolled over it and on. At the speed Mac had when this mound was reached, however, the ship was bounced into the air while it still did not have flying speed, and it slapped back down upon the ground viciously. And when it did, it was moving sidewise so rapidly that Mac was unable to control it—it was moving over the ground at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees from the way it was headed.

It dropped back down and struck the ground, then bounced once more. Mac felt it shudder, heard something snap. By a reflex action altogether—he didn't have time to think—he pulled the plane up into a stall and managed to stay above the ground. He did not know what had broken, but he knew something had given way.

The plane wabbled off cross-wind, barely missed the house at the end of the field, and staggered over a group of trees and mesquite on the far side of the little clearing. Gradually it picked up speed, and when it did, Mac turned south into the wind and climbed. Five hundred feet up, then back north toward San Antonio.

A cursory examination of the plane showed nothing wrong, but after they were stretched out upon their course, making miles per hour with the wind, Mac studied each detail of the ship within his range of vision. This examination revealed a broken rivet—several broken rivets—on the vertical landing-gear strut. The strut itself was still in place, but it had dropped down a quarter of an inch below its customary position, and might drop completely away from the supporting member any time. If it did, Mac knew, it would cause a crash in landing, for it would allow the left wheel to swing down below the fuselage, where it would drag upon the ground and turn the ship over as soon as contact had been made.

But Mac had never been one to worry about trouble until the trouble came. Now, flying by his compass over sage and wastes of dusty, scrubby vegetation, he figured his chances. If the strut held, there was nothing to fear. If the thing fell down, there was only one thing he could do to fix it—crawl out upon the braces of the wing and tie it up. He figured it out impersonally, weighed the possibilities of one man's doing what was to be done.

The next time he looked at the injured member, it was down!

The strut had snapped loose from the stud that held it, had dropped away, and now hung far down below the fuselage. The left wheel had swung underneath the ship, just as he had known it would.

It had seemed a casual thing, this possibility, when Mac first thought about it. Faced with the actual necessity of getting the plane down, it assumed colossal proportions. Mac had neglected entirely the problem of who would fly the plane while he was working on the landing-gear; he had not examined the window to see if he could make his exit and entrance easily; he had not figured the time limit of his gasoline.

The gas, he estimated, would hold out for three hours more, which would be ample. There was no door on the left side of the cabin, and the question of squeezing himself through a window which was nineteen by sixteen inches could not be settled until he discovered a way to fly the ship from the outside of the cabin. After some thought he realized this was an impossibility.

Suddenly he turned around and yelled to Doctor Walgren, motioning the other to come forward in the cabin.

"Landing-gear broken!" he yelled in Walgren's ear, and pointed out the trouble.

The Doctor looked carefully, then studied Mac. "What can you do?" he asked.

"Fix it—if you can fly this ship. Ever had any time before?"

"Why—no. No, I certainly never did! You can't possibly land the plane some way?"

"Not with any assurance that we'll be alive when it has stopped sliding. These things burn up too often to suit me for a crash. I've got to fix that landing-gear, and to do that you've got to keep the plane flying straight and level for at least fifteen minutes!"

Walgren tried to smile. He seemed to age suddenly, and Mac noticed that he was shaking. He didn't notice that he himself was slightly nervous!

"Here," he yelled, and explained the function of the controls, how a wing was brought up when a bump knocked it down, how to control the plane on a straight line with the rudder. Walgren listened carefully.

"Just remember," Mac bellowed against the noise of the engine, "when you want any part of the ship to go *down,* just push the stick that way. If a wing is up, and you want it down, push the stick over. Now the rudder—just guide this damn' thing as you would an automobile—if you want to turn, or straighten her around, push rudder in that direction. Now try it."

He slid out of his seat and, while the plane rocked from the gusty air, helped the Doctor into the pilot's seat, helped him to adjust himself to the controls.

"Easy does it," he yelled. "Don't try too hard! And remember that you don't have to shove those controls very far to get a reaction—just a fraction of an inch on either one of them is plenty."

Walgren tried. The ship wallowed aimlessly across the sky, swinging off its course and circling slowly. He could not get the idea of holding rudder to counteract the torque of the engine and the wing-drag. He let the nose swing at will. When a wing went down he was apt not to see it at all, or if he saw it, to slam the stick over and bring it up in a hurry. When he did the other wing went down, the ship yawed, and was more off balance than before.

For thirty minutes Mac instructed from a position just behind the doctor. For thirty minutes he swore and yelled and tried to pound some elementary flying knowledge into a man who had long since passed the age at which he could assimilate new knowledge of that sort quickly. And at the end of those thirty minutes, while as yet Mac had not admitted to himself the full danger of his position, he knew that they would be lucky if he saved a crash. Bobby Brennam would be lucky if he were alive tomorrow; so would they all. Bobby Brennam might be dead tomorrow anyhow—if they didn't get him to the ground quickly. Mac wished for a parachute, with the idea of throwing the boy off and lowering him safely—folly, of course, to wish a thing like that.

San Antonio, a dark, dusty smudge on the horizon, slid under the nose of the little plane thirty minutes after Mac had taken off. Winburn Field was suddenly below them, as inaccessible as the broken landing-gear.

But Walgren, slow as he was, did learn something about flying. Within an hour, as the plane circled at will over the city, he got the idea of getting a wing up, of keeping the ship level in the air. He learned not to climb too much, or dive. The only thing he lacked, to make him reasonably safe for Mac's purpose, was the ability to use his rudder. He kicked it, rather than easing it on when necessary; he neglected it entirely when he should have used it.

Time was growing short, speed was urgent, and Mac decided to go out through the window on the left side of the cabin. He slid the window back as far as it would go,

The first warning Winslow got was a slight rattle near his shoulder; then the big reptile flashed out and sank its fangs into his arm.

stuck his head and one arm and shoulder out, and tried to worm his way through. But he stuck with his shoulders in the framework. He could move neither forward nor back. He struggled, bruised his arms, cursed savagely, but for a time to no avail.

Finally he wrenched himself free, and tried again. He hoisted himself up by the brace-wires in the top of the cabin and put his feet through the window, trying to hold himself steady until his feet could find a strut on the outside of the ship on which to stand. His hips went through without much difficulty, and he found the footing he desired. Then, slowly, working cautiously, he turned himself over so that he was lying stomach-down across the window-sill. Out by inches now, working gradually—one shoulder out, one arm. Quickly, then, he was free, standing on the wing strut that attached itself to the lower longeron of the fuselage. A precarious foothold, a place where one misstep would plunge him down three thousand feet to a quick and violent death.

But he didn't think of that part now. He was having a battle to hang onto the ship. The fury of the propeller blast swept back at him with a velocity of nearly a hundred and fifty miles an hour. The heat from the exhaust whipped past his face and scorched it. The fumes filled his lungs, choking him, and tears, aided by the wind, filled his eyes until he could hardly see.

He turned until his back was toward the cabin and holding carefully with one hand to the window-sill, lowered himself down upon the wing strut until he was sitting on it straddling it with one leg on either side. He switched his hand-hold, grabbing the oblique strut that extended from the broken stub of the landing-gear fitting to the rear of the engine mount. He had a better hold here, and could work more freely.

"I've got to fix that landing-gear, and to do that you've got to keep the plane flying level for at least fifteen minutes."

Yet he was far from success where he was, for the upper end of the landing-gear strut was nearly four feet below him! He leaned over and tried to reach it with his hand, but the distance was too great. He removed the belt from around his waist and made a loop of it, then tried to swing it around the member. The wind whipped the line away. He put it back around him, fastened it again.

Finally he conceived the idea of using his feet, and he reached down and tried to hook one toe over the strut. Still he couldn't make it. He slid over on his perch and let one leg down nearly a foot farther; this time he got his toe below the strip of metal and slowly lifted it. In this position he was unbalanced; he had to fight with all his strength to lift the weight of the landing-gear.

Walgren was having trouble with the plane. He was not used to Mac's weight out upon the wing, and the balance of the ship being changed, he did not know how to correct it. He would shove the stick over, trying to bring the wing up; when he did this the plane rocked dangerously. Each time this happened, he became frightened, and eased off the controls for a moment, waiting for the ship to right itself somewhat, or to resume the position as before.

He had thus rocked the ship just at the moment when Mac had started bringing up the broken landing-gear. At the same moment a violent gust of air unbalanced it and threw it over nearly vertical. Mac was concentrating his attention on the gear, and was holding to his strut with one hand only. When this bump came he was unprepared. The shock broke his hold on one side and he fell. Wildly, in an agony of fear, he clutched with the other hand, touched the wing strut—caught it, held. As the plane gradually righted itself he was hanging at arm's length from the strut, and could not lift himself!

Mac was not an athlete, and he had never been trained in physical acrobatics. Had he been hanging from a trapeze in still air, he would no doubt have been able to regain his sitting position, but now, weak from fear and from his fight with the wind and the propeller blast, he was unequal to it. His grip was slowly giving way, his fingers slipping. He looked quickly down, saw the earth awaiting him. He looked up—at Walgren's horror-stricken face framed in the window of the cabin.

It was at this point Mac realized that Death was waiting for him, had his ticket, was even now about to call his name. His arm ached with a pain that made dying seem insignificant in comparison. . . . But it was not his own life that spurred Mac on. He saw Walgren's face—knew that when he dropped free and fell, Walgren too would die. And with Walgren would go Bobby Brennam. In his incoherent thoughts Mac wondered if he, even where he was, about to die, valued his life more than that boy in the cabin.

He didn't want to die, but his strength was almost gone; he was dangling there, swinging in the wind. He tried to swing his feet so that he could reach the base of the strut near where it was bolted to the fuselage fitting. But this movement loosened his grip still more, tired him to torture. He had an impulse to let go, to drop away; but his inherent fighting instinct and his love of life made him grip still tighter.

Walgren was watching, unable to take his eyes away. Mac looked steadfastly at the older man, tried to plan some means by which the Doctor could be of aid.

"Tilt the ship!" he yelled frantically—but the words were whipped away by the fury of the wind.

Walgren leaned closer to the window, trying to hear. Mac saw his lips frame a question, but he could not understand.

"Tilt the wings!" Mac cried again, and made a motion with his free hand. Still the Doctor could not hear. Mac knew he never would!

Then Walgren did something that not one man in a thousand, having as little experience in the air as he, would have done. He didn't know one instrument in the plane from another. The switch, the throttle, the air-speed—all were the same to him. But he saw, on the ignition switch the words "Off" and "On," and he observed that the lever was placed in the "On" position. Quickly, knowing nothing else to do, and realizing the urgency of Mac's request, he snapped the switch to the "Off" position, waited while the motor died. Then he leaned close to the window and yelled: "What?"

"Tilt the ship!" Mac bellowed, "so I can swing my feet in on this strut!"

And Doctor Walgren, with his usual thoroughness, pushed his stick far over to the side and held it there. The ship careened up on one wing, banked steeply, and Mac's feet swung around the base of the strut.

He clambered up until he was hanging to the window-frame, his feet in the same position in which they had been when first he made his exit from the cabin. Quickly he reached inside and turned on the ignition switch. The propeller was still turning from the wind blast, and it did not occur to him that the engine would not "take."

But it didn't. Walgren had left the throttle in its place—had, by this negligence, allowed the engine to flood completely. As the glide slowed, the prop stopped turning!

"My God!" Mac cried. "You fool, here you're stalling! Watch the air-speed meter—keep it up to seventy! Hold it there. Get your nose down a little!"

Walgren, confused and baffled by the suddenness of events, tried as best as he could. He didn't know the full danger of the situation, but he was frightened. He had time, in one brief thought, to swear eternally that he would never fly again. He meant it.

Mac watched the attitude of the plane a moment, judged his altitude, debated for an instant what to do. They were flying at an altitude of at least three thousand feet—which would give him at least three, and not more than five minutes in which to fix the landing-gear, crawl back into the cabin, and land! He leaned into the cabin and spoke into Walgren's ear.

"Hold her straight ahead," he cautioned. "I'll be with you in a minute."

Then MacDonald slid down his strut again, straddled it as before, and fished with his foot for the landing-gear brace. He got it halfway up, dropped it when a bump struck the plane, picked it up again. Without the prop blast to bother him as it had before he managed to get the brace up. He picked up more than a hundred pounds of weight, lifted it back and put it where it belonged. Then, holding it there with one hand, he unbuckled his belt again and strapped it around the shock-cord of the gear, pulled the buckle tight, and crawled back up toward the window.

It took perhaps a minute and a half to accomplish all that. The ship was now gliding rapidly. Walgren didn't know enough about flying to hold the speed of the plane at an efficient rate; after Mac's warning he held the nose down and glided at a hundred miles an hour instead of seventy. Mac had at the most not more than two minutes in which to wiggle through the cabin window!

He started in just as he had come out, head and shoulders first, lying on his stomach. When he got that far he tried to turn around so that he would be face uppermost, and could drag himself in. He was working frantically, trying to hurry, trying to keep his mind away from the stark fact that if he didn't get in in time, Walgren would glide into the ground at a speed almost as great as normal flight! He tried to see the ground, to tell how much more time he had, but in the position of his body he could not.

Walgren kept telling him to hurry, tried to help him in, but managed to hinder more than help. Then he yelled in Mac's ear, so loudly that it hurt: "What shall I do now? Aren't we getting close?"

Something caught Mac, snagged his trousers in the back as he tried to roll over in the window. Vainly he struggled to get free, realized like a flash that there would be insufficient time, thought of Bobby Brennam and Walgren—of himself in the mess that the ship would make when it struck the ground. He was half in the window, half out, and he could not move in either direction.

He raised his head and looked down through the glass at the side of the pilot's seat, saw that they had less than a hundred feet.

But he saw, in that glance, that there was a field up there ahead—that if Walgren would keep going straight the ship would make it. And he reached in, grasped the control-stick with his right hand, and said to the Doctor: "Do what I tell you. I'll handle the stick, and when I say 'right rudder' or 'left rudder,' ease it on!"

He pulled the nose up slightly, slowing up the speed. He was in an awkward and uncomfortable position, but he could see the field, and he could tell how far above the ground he was.

"Left rudder—easy!" he said to Walgren. "That's it—now straight!" And he pulled the nose up still more, flattening the glide.

There was an eternity of waiting just before they landed, but when the wheels finally struck, the impact was not noticeable. The plane rolled for fifty yards, and bounced slightly on some rough ground. Then the strap that Mac had tied around the landing-gear gave way. The gear crumpled, the wing went down, bit into the ground and clung. The plane veered sharply from its course and swung around, then stopped.

Silence for a moment; then Mac said, his voice shaking: "For God's sake, Doc, help me get out of this damn' window! Hey, Doc, what's the matter?"

Doctor Walgren drew a long breath, quivered as he exhaled it. "Just thinking—*just thinking!*" he murmured. "Here, we've got to get this boy to town!" He crawled out of his seat and hurried back to Bobby Brennam's seat.

Mac struggled tore his pants, was suddenly free. He backed out of the window, fumbled for the ground with his feet, and stepped down. Just then Walgren opened the door on the opposite side and carried Bobby out.

"Sick, sonny?" he asked. "Never mind, old-timer; we got here, and I know how to fly!" He chuckled deeply, and Mac couldn't tell whether it was relief at being down or not.

They commandeered a car that had stopped at the edge of the field, and rushed the boy to the hospital. They put him in the ward with Winslow, in a cot beside Mac's friend. Walgren directed the operations, and when that was finished, went over to Winslow.

"You love humanity a lot," he exclaimed, "to go riding around the sky with this bird MacDonald! I wouldn't get in another airplane with that fellow for a thousand dollars! He's wild! He climbed out under the wing of that ship and made me fly it for an hour and a half, while he hung on by one hand! Scared me to death—I'll never get over it!"

"I wasn't attending any matinée!" Mac grinned. "If *you* were scared, I don't know what you'd say I was! I'm going to draw and quarter me an inspector when I find him—letting that ship go out like that!"

He got up, put on his hat. "Well, sonny," he said to Bobby Brennam, "you'll be all right here. I'm glad I got a chance to bring you up. And Doc,"—to Walgren—"sorry I didn't put on any better show for you. Usually I hang by my toes while the pilot loops—but you didn't know how to loop today. I'll have to give you just a little more instruction!"

"Not me, you won't! No, *sir!*"

Mac grinned again. "Well, I gotta get out and fix up the plane. Somebody might call us out tomorrow." He walked out.

After he had gone, Bobby Brennam called to Walgren: "Who is that guy? He aint afraid of nothin', is he? I want to be like him when I grow up!"

Chris'mas Gif'

By EWING WALKER

"I'll give you sixty thousand dollars for the horse." The Major frowned. "Two bits or a million—it's all the same!"

In the Kentucky blue-grass country the rich man who believed that "money could buy anything," discovered one thing it couldn't buy.

Illustrated by Allen Moir Dean

"WHITE folks sho' does sleep late on Chris'mas!" Old Jeff hunched his hide-bottom chair a little nearer his cabin window and peered out across the snow. Before him were the paddocks and a little farther on Pilot's private stable; beyond that, the big house looking mighty cold and still and solemn-like.

He glanced down at Roderick Dhu, an old and deaf English setter regarding him with placid eyes. "Nemmine thumpin' de flo' wid yo' tail, 'cause yo' aint gwine git nothin' t'eat till de folks gits to stirrin'! Ef yo' warn't so deef, you'd heered what I said 'bout 'em sleepin' late."

Jeff opened his window, rubbed the frost from it and closed it with a bang. A blaze-faced head was thrust over the half-door of the private stable. "Uh-huh! You's sort o' wonderin' yo'se'f, huh? Wal, yo' might ez well draw dat haid in an' keep hit warm, 'cause aint nobody gwine pay yo' no min' fo' de longes'."

Abruptly Jeff rose, placed his rusty hat upon his head at a jaunty angle and stiffly shuffled a "pigeon-wing," his old setter wonderingly looking on. Through his window he had seen smoke spiraling from the chimneys of the big house. He forced himself to wait a matter of ten minutes. "Got to gib 'em time fo' to git dey clothes on!" Then, sedately followed by Roderick Dhu, he stepped out into the open and closed the door behind him.

The snow crunching under his feet, he shuffled toward the big house, with the old dog at his heels. Passing the kitchen steps—for he didn't care to subject himself to Ca'line's bickering—he proceeded to the side entrance. He opened the door without knocking—for Jeff is a privileged character—and entered the house, Roderick Dhu at his side —for Roderick too is a privileged one. Jeff proceeded warily, for the idea was to catch them unawares. He did not know that the Major, chancing to glance through a window, had seen him approaching and purposely turned his back, pretending to busy himself with some papers.

The old darky paused in the doorway, grinning. "Chris'mas gif', Marse Ed! Chris'mas gif'!"

The master of Greymoor wheeled. "Well, by ye gods o' war, Jeff! I made sure I'd get you this year!" His hand reached into a pocket and emerged with a bill. "I'll beat you to it one of these days!" he added.

Furtively Jeff approached the dining-room and looked in. "Chris'mas gif', Miss Evelyn! Chris'mas gif'!"

The mistress of Greymoor dropped her hands to her sides. It would seem she was chagrined. "Again! Jeff, you do beat all. I just knew I'd catch you *this* time!" She handed him a package carefully wrapped in tissue and tied with ribbon.

Thus Jeff made the round of the house, "ketchin'" each of us, for each had with himself a secret compact that he should be caught each year by the old man's greeting of, "Chris'mas gif'!"

Breakfast done with, there followed another ceremony that is as much a part of Christmas at Greymoor as the bowl of eggnog in the parlor for the white folks and that other bowl in the back hall for the colored.

Miss Evelyn, wrapping a shawl about her, started along the brick walk toward the paddocks. A little way behind her shuffled old Jeff. At his heels, Roderick Dhu gravely padded along over the snow.

The mistress paused before a small stable that stood off to itself. A regal head was thrust over the half-door and a moist nose touched her shoulder.

"Merry Christmas, Pilot!" She offered him sugar. When he was done munching it, she fastened a spray of holly in the hinge of his stable door. She passed on to a line of box-stalls and paused before one of them. Had you

been at her side and glanced in, you would have seen a medium-sized bay mare with calm eyes, the sunken temples that come with age, and the slightly swayed back that comes with the bearing of many colts. Her sons and daughters have carried far the name Greymoor—and the greatest of these sons and daughters is Moor Pilot.

A soft hand rested caressingly upon a finely chiseled head. Another spray of holly was thrust into a crack of a stable door, whereupon the mistress of Greymoor returned along the brick walk to the big house, old Jeff and Roderick Dhu soberly following. . . .

Breakfast over, the Major lowered the shades of his office and sat before his desk, for somehow he preferred the room darkened this day. From without, came the sound of darkies laughing, of a hound barking for its breakfast, of a horse whinnying. He wondered if another Christmas would hear those sounds at Greymoor. The last two years had been trying ones. The spring before, three of his brood mares had died, others had failed to find colts; and through two seasons, racing had proven costly. The Major rose, shaking his head as though to fling off his mood. Perhaps at the Lexington spring meeting Greymoor would again come into its own and win its share of races.

A long closed car, driven by a liveried chauffeur, halted under the *porte-cochère*. The Major frowned, for he preferred not to see outsiders this day. Still— Opening his office door, he passed on to the living-room.

Wadsworth, who, two years before, had purchased the old Dowling place a mile down the pike, was there with his daughter Ellen. Crisp of speech and keen of eye, Wadsworth extended a hand. "Merry Christmas, Major!"

"The same, Wadsworth!" He turned to Ellen. "My dear, I wish you a very happy day—and many, many more." Then, to his wife: "Ev, what's in that bowl yonder?"

"Eggnog, my dear, as you quite well know."

The Major winked at his guests. "Do we have to have it with the egg?"

The mistress of Greymoor affected a frown. "You do, sir. And not too many, even then."

In a little while, Wadsworth rose. "Major, let's go look at the horses."

"Certainly, if the ladies will excuse us."

Passing along the brick walk, they came to the small stable that stands off to itself. An old setter, sober of mien, sat before it. As they approached, the seamed face of old Jeff and the proud head of Moor Pilot were thrust over the half-door.

"Does the old darky ever leave him?" Wadsworth asked.

The Major smiled. "Mighty seldom. You're apt to find him right there—and old Roderick too—any time of the day or night. You see," he explained in an undertone, "old Jeff really raised the horse. He took a fancy to the colt from the start; he was the first to put a halter on him—and a bridle and a saddle. He's petted him—and spoiled him—all his life." He paused, smiling reminiscently. "The day Pilot won the Derby, Jeff was the world's proudest darky. We let him lead the colt back to the stables and he walked on air. In every race Pilot ran, Jeff was right there, standing in the paddock while he was saddled, and waiting on the track when he came back. Couldn't keep him at home."

Wadsworth turned to Jeff. "Is he a pretty good horse, old man?"

Jeff grinned. "Cap'n, don' projec' wid de ol' niggah! Dis heah's de greatest hoss eber was foaled."

Wadsworth glanced at the Major. "Do you mind Jeff leading him out?"

"Proud to do it, suh!" interposed Jeff, securing a lead-line to the horse's halter and ceremoniously opening the door. "Now, boy, you walk right 'long behin' me an' 'have yo'se'f. Nemmine nibblin' at dat hat, 'cause hit's de onlies' one what I got."

"Ellen! She's up there!" Winthrop cried. "Dat's what I knows," Jeff muttered. "An' you's down heah."

Around in a small circle they paraded, old Roderick Dhu bringing up a dignified rear.

Wadsworth was silent. It was no time for conversation. Critically he studied the bold eyes, the pointed ears, the tapering and arched neck, the powerful barrel, the strangely long back and high hindquarters. Abruptly he wheeled upon the master of Greymoor, his eyes narrowing.

"Major, I want that horse."

The Major smiled. "Reckon you do. There're a good many in that fix."

"I know that," acknowledged Wadsworth. "But I mean business. I'll make it worth your while."

Old Jeff halted and peered anxiously toward the Major.

"Sell Pilot? I'd as soon think of selling Greymoor. He's a member of the family."

"Bless de Lawd! Major spoke a moufful den!" muttered Jeff, as, followed by the horse and Roderick, he continued his rounds.

Wadsworth, hands thrust into his pockets and head tilted to one side, looked up at his host. "Major, you can spare that horse. You've got a lot of stuff carrying his blood. About every brood mare you've got's in foal to him; his dam's due to bring you a full brother or sister to him in the spring. I need him. What's more, I want him." He paused, took a cigar from his pocket, struck a match and allowed it to burn out without touching flame to tobacco. "I'm going to do a fool thing. I'll give you sixty thousand dollars for that horse."

The Major frowned. "Let's not discuss it any further. Two bits or a million—it would be the same. If you're ready—" He turned toward the house.

"All right!"—crisply. "Think it over. That's a lot of money. Any time you decide to take it, send me word."

Back in the living-room, Wadsworth's face darkened. In a far corner, and seemingly oblivious of the others, sat Ellen, eyes bright, lips smiling. Leaning over her was Harry Shannon, the Major's nephew.

"Ellen, it's time we were going." Wadsworth as usual spoke abruptly. "You see," he explained to the others, "a friend of Ellen's is coming for a little visit. Fine boy! Want you all to know him."

And, when Wadsworth and Ellen were gone, the Major turned to Harry. "Well, son, I can't say that Wadsworth was exactly overjoyed at findin' you with his daughter."

The boy sobered. "No, and he never has been. What has he against me?"

The elder man's arm encircled the boy's shoulder. "Son, you just haven't a few million dollars. But I'll say this for you: You've got good taste."

The boy rose. "'Friend of Ellen's'," he quoted. "Who you reckon he is?"

The Major smiled. "The future master of Dowling Grove, maybe."

"Well, I'll tell the wide world this: He may be the master of the Grove and welcome; but if he and old Wadsworth think I'm going to lose Ellen without a fight—"

"It's hard to fight money, son," the Major explained kindly. *"Hard."*

"I suggest," interjected the Major's wife, "that we drive over to the Grove this afternoon. Just a Christmas call, you know. Then you can look over your rival," she added archly.

In midafternoon a low-swung carriage rolled down the pike and entered the gateway of Dowling Grove.

Wadsworth flung open the door. "Welcome! Welcome! Come right in!" Then, stepping back, "I want you to meet my young friend Mr. Winthrop."

Mr. Winthrop, glistening from crest to heel, bowed low. He was charmed, very charmed, it seemed. His pale and somewhat protruding eyes coolly observed the company. It developed he was having a "corking time—a really corking time, you know." Yes, he thought he'd like Kentucky. Everything so—well, sort of quaint, you know! All these dogs and horses and gamecocks, and sport in general! Quite a bit like parts of old England and Ireland. At school there, you know. Cambridge? No, Oxford. The fingers of one of Mr. Winthrop's well-fleshed and soft hands toyed with his diminutive mustache.

Harry strode across the room to Ellen and engaged that young lady in a low-toned conversation.

Wadsworth, glancing toward them, rose with characteristic energy. "I want to show you gentlemen the place—show you what I've done." He led the way out.

Each of his improvements he pointed out pridefully. At last he halted before a small and new brick stable.

"What's this for?" asked the Major.

Wadsworth smiled. "This is for Moor Pilot," he said.

THE Major looked up. "For Moor Pilot, eh? Well, if he's the only horse that's to use it, you've wasted some money."

"Now, Shannon, be a good fellow! I need him a heap worse than you do; and that's a lot of money—sixty thousand."

The master of Greymoor glanced at his watch. "There are some things, Wadsworth, not for sale," he said quietly, starting toward the house.

"Not many, Shannon! Not many!"

The weeks that followed were rather dreary ones at Greymoor. When with the rest of us, the Major wore an air of blustering good humor that fooled none, and we observed that each day he spent much of his time alone in his office.

The Lexington spring meeting had been our hope, for we had a number of promising two-year-olds coming on and several trusty three-year-olds and aged horses and mares. If we could have had our share of success with them, at least the darkest of our clouds would have been dispelled. But the Lexington meet came and passed; and, with its passing, it seemed the clouds were hovering even lower, for we won but two races and those were cheap ones.

DAY after day I saw the Major, shoulders unnaturally squared and lips pressed tight, lean over the half-door of Pilot's stall, as old Jeff wonderingly looked on and as Roderick Dhu gravely observed him. And then there came that afternoon when the Major, flinging open the door of the living-room, confronted us. His face was lined, his eyes all but closed, and his mouth had become a grim line. He looked at each of us in turn. "Well, it's come," he said.

In the main, we knew what he meant, and we were silent.

Miss Evelyn crossed the room and seated herself upon the arm of his chair. "What will you do, Ed?" she asked softly.

"There's but one thing to do," he muttered. "Moor Pilot—Wadsworth." He rose and, hands thrust into pockets, strode about the room.

Sell Moor Pilot! Somehow, though we groped for words, none of us found them. Sell Moor Pilot! Why, it wouldn't be Greymoor without him! He was a part of the place—of the very warp and woof of our life there. I couldn't quite visualize that small stable, down by the paddocks, without that proud head thrust over the half-door as old black Jeff and deaf Roderick Dhu sat contentedly by.

"Perhaps—he'll understand," murmured Miss Evelyn.

The Major halted before a window, peering out toward the lawn's grove of black walnuts and the white ribbon of pike on beyond. "God forbid!" he whispered.

Suddenly he wheeled, facing us, his hands opening and closing. "I can't—tell old Jeff," he muttered.

He strode from the room. While he was away, the rest of us sat about glancing furtively at one another and swiftly turning away when our eyes met.

Soon he was back and handed me a note. "Read it," he ordered.

Holding the sheet before a window, I read aloud:

Wadsworth: You may send for him. Shannon.

"Have a boy take it to him," he added.

The next two hours were the bitterest and yet, perhaps, the sweetest in the long life of Greymoor.

The small colored messenger had but left for Dowling Grove, when the side door of the big house was opened and Miss Evelyn stepped out. Glancing about warily, she hurried down the old brick walk toward the paddocks, her small knotted handkerchief pressed to her lips. She took Pilot's nose between her hands. "Good-by, old friend! Luck! Long life!" she whispered and in, a moment, was hurrying back toward the house.

Old Jeff, his face wrinkling, peered after her. He glanced down at Roderick Dhu. "Now, what you reckon? Dey's sumpin' curisome gwine on roun' heah!"

Deaf Roderick thumped the ground with his tail.

The knob of the front door turned and the Major, stepping out upon the porch, slammed the door behind him. It would seem he wished all to know he was leaving the house by that exit. Noisily he strode across the porch and starting down the drive, coughed a time or two. At that point where the driveway enters a grove of low-limbed walnut trees, thus hiding it from view of the house, he halted and glanced about furtively. Then, still moving cautiously, he made his way by a circuitous route to Pilot's stable.

"How's the horse?" he gruffly demanded of Jeff.

"Fust-rate, Majah. Happy ez a 'possum in 'simmon-time!"

With considerable fuss, the Major slapped the pockets of his coat. "Left my pipe. Hurry up to the house and get it for me."

Old Jeff, Roderick Dhu at his heels, shuffled away. "Majah sho' got sumpin' on his min' *dis* mawnin'. When he gits rough, he's fretted."

The master of Greymoor watched the old negro out of the corner of his eye; and once he had disappeared, quickly opened Pilot's door and stepped within. "It's tough, old man! Tough!" He spoke low, so that only Pilot might hear. "Want you to know I'm sorry—sorry!"

ON his way back toward the big house, he met Jeff and the old setter. "Put a new blanket on Pilot," he ordered; and taking his pipe from the old darky's hand, continued along the brick walk.

Jeff peered after him, pursing his lips. " 'Pears like *ev'*ybody done gone 'stracted."

I glanced at my watch. I realized Jeff should be told with no more delay. Perhaps, even then, I had put it off too long. Possibly a man or boy was already on the way from Dowling Grove. . . .

I permitted myself to believe that brevity, even abruptness, was the better way.

"Jeff, the Major has had to sell Pilot."

He peered up into my face. His hands, stiff-jointed and wrinkled, gripped the arms of his hide-bottom chair. He looked down at old Roderick Dhu, as though to prove himself asleep and dreaming. Again he turned to me and slowly rose from his chair, pushing himself up with his arms. "Cap'n—you mean—he done—*sol'* 'im?"

I nodded, a little jerkily perhaps, for I felt myself weakening.

His leathery old face was upturned. "Please, suh, Cap'n, don't fool ol' Jeff!" he pleaded. "Don' do it, Cap'n!"

"It's true, Jeff," I explained uncertainly. "He had to."

The old man gripped my arm. "De Majah—sol'—*Pilot?*"

I could only nod.

At last he accepted the truth. His hands fell to his sides; his eyes peered into mine; and as I quickly turned, I saw those eyes grow moist.

Back at the house, I found the rest of them in the living-room that overlooks the lawn and the pike beyond. Each sat silent and with face averted.

After what seemed an interminable time, though it could have been but a little while, a maid was standing in the darkened doorway. "Majah, dey's a man heah fo'—Pilot." Even she paused over the name.

"Show him the way," the Major gruffly ordered.

There are four windows in the living-room that face the lawn. In a little while, Miss Evelyn rose and silently stood before one of them, peering out into the twilight. Suddenly I saw her fingers press her lips and her shoulders tremble. The Major and I, neither speaking, hurried to her and looked through the window over her shoulders.

Stepping briskly along the drive was a colored boy of Wadsworth's, his feet in shining boots, his cap at a jaunty angle. Behind him, his white-blazed head flung high, the white stockings of his forelegs gleaming in the waning light, marched Moor Pilot, a blanket in Greymoor's colors over his back. A pace or two behind him, his head bent over, a bundle of clothes in either hand, shuffled old Jeff. Padding soberly along in the rear was Roderick Dhu.

Before the Major or I could speak, Miss Evelyn hurried from the room, through the front doorway and on down the drive. "Jeff! Where are you going, Jeff?"

The old man looked up. "Wid him, Miss Ev. Me an' Rod'rick—us is gwine wid him."

"Oh, but you mustn't, Jeff! You mustn't! This—why, this is home, Jeff! Your home."

Thoughtfully, the old man nodded. "Yes'm, hit's home. Hit's been home fo' de longes'. But I has to go, Miss Ev, I has to. He aint gwine let dem biggity niggahs mess wid him. He been countin' on me, Miss Ev, sence he come heah—an' he countin' on me now." Majestically marching along, the horse turned his head, attracted by the voices behind him. Eagerly old Jeff pointed. "See dar, Miss Ev? Look yondah! Did yo' see 'im—lookin' back? He's lookin' fo' ol' Jeff."

He hurried along the drive, Roderick Dhu sedately trotting behind. . . .

Perhaps it was natural that there was little visiting, as we term it, between Greymoor and Dowling Grove. Probably the thought of Moor Pilot being there and the cause of his going discouraged it; and there were other barriers that slowly and surely reared themselves between us. The Grove, as the neighborhood speaks of it, had come to be but a too-flawless show place—too obviously the hobby of a rich man. Greymoor, on the other hand, was an old and comfortable dwelling upon which age rested gracefully, and through whose doors the sons and daughters of generations had gone forth into the world. When I think of the two places, I realize that there is some justification for a few fence-corners comfortably grown up in brush and for an outbuilding or two in need of painting and repairs. Lastly, there had come about an affair that contributed to our aloofness.

Harry Shannon, the Major's nephew, who had spent a deal of his life at Greymoor, rode up one Sunday afternoon in October, flung his reins to a black boy and strode into the house. Tall, slender, regular-featured, he reminded me of the Major in his younger days and of his grandfather, whose portrait looked down upon us.

"Well, son, what seems to be the trouble with you?" drawled the Major.

The boy turned to Miss Evelyn. "Aunt Ev, I apologize in advance." Then, to the Major: "That damned old rooster just the same as ordered me off his place."

The Major smiled. "Well, the point is—did you go?"

"I did, in my own good time, and after I had told him a few things. Ellen—well, she's not indifferent to me, and if he thinks I'm going to sit by idly and see him make her throw herself away on that—that mush-head Winthrop—"

"I would judge," interjected the Major, "that you told him plenty!"

"He seemed to think so. Anyway, he suggested that Dowling Grove could get along fairly well without my distinguished presence."

MEANWHILE, strange and sometimes disturbing stories came to us of old Jeff and Moor Pilot and Roderick Dhu. That first day Wadsworth, of course, was waiting for his boy to return with the horse. When the stallion had passed through the gateway of Dowling Grove, Wadsworth called to one of his men: "Take that blanket off and put on one of ours."

The Greymoor blanket of purple and yellow was tossed aside, and promptly and carefully folded by old Jeff.

Wadsworth turned to the old darky. "You can go now, uncle. We won't need you any more."

Jeff observed him solemnly. "I's gwine stay wid 'im," he explained, nodding toward Pilot.

"Stay here?"—crisply. "We don't need you. Better go on home." He wheeled and walked toward the house.

Jeff stayed. Through the weeks and the months he

stayed, despite the frowns of Wadsworth, the profanity of the Grove's trainer, and the ridicule of Wadsworth's darkies. The first three nights he slept upon the ground before Pilot's stable door, wrapped in his Greymoor blanket, and with old Roderick Dhu at his side. After that they permitted him to sleep in Pilot's barn.

One day toward the end of summer, Wadsworth flagged the Major as they were passing on the pike. "Shannon," he began, somewhat red of countenance, "I want you to tell that old nigger of yours to go on home. Frankly, I don't want him hanging around."

The Major, I'm afraid, also reddened. "Wadsworth," he retorted, "that 'old nigger,' as you call him, is not at your place because I sent him and he'll not leave because I order him to. You will not understand it, suh, but when he left we felt like we'd lost a member of the family. 'That old nigger', as you call him, rode hosses for my grandfather. He just about raised Pilot—and me. He loves the hoss as he would his own child—maybe more—and the hoss loves him. If you'll take my advice, suh, you'll turn the hoss over to 'that old nigger' —God bless him! I wish you good day, suh!" With which the Major proceeded along the pike.

Wadsworth had refrained from telling the Major that a few days before, when he had gone to town and the men and boys were away from the stables, he had returned earlier than expected, and upon walking toward Pilot's stable, heard old Jeff carrying on a low-toned monologue:

"Nemmine, whiteface! Dey kin blow an' snort all dey choose, but me'n' ol' Rod gwine stay right wid yo'. Right heah wid *you!* What dese uppity niggahs know 'bout handlin' mah big boy? Dey aint fittin' fo' to see atter sellin'-platers! Son, yo' sho' does look noble in dese colors! Purple an' yaller suttinly does suit yo' style. Yas, suh, us is gwine stay right heah. De truf is, us gwine stick to yo' close ez a lean tick to a niggah's shin."

At this juncture, Wadsworth had peered over the half-door of Pilot's stable. "What's that blanket doing on him?" he demanded.

Startled, but striving to grin, Jeff looked up sheepishly.

"Bless de Lawd, Cap'n! I wondered who dat was I heered a-comin'!" Hurriedly the purple and yellow blanket of Greymoor was unstrapped. "Yo' see, suh, I was jes' a-tryin' hit on to see had hit swunk up any."

"Well, don't try it on any more," Wadsworth had ordered, striding away.

Christmas Eve dawned with a chill and weighty moisture in the air that gave promise of a white Christmas; and, sure enough, in the late afternoon snow began falling.

It seemed that, this year, Christmas would prove a glum affair at Greymoor, though the usual preparations went ahead briskly enough and all strove to wear an air of good cheer. Late in the afternoon, the Major strode through the snow and, pretending he had business down at the paddocks, glanced toward Pilot's stable. No horse had occupied it since Pilot left. That much at least the Major could do. He remembered that it would the next morning be just a year since Wadsworth seriously broached the matter. A year! He wondered how the horse looked. Probably all right, for old Jeff—God bless him!—had refused to be driven away.

Yes, it was a glum Christmas. Harry, arriving late, flung himself into a chair.

"What's wrong, my dear?" Miss Evelyn asked quietly.

"Wrong? Everything! *He's* there again."

" 'He?' "

"You know. That flabby Winthrop."

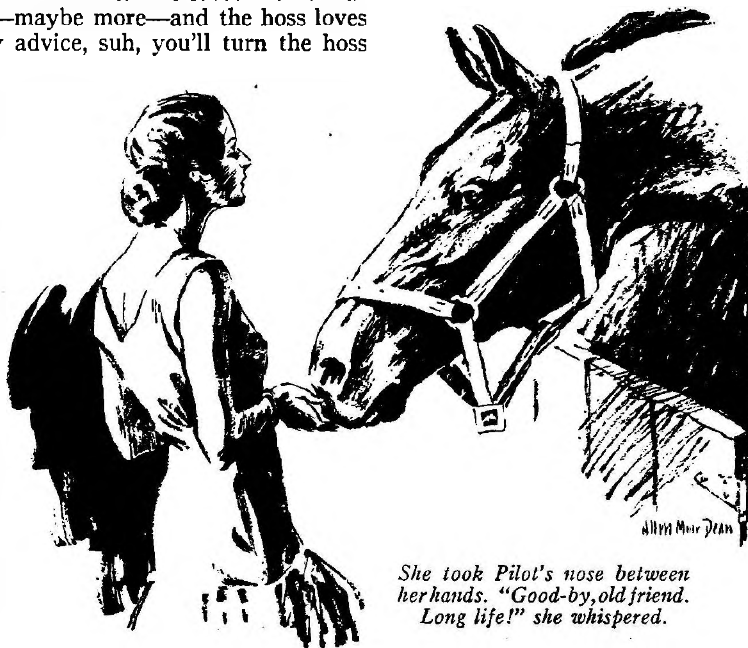
Well, it would seem we could do nothing about *that.* But later in the evening, Miss Evelyn confronted the Major, in her hand a package wrapped in tissue and tied with ribbon and through which a spray of holly was thrust.

"Please have a boy take this over to the Grove."

"To the Grove?" All of us were a little surprised. "What is it?" demanded the Major.

"Just a little remembrance for Uncle Jeff," she explained, and added, before hurrying away, "Have the boy tell him I said he would know what to do with the holly."

"Ye gods o' war!" muttered the Major. "I've a good mind to go myself."



She took Pilot's nose between her hands. "Good-by, old friend. Long life!" she whispered.

Old Jeff sat in the corner of Pilot's stall. Thrust into a crack of the door—but on the inner side, this year, so folks wouldn't see it and start asking questions—was a sprig of browning holly. A wrinkled hand rested upon Roderick Dhu. "Wal, boys, ev'ybody back home aint fo'got ol' Jeff! Dey mind's he's still roun' heah som'eres. Now, den, us is gwine hab Chris'mas right heah, us three is. Dey aint gwine be no walkin' up to de big house an' ketchin' de fambly an' callin' 'Chris'mas gif'!' No, suh, we aint gwine do dat *dis* day. Us is jes' gwine take our Chris'mas jes' a-talkin' heah in de stable. Jes' talkin', sociable-like. All de white folks done gone, 'scusin' Miss Ellen, what I 'spec' is still a-sleepin', 'count o' bein' up so late las' night at dat dance—an' dat gemman what's a-tryin' his dead-lebel bes' to set up to 'er. I lay you Mr. Harry sho' would gib him down de country did he git de chance!"

HE drew from under his frayed coat a folded blanket of purple and yellow. Slowly—and, perhaps, a little reverently—he roughened the nap with a wrinkled hand. He glanced up at the horse. "Pilot, I sho' would be proud to dress yo' up in dese heah colors dis Chris'mas, but I can't do it. De ol' niggah jes' nachally skeered to. We'll jes' keep it folded so's I kin git it under mah coat easy-like, did anybody come prowlin' roun'. Rod, ef yo' warn't so ol' an' deef an' wo' out, you'd set up heah wid yo' Sunday manners an'—"

Abruptly Jeff paused, sniffing the air. "Now, what yo'

reckon—" Rising stiffly, he peered over the half-door. "Bless de Lawd! Looky yondah!"

Smoke was spiraling from the upper story of the big house.

Old Jeff turned. "Heah, boy! Quick! Hol' yo' haid still!" He snapped a strap onto Pilot's halter and led the horse out. "Dat fire li'ble spread an' bu'n up ev'ything. I'se gwine hitch you way down yondah out o' danger, an' see what kin I do."

Trotting along stiffly, he passed the last of the barns, crossed the small creek that borders the house pasture and hitched Pilot to a swinging limb—the first time that aristocratic chestnut had been so hitched. Then, panting, Jeff hurried shufflingly back toward the house.

Small negroes were running about, some wailing, some mute. A housemaid was crouched at the base of a tree, her face buried in her handkerchief. Hagar the cook, ponderous and bewildered, stood wringing her hands and blubbering. A side window of the house was thrust up and a figure leaped to the ground, fell, got quickly upon its feet, and scurried to safety. It was Winthrop, who had but finished dressing.

Old Jeff grasped the housemaid's shoulder, shaking her. "Where's Miss Ellen? Set up heah, gal! Heah me? Where's Miss Ellen?"

The girl, biting her lip, pointed toward an upper window.

Jeff ran to Winthrop. "Cap'n, when you-all come out, was de smoke bad downstairs?"

"Terrible! Terrible! Why, I couldn't see my way! Why, you know—"

"Umph!" Jeff didn't wait to hear more. He hurried to a small darky, clutching him. "Heah, boy! Quick! Shake yo'se'f!" From under his coat he drew the folded purple and yellow blanket of Greymoor. "Quick! Soak hit good at dat hy-drant, whilst I gits dat ladder!"

He hurried away, followed by Winthrop, picked up a ladder leaning against a near-by shed and, somewhat falteringly, ran toward the house.

"Let me help you." Winthrop reached for one end of the ladder.

Stumbling along, old Jeff glanced back. "Nemmine, Cap'n. You bettah stay back yondah som'eres. You's li'ble git all smoked up."

Winthrop paused, tugging at his lapels. "Ellen! There! She's up there!"

"Uh-huh! Dat's what I knows," Jeff muttered to himself. "An' you's down heah!"

He braced the ladder against the kitchen porch, grabbed the dripping purple and yellow blanket from the boy and started up the ladder. "Ol' niggah gittin' stiff," he mumbled. "But maybe—ef de good Lawd—reach out—wid jes'—one han'—" He clambered over the porch roof, threw the wet blanket across his shoulder, kicked in a window and disappeared through the dense smoke that poured out.

The women below wailed; children shrieked; Winthrop, eyes blinking, wrung his hands. "Why, he forgot to put a wet cloth over his own face!" he remarked to Hagar, who for some reason moved off to another part of the yard.

Minutes passed. A section of the roof collapsed and flames darted skyward through the opening. Winthrop shuddered. A car rushed up the driveway, dragged its wheels and Wadsworth leaped out. Hatless, his horse blowing, Harry Shannon dashed up and, tossing the reins over the horse's head, leaped to the ground.

"Ellen? Where's Ellen?" Wadsworth shouted, shaking Winthrop by the shoulders.

He swallowed, pointing. "There! Up there! I wanted to find her, but the smoke—".

They waited to hear no more. "Go back!" ordered Harry to the older man as he and Wadsworth ran toward the side entrance to the building. "Go back! One's enough."

As they reached the steps, the door opened. Through the swirling smoke a figure staggered out into the open. A bundle, wrapped in the purple and yellow blanket of Greymoor, was in its arms. Slowly the figure got upon its knees, carefully laid the bundle upon the ground and then fell face down upon the snow. Roderick Dhu, whining, licked a black and wrinkled outstretched hand. . . .

It seemed to Jeff that things were mighty light and airy-like and strange-feelin'. Shuddering, he remembered the fire, and of climbing a ladder—and smoke that stung his eyes. While he climbed that ladder, his feet were heavy enough, but now— It seemed he was floatin' around an' bumpin' against things like a toy balloon an' yet not feelin' it none. Maybe he was dreamin' —or was dead! If that was so, what would become o' Pilot an' ol' Rod? The best thing to do would be to open one eye slow and careful-like an' see where he was at, an' who dat was what seemed so fur off an' was doin' all dat talkin'.

Just one eye, now! Uh-huh. Ev'ything mus' be all right. Yondah on de flo' was his Greymoor blanket, so

Old Jeff halted, leaning heavily on Pilot. Wearily his eyes closed, but he managed to call feebly: "Chris'mas gif', Marse Ed! Chris'mas gif'!"

he certainly warn't daid, 'cause nobody evah heered o' *anybody* totin' a blanket to Heben—or to dat oder place either. Mos' certainly not to dat oder place! Now, if he'd jes' move his haid a lee-tle bit to de right— Uh-huh! See? What'd I tell yo'?

Dar in a cheer was Miss Ellen, a-settin' all wropped up in a shawl an' smilin', happy-like. 'Spec' dat's 'count o' Mr. Harry kneelin' down dar by 'er an' hol'in' her han' an' lookin' monst'ous serious-like an' sayin' nothin'. An' dar in de do' was dat city gemman, Mr. Winthrop. Well, bless de Lawd! He didn't eben hab his feathers swinged!

Still dazed from his hard struggle through the smoke, the old negro lay gazing about.

"Ol' Mr. Wadsworth sho' do look crabbed," thought Jeff, "fust a-lookin' at Mr. Winthrop an' den at he watch an' den at Mr. Winthrop ag'in; an' fin'ly sayin':

" 'Mr. Winthrop, ef you don't hurry you're mighty apt to miss yo' train!' An' den he sort o' grits his teeth an' dem stubby fingers o' his open an' shet an' he says: 'I's suttinly sorry, Jeff—God bless him! —didn't hab time to save yo' clothes fo' you.' An' Mr. Winthrop he jes' sort o' slinks away lak a houn'-dawg cotched liftin' a ham-bone. . . .

"Wal, I do feel curisome, but wid all dat goin' on I sho' aint daid. All dem folks sho'ly wouldn't be gwine to Heben at de same time! Dat'd sort o' be imposin' on de good Lawd's horspitality. Now, Pilot—"

Slowly Jeff sat up. He remembered Pilot was hitched to a swinging limb down yonder by the creek. He better go see—

He felt a hand patting his back; the hand kept getting heavier and the strokes slower and more emphatic. He looked up to find it was Mr. Wadsworth bending over him. Funny, Jeff didn't remember about him having weak eyes that'd water that way. Most likely some of the smoke got in 'em.

"You stay where you are, Jeff," Mr. Wadsworth was ordering, sort o' choking-like, as he shook a stubby finger. "You stay right there. I'm going to have the best doctor and nurse in this State out here for you soon."

Slowly—it did hurt; ol' Jeff stiff in he j'ints anyway an' den gittin' all swinged up!—the old negro got to his feet.

"Law, Cap'n, I's all right. You-all jes' 'scuse de ol' niggah whilst I sees 'bout Pilot."

And then Mr. Harry was gripping his two shoulders—gripping them till it all but hurt. And he too must have got smoke in his eyes, for they certainly were watery. And it seemed like something was wrong with his throat too, for he wasn't speaking so plain.

"Uncle Jeff, Uncle Jeff—" he began. But somehow no other words came.

It seemed that Miss Ellen wanted to say something to him, but she just sort of choked up and buried her face on Mr. Harry's arm.

Now she was all right, except for having to wipe her eyes with that funny little handkerchief; she turned to Mr. Wadsworth and took his broad, stubby-fingered hand in both of hers. For some reason, he got upon his knees by her side and seemed to be swallowing hard.

"Father—" she began.

"Yes, sweetheart?"

"Father, there's an old custom among gentlemen of giving a dowry with their daughters. Are you going to give one with me?"

"If you wish it, little daughter."

She drew his head to her lips and whispered into his ear. In a moment he rose to his feet and went hurrying through the doorway.

In a little while he was back again and was standing in the snow before the door and calling:

"Ellen, we're here!"

She turned to the boy at her side.

"If you'll help me a bit, Harry—" His arm was about her shoulders. "The blanket," she reminded him. Stooping, he took up the purple and yellow colors of Greymoor, and together they went out into the open.

Old Jeff followed, a little unsteadily.

As he looked on wonderingly, he saw them toss the blanket of Greymoor over Pilot's back and secure it about him. And then Miss Ellen was handing him a lead-line and was saying, though none too evenly:

"Uncle Jeff, Pilot is my dowry—a new sort of dowry—and a wedding-present too, from my father." Her voice grew unsteady. "I think, maybe, he'd like—he'd like—to go home."

Somehow, Jeff knew they weren't foolin'—weren't just "projeckin' wid de ol' niggah." As the realization came to him, his own eyes grew unruly and onto his wrinkled, leathery cheeks there fell something that his hand must brush away.

Silently—maybe they'd excuse him for not talkin' none —he took the rein in his hand and started down the drive. Though his step was a little faltering, pride seemed perching upon his shoulders. Pilot, lowering his ears, reached out and nosed his shoulder as they walked along. Behind the two soberly marched Roderick Dhu.

JEFF was glad to be "gettin' back 'fo' dahk, 'count o' havin' to fix up the ol' stable an' bed Pilot down proper. Sho' had been a long walk! Didn't know a mile could be so long." He plodded along wearily. . . .

"Yas, suh, de ol' niggah sho' was tired. He warn't ez spry ez he used to be. Anyhow, he was comin' home—an' on Chris'mas! Suttinly was a good time fo' to git back. Maybe, if he an' Pilot'd step off onto the grass an' make no noise he could ketch de folks after all—same as usual. An' there's de do'—ol' brass knocker jes' a-shinin'! Suttinly had been a long time. Good thing—de house—warn't no—further. Couldn't—hahdly—make it." . . .

Of a sudden, the door flew open and there was the Major, eyes staring, mouth open in wonderment.

Old Jeff halted, leaning heavily upon Pilot. Wearily his eyes closed, but he managed to call feebly:

"Chris'mas gif'—Marse Ed! Chris'mas—gif'!"

In Our Next Issue:

Ewing Walker brings back Little Gill, that pathetic and lovable groom who was once a great English jockey. It is a story of thoroughbreds. There are two kinds—that of lineage, and that of "heart." You will find a gripping drama of the romantic Kentucky horse region in—

"The Side-Purse"

"Put down the she," Tarzan demanded. "No!" bellowed To-yat. "She is mine!"

TARZAN
Guard of the Jungle

The Story So Far:

THE Lord of the Jungle was troubled when he learned that his domain had been invaded by a party of European agents, who were plotting to dominate the world with communism. Their leader was Peter Zveri, a ruthless Russian who brooked suggestions from no one save Zora Drinov, a beautiful Russian girl who was his confidential secretary and with whom he was in love. It was Zveri's secret plan to use his followers to aid him in conquering Africa, after which he intended to abandon them and make himself emperor with Zora as his empress. The immediate objective of the communist party was to seize the fabled gold of Opar. Their first attack was unsuccessful because the horrid cries of the Oparian half-men frightened away the black warriors of Zveri's party.

Tarzan, who had learned of their plans, went to warn the Oparians because of his friendship for the high priestess, La. He was attacked from behind and imprisoned, discovering too late that a conspiracy had dethroned La. But he escaped from the dungeon, fought his way out of Opar, and took La with him. While Tarzan was away hunting, La awakened. She decided Tarzan had disappeared, and started to find him. She lost her way and Tarzan, returning later, searched the jungle in vain for her.

Soon Zveri started another advance upon Opar. He ordered the Sheik Abu Batu, and his warriors, to guard the base camp. Abu Batu had the Aarab's antagonism for Europeans, but he had joined Zveri through his lust for loot and his hatred of British authority. He resented Zveri's orders as an aspersion on his courage, and decided to desert.

While these plans were in progress, La arrived at the camp. The Aarabs captured her, and when they fled the camp they took Zora and La, intending to sell them on the slave-block. Zora and La became friends, and Zora feared that Ibn Dammuk, one of Abu Batu's lieutenants, coveted La. The girls had learned to converse, though haltingly, and they often talked of escape.

Zveri's second attack on Opar was unsuccessful through his own cowardice. In his flight, he abandoned Wayne Colt to the Oparians. Colt was an American, whose allegiance the communists desired because his reputed wealth would aid prestige to the organization. But Zveri was secretly pleased at the loss of Colt, for he suspected him of winning Zora's affections. However, Colt was not killed, as they thought, but had been captured and condemned to death. That night as he lay wakeful in his cell, he saw a figure approaching silently.

Zveri's demoralized party was now reduced to two other Russians, Michael Dorsky and Paul Ivitch; a Mexican, Miguel Romero; Kitembo, an African chieftain and his

Copyright, 1930, by Edgar Rice Burroughs. All rights reserved.

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

In the realm of the purely imaginative, no narrative is more fascinating than this, in which many diverse elements are skillfully woven into a tale of sheer romance.

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

black Galla warriors, who sought to regain the power lost through British rule. Tarzan roamed through the jungle, seeking La, while Abu Batu led his loot-laden party to the edge of the Galla country, and Zveri's would-be marauders withdrew again to their temporary camp. *(The story continues in detail:)*

IT was a sullen and discouraged party that made its way back to the camp at the edge of the forest below the barrier cliffs of Opar, and when they arrived late in the evening it was to find only still further disorganization and discouragement.

No time was lost in narrating to the members of the returning expedition the story of the sentry who had been carried off into the jungle at night by a demon, from whom the man had managed to escape before being devoured. Still fresh in their minds was the uncanny affair of the death of Raghunath Jafar. Nor were the nerves of those who had been before the walls of Opar inclined to be at all steadied by that experience; so it was a nervous company which bivouacked that night beneath the dark trees at the edge of the gloomy forest and, with sighs of relief, witnessed the coming of the next dawn.

Later, after they had taken up the march toward the base camp, the spirit of the blacks gradually returned to normal and presently the tension under which they had been laboring for days was relieved by song and laughter. But the whites were gloomy and sullen. Zveri and Romero did not speak to one another, while Ivitch, like all weak characters, nursed a grievance against everyone because of his own display of cowardice during the fiasco at Opar.

From the interior of a hollow tree in which he had been hiding, little Nkima saw the column pass and after it was safely by he emerged from his retreat and dancing up and down upon a limb of the tree, shouted dire threats after them and called them many names. . . .

Tarzan of the Apes lay stretched upon the back of Tantor the elephant, his elbows upon the broad head, his chin resting in his cupped hand. Futile had been his search for the spoor of La of Opar. Had the earth opened and swallowed her she could not more effectually have disappeared.

Today Tarzan had come upon Tantor, and as had been his custom from childhood, he had tarried for that silent communion with the sagacious old patriarch of the forest which seemed always to impart to the man something of the beast's great strength of character and poise. There was an atmosphere of restful stability about Tantor which filled the ape-man with a peace and tranquillity that he found restful, while Tantor, upon his part, welcomed the companionship of the Lord of the Jungle, whom alone of all two-legged creatures he viewed with friendship and affection.

The beasts of the jungle acknowledge no master, least of all the cruel tyrant that drives civilized man throughout his headlong race from the cradle to the grave—Time, the master of countless millions of slaves. Time, the measurable aspect of duration, was measureless to Tarzan and Tantor.

Of all the vast resources Nature had placed at their disposal, she had been most profligate with time, since she had awarded to each all that he could use during his lifetime, no matter how extravagant of it he might be. So great was the supply of it that it could not be wasted, since there was always more, even up to the moment of death, after which it ceased, with all things, to be essential to the individual. Tantor and Tarzan, therefore, were wasting no time as they communed together in silent meditation. But though time and space go on forever, whether in curves or straight lines, all other things must end—and so it was that the quiet and the peace the two friends were enjoying was suddenly shattered by the excited screams of a diminutive monkey in the foliage of a great tree above them.

It was Nkima. He had found his Tarzan, and his relief and joy aroused the jungle to the limit of his small shrill voice. Lazily Tarzan rolled over and looked up at the jabbering simian above him and then Nkima, satisfied now beyond peradventure of a doubt that this was indeed his master, launched himself downward to alight upon the bronzed body of the ape-man. Slender, hairy little arms went around Tarzan's neck as Nkima snuggled close to this haven of refuge which imparted to him those brief moments in his life when he might enjoy the raptures of a temporary superiority complex. Upon Tarzan's shoulder he felt al-

most fearless, and could with impunity insult the entire world.

"Where have you been, Nkima?" asked Tarzan.

"Looking for Tarzan," replied the monkey.

"What have you seen since I left you at the walls of Opar?" demanded the ape-man.

"I have seen many things. I have seen the great Mangani dancing in the moonlight around the dead body of Sheeta. I have seen the enemies of Tarzan marching through the forest. I have seen Histah, gorging himself on the carcass of Bara."

"Have you seen a Tarmangani she?" demanded Tarzan.

"No," replied Nkima. "There were no shes among the Gomangani and Tarmangani enemies of Tarzan. Only bulls, and they marched back toward the place where Nkima first saw them."

"When was this?" asked Tarzan.

"Kudu had climbed into the heavens but a short distance out of the darkness when Nkima saw the enemies of Tarzan marching back to the place where he first saw them."

"Perhaps we had better see what they are up to," said the ape-man. He slapped Tantor affectionately with his open palm in farewell, leaped to his feet and swung nimbly into the overhanging branches of a tree, while far away Zveri and his party plodded through the jungle toward their base camp.

Tarzan of the Apes follows no earth-bound trails where the density of the forest offers him the freedom of leafy highways, and thus he moves from point to point with a speed that has often been disconcerting to his enemies.

Now he moved in an almost direct line so that he overtook the expedition as it made camp for the night. As he watched them from behind a leafy screen of high-flung foliage, he noticed, though with no surprise, that they were not burdened with any treasure from Opar.

As the success and happiness of jungle-dwellers—even life itself—is largely dependent upon their powers of observation, Tarzan had developed his to a high degree of perfection. At his first encounter with this party he had made himself familiar with the face, physique and carriage of each of its principals and of many of its humble warriors and porters—with the result that he was now immediately aware that Colt was no longer with the expedition. Experience permitted Tarzan to draw a fairly accurate picture of what had happened at Opar and the probable fate of the missing member of the expedition.

Years ago he had seen his own courageous Waziri turn and flee upon the occasion of their first experience of the weird warning screams from the ruined city and he could easily guess that Colt, attempting to lead the invaders into the city, had been deserted, and had found either death or capture within the gloomy interior. This, however, did not greatly concern Tarzan. While he had been rather drawn toward Colt by that tenuous and invisible power known as personality, he still considered him as an enemy, and if Colt were either dead or captured Tarzan's cause was advanced by just that much.

Tarzan noticed the constrained and sullen manner of the remainder of the whites and guessed that all was not well among them.

From Tarzan's shoulder Nkima looked down upon the camp, but he kept silent, as Tarzan had instructed him to do. Nkima saw many things that he should have liked to possess and particularly he coveted a red calico shirt worn by one of the *askari*. This, he thought, was very grand indeed, being set off as it was by the unrelieved nakedness of the majority of the blacks. Nkima wished that his master would descend and slay them all, but particularly the man with the red shirt—for at heart Nkima was bloodthirsty, which made it fortunate for the peace of the jungle that he had not been born a gorilla. But Tarzan's mind was not set upon carnage. He had other means for thwarting the activities of these strangers. During the day he had made a kill and now he withdrew to a safe distance from the camp and satisfied his hunger, while Nkima searched for birds' eggs, fruit and insects.

And so night fell and when it had enveloped the jungle in impenetrable darkness, relieved only by the beast-fires of the camp, Tarzan returned to a tree where he could overlook the activities of the bivouacked expedition. He watched them in silence for a long time; then suddenly he raised his voice in a long scream that mimicked perfectly the hideous warning cry of Opar's defenders.

The effect upon the camp was instantaneous. Conversation, singing and laughter ceased. For a moment the men sat as in a paralysis of terror. Then, seizing their weapons, they came closer to the fire.

With the shadow of a smile upon his lips, Tarzan slipped away into the jungle.

CHAPTER XII

The Love of a Priestess

Ibn Dammuk had bided his time and now, in the camp by the swollen river at the edge of the Galla country, he at last found the opportunity he had so long awaited. The surveillance over the two prisoners had somewhat relaxed, due largely to the belief entertained by Abu Batu that the women would not dare to invite the perils of the jungle by attempting to escape from captors who were, at the same time, their protectors from even greater dangers. He had, however, reckoned without just estimation of the courage and resourcefulness of his two captives who, had he but known it, were constantly awaiting the first opportunity for escape; and it was this fact as well that played into the hands of Ibn Dammuk.

With great cunning he enlisted the services of one of the blacks who had been forced to accompany them from the base camp and who was virtually a prisoner, and by promising him his liberty he easily gained the man's acquiescence in the plan that Ibn Dammuk had evolved.

A separate tent had been pitched for the two women and before it sat a single sentry, whose presence Abu Batu considered more than sufficient for the purpose, which was even more to protect the women from his own followers than to prevent a remotely possible attempt at escape.

This night, which Ibn Dammuk had chosen for his villainy, was one for which he had been waiting, since it found upon duty before the tent of the captives one of his own men, a member of his tribe, who was bound by laws of hereditary loyalty to serve and obey him. In the forest just beyond the camp, Ibn Dammuk waited, with two more of his own tribesmen, four slaves that they had brought from the desert and the black porter who was to win his liberty by this night's work.

The interior of the tent that had been pitched for Zora and La was illuminated by a paper lantern, in which a candle burned dimly, and in this subdued light the two sat talking in La's newly acquired English, which was at best most fragmentary and broken. However, it was far better than no means of communication and gave the two girls the only pleasure that they enjoyed. Perhaps it was not a remarkable coincidence that this night they were speaking of escape and planning to cut a hole in the back of their tent through which they might sneak away into the jungle after the camp had settled down for the night and their sentry should be dozing at his post, for frequently much of their conversation was upon the topic of escape. While they

conversed, the sentry before their tent rose and strolled away and a moment later they heard a scratching upon the back of the tent. Their conversation ceased and they sat with eyes riveted upon the point where the fabric of the tent moved to the pressure of the scratching without.

Presently a voice spoke in a low whisper. "Memsahib Drinov!"

"Who is it? What do you want?" asked Zora in a low voice.

"I have found a way to escape. I can help you if you wish."

"Who are you?" demanded Zora.

"I am Bukula"—and Zora at once recognized the name as that of one of the blacks that Abu Batu had forced to accompany him from the base camp.

"Put out your lantern," whispered Bukula. "The sentry has gone away. I will come in and tell you my plans."

Zora arose and blew out the candle and a moment later the two captives saw Bukula crawling into the interior of the tent. "Listen, Memsahib," he said, "the boys that Abu Batu stole from Bwana Zveri are running away tonight. We are going back to the safari. We will take you two with us, if you want to come."

"Yes," said Zora, "we will come."

"That is good," said Bukula. "And now listen well to what I tell you. The sentry will not come back, but we cannot all go out at once. First I will take this other Memsahib with me out into the jungle where the boys are waiting; then I will return for you. You can make talk to her. Tell her to follow me and to make no noise."

Zora turned to La. "Follow Bukula," she said. "We are going tonight. I will come after you."

"I understand," replied La.

"It is agreed, Bukula," said Zora. "She understands."

"Have you seen a Tarmangani she?" demanded Tarzan. "No," replied Nkima, "there were no shes among the Tarmangani—only bulls."

Bukula stepped to the entrance to the tent and looked quickly about the camp. "Come!" he said; and followed by La, he disappeared quickly from Zora's view.

The European girl fully realized the risk that they ran of going into the jungle alone with these half-savage blacks, yet she trusted them more implicitly than she did the Aarabs and, too, she felt that she and La together might circumvent any treachery upon the part of any of the negroes, the majority of whom she knew would be loyal and faithful. Waiting in the silence and loneliness of the darkened tent, it seemed to Zora that it took Bukula an unnecessarily long time to return for her; and when minute after minute dragged slowly past until she felt that she had waited for hours and there was no sign either of the black or the sentry, her fears were aroused in earnest. Presently she determined not to wait any longer for Bukula, but to go out into the jungle in search of the escaping party. She thought that perhaps Bukula had been unable to return without risking detection and that they were all waiting just beyond the camp for a favorable opportunity to return to her. As she arose to put her decision into action, she heard footsteps approaching the tent and thinking that they were Bukula's she waited, but instead she saw the flapping robe and the long-barreled musket of an Aarab silhouetted against the lesser darkness of the exterior as the man stuck his head inside the tent. "Where is Hajellan?" he demanded, giving the name of the departed sentry.

"How should we know?" retorted Zora in a sleepy voice. "Why do you awaken us thus in the middle of the night?"

The fellow grumbled something in reply and then, turning, called aloud across the camp, announcing to all who might hear that Hajellan was missing and inquiring if any had seen him. Other warriors strolled over then and there was a great deal of speculation as to what had become of Hajellan. The name of the missing man was called aloud many times, but there was no response, and finally the Sheik came and questioned every one. "The women are in the tent yet?" he demanded of the new sentry.

"Yes," replied the man. "I have talked with them."

"It is strange," said Abu Batu and then, "Ibn Dammuk!" he cried. "Where art thou, Ibn? Hajellan was one of thy men." There was no answer. "Where is Ibn Dammuk?"

"He is not here," said a man standing near the Sheik.

"Nor are Fodil and Dareyem," said another.

"Search the camp and see who is missing," demanded Abu Batu, and when the search had been made they found that Ibn Dammuk, Hajellan, Fodil and Dareyem were missing with five of the blacks.

"Ibn Dammuk has deserted us," said Abu Batu. "Well, let it go. There will be fewer with whom to share the reward we shall reap when we are paid for the two women!" And thus reconciling himself to the loss of four good fighting men, Abu Batu repaired to his tent and resumed his interrupted slumber.

Weighed down by apprehension as to the fate of La and disappointment occasioned by her own failure to escape, Zora spent an almost sleepless night; yet fortunate for her peace of mind was it that she did not know the truth. . . .

Bukula moved silently into the jungle, followed by La, and when they had gone a short distance from the camp the girl saw the dark forms of men standing in a little group ahead of them.

The Aarabs, in their telltale thobs, were hidden in the underbrush, but their slaves had removed their own white robes and, with Bukula, were standing naked but for geestrings, thus carrying conviction to the mind of the girl that only black prisoners of Abu Batu awaited her.

When she came among them she learned her mistake, but too late to save herself—for she was quickly seized by many hands and effectually gagged before she could give the alarm. Then Ibn Dammuk and his Aarab companions appeared and silently the party moved on down the river through the dark forest.

All night they fled, for Ibn Dammuk well guessed what the wrath of Abu Batu would be when in the morning he discovered the trick that had been played upon him. When morning dawned they were far away from camp, but still Ibn Dammuk pushed on, after a brief halt for a hurried breakfast.

Long since had the gag been removed from La's mouth and now Ibn Dammuk walked beside her, gloating upon his prize. He spoke to her, but La could not understand him. She only strode on in haughty disdain, biding her time

against the moment when she might be revenged, and inwardly sorrowing over her separation from Zora, for whom a strange affection had been aroused in her savage breast.

Toward noon the party withdrew from the game trail which they had been following and made camp near the river. It was here that Ibn Dammuk made a fatal blunder.

Goaded to passion by close proximity to the beautiful woman for whom he had conceived a mad infatuation, the Aarab gave way to his desire to be alone with her. Leading her along a little trail that paralleled the river, he took her away out of sight of his companions and when they had gone perhaps a hundred yards from camp, he seized her in his arms and sought to kiss her.

With equal safety might Ibn Dammuk have embraced a lion. In the heat of his passion he forgot many things, among them the dagger that hung always at his side. But La of Opar did not forget. With the coming of daylight she had noticed that dagger and ever since she had coveted it; now, as the man pressed her close, her hand sought and found its hilt. For an instant she seemed to surrender. She let her body go limp in his arms, while her own, firm and beautifully rounded, crept about him, one to his right shoulder, the other beneath his left arm. But as yet she did not give him her lips; and as he struggled to possess them the hand upon his shoulder seized him suddenly by the throat. The long, tapered fingers that seemed so soft and white were suddenly claws of steel that closed upon his windpipe, and simultaneously the hand that had crept so softly beneath his left arm drove his own long dagger into his heart from beneath his shoulder-blade.

The single cry that he might have given was choked in his throat. For an instant the tall form of Ibn Dammuk stood rigidly erect; then it slumped forward and the girl let it slip to the earth. She spurned it once with her foot, then she removed from it the girdle and sheath for the dagger, wiped the bloody blade upon the man's thôb and hurried on up the little river trail until she found an opening in the underbrush that led away from the stream. On and on she went until exhaustion overtook her; then, with her remaining strength, she climbed into a tree in search of much-needed rest. . . .

In far-away Opar Wayne Colt watched the shadowy figure approach the corridor where his cell lay. He wondered if this was a messenger of death, coming to lead him to sacrifice. Nearer and nearer it came until presently it stopped before the bars of his cell door; then a soft voice spoke to him in a low whisper and in a tongue which he could not understand, and he knew that his visitor was a woman.

Prompted by curiosity, he came close to the bars. A small soft hand reached in and touched him, almost caressingly.

A full moon rising above the high walls that surround the sacrificial court suddenly flooded the mouth of the corridor and the entrance to Colt's cell in silvery light and in it the American saw the figure of a young girl pressed against the cold iron bars of the grating. She handed him food; when he took it she caressed his hand and drawing it to the bars pressed her lips against it.

Wayne Colt was nonplused. He could not know that Nao, the little priestess, had been the victim of love at first sight—that to her eyes, accustomed to the sight of males only in the form of the hairy grotesque priests of Opar, this stranger appeared a god indeed.

A slight noise attracted Nao's attention toward the court and, as she turned, the moonlight flooded her face and the American saw that she was very lovely. Then she turned back toward him, her dark eyes wells of adoration, her full, sensitive lips trembling with emotion as, still clinging to his hand, she spoke rapidly in low liquid tones.

She was trying to tell Colt that at noon of the second day he was to be offered in sacrifice to the Flaming God; that she did not wish him to die and if it were possible she would help him, but that she did not know how that would be possible.

Colt shook his head. "I cannot understand you, little one," he said, and Nao, though she could not interpret his words, sensed the futility of her own. Then, raising one of her hands from his, she made a great circle in a vertical plane from east to west with a slender index finger, indicating the path of the sun across the heavens, and then she started a second circle, which she stopped at zenith, indicating high noon of the second day. For an instant her raised hand poised dramatically aloft and then, the fingers closing as though around the hilt of an imaginary sacrificial knife, she plunged the invisible point deep into her bosom.

"Thus will Oah destroy you," she said, reaching through the bars and touching Colt over the heart.

The American thought that he understood the meaning of her pantomime, which he then repeated, plunging the imaginary blade into his own breast and looking questioningly at Nao.

In reply she nodded sadly and the tears welled to her eyes.

As plainly as though he had understood her words, Colt realized that here was a friend who would help him if she could and reaching through the bars, he drew the girl gently toward him and pressed his lips against her forehead. With a low sob Nao encircled his neck with her arms and pressed her face to his. Then as suddenly she released him and turning, hurried away on silent feet, to disappear in the gloomy shadows of an archway at one side of the court of sacrifice.

Colt ate the food that she had brought him and for a long time lay pondering the inexplicable forces which govern the acts of men. What train of circumstances leading down out of a mysterious past had produced this single human being in a city of enemies in whom all unsuspecting,

"Go—taking the heart of Nao with you!" she said. "I shall never see you again, but I shall have the memory of this hour."

there must always have existed a germ of potential friendship for him, an utter stranger and alien, of whose very existence she could not possibly have dreamed before this day? He tried to convince himself that the girl had been prompted to her act by pity for his plight, but he knew in his heart that a more powerful motive must have impelled her.

Colt had been attracted to many women but he had never loved, and he wondered if that was the way that love came and if some day it would seize him as it had seized this girl, and he wondered also if, had conditions been different, he might have been as strongly attracted to her. If not, then there seemed to be something wrong in the scheme of things. . . . And still puzzling over this riddle of the ages he fell asleep upon the hard floor of his cell.

WITH morning a hairy priest came and gave him food and water, and during the day others came and gazed at him, as though he were a wild beast in a menagerie. And so the long day dragged on and once again night came—his last night.

He tried to picture what the final ceremony would be like. It seemed almost incredible that in the Twentieth Century he was to be offered as a human sacrifice to some heathen deity, but the pantomime of the girl, and the concrete evidence of the bloody altar and the grinning skulls assured him that such must be the very fate awaiting him upon the morrow. He thought of his family and his friends at home. They would never know what had become of him. He weighed his sacrifice against the mission that he had undertaken and he had no regret, for he knew that it had not been in vain. Far away, already near the Coast, was the message he had dispatched by the runner. It would insure that he had not failed in his part for the sake of a great principle for which, if necessary, he was glad to lay down his life. He was glad that he had acted promptly and sent the message when he did—for now, upon the morrow, he could go to his death without vain regrets. But he did not wish to die, and during the day he made many plans to seize upon the slightest opportunity that might be presented to him to escape.

He wondered what had become of the girl and if she would come again now that it was dark. He wished that she would, for he craved the companionship of a friend during his last hours, but as the night wore on he gave up the hope and sought to forget the morrow in sleep. . . .

As Wayne Colt moved restlessly upon his hard couch Firg, a lesser priest of Opar, snored upon his pallet of straw in the small dark recess that was his bedchamber. Firg was the keeper of the keys and so impressed was he with the importance of his duties that he never would permit anyone even to touch the sacred emblems of his trust. Because it was well known that Firg would die in defense of them was probably the reason that they were intrusted to him. Not with justice could Firg have laid any claim to intellectuality, if he had known that such a thing existed. He was only an abysmal man and, like many men, far beneath the so-called brutes in most of his activities of mind. When he slept all his faculties were asleep—which is not true of wild beasts when they sleep.

Firg's cell was in one of the upper stories of the ruins that still remained intact. It was upon a corridor that encircled the main temple court—a corridor that was now in dense shadow, since the moon, touching it early in the night, had passed on; so the figure creeping stealthily toward the entrance to Firg's chamber would have been noticeable only to one who happened to be quite close. It moved silently but without hesitation, until it came to the entrance beyond which Firg lay. There it paused, listening, and when it heard Firg's noisy snoring, it entered quickly. Straight to the side of the sleeping man it moved and there it knelt, searching with one hand lightly over his body, while the other grasped a long sharp knife that hovered constantly above the hairy chest of the priest.

Presently it found what it wanted—a great ring, upon which were strung several enormous keys. A leather thong fastened the ring to Firg's girdle and with the keen blade of the dagger the nocturnal visitor sought to sever the thong. Firg stirred and instantly the creature at his side froze to immobility. Then the priest moved restlessly and commenced to snore again and once more the dagger sawed at the leather thong. It passed through the strand unexpectedly and touched the metal of the ring lightly, but just enough to make the keys jangle ever so slightly.

Instantly Firg was awake; but he did not rise. He was never to rise again—silently, swiftly, before the stupid creature could realize his danger, the keen blade of the dagger had pierced his heart.

Soundlessly Firg collapsed. His slayer hesitated a moment with poised dagger as though to make certain that the work had been well done. Then, wiping the telltale stains from the dagger's blade with the victim's loin-cloth, the figure arose and hurried from the chamber, carrying in one hand the great keys upon their golden ring.

Colt stirred uneasily in his sleep and then awakened with a start. In the waning moonlight he saw a figure beyond the grating of his cell. He heard a key turn in the massive lock. Could it be that they were coming for him? He rose to his feet, the urge of his last conscious thought strong upon him—escape. And then as the door swung open a soft voice spoke and he knew that the girl had returned.

She entered the cell and threw her arms about Colt's neck, drawing his lips down to hers. For a moment she clung to him; then she released him and, taking one of his hands in hers, urged him to follow her; nor was the American loath to leave the depressing interior of the death-cell.

On silent feet Nao led the way across the corner of the sacrificial court, through a dark archway into a gloomy corridor. Winding and twisting, keeping always in dark shadows, she led him along a circuitous route through the ruins until, after what seemed an eternity to Colt, the girl opened a low, strong, wooden door and led him into the great entrance-hall of the temple, through the mighty portal of which he could see the inner wall of the city.

Here Nao halted, and coming close to the man looked up into his eyes. Again her arms stole about his neck and again she pressed her lips to his. Her cheeks were wet with tears and her voice broke with little sobs that she tried to stifle as she poured her love into the ears of the man who could not understand. She had brought him here to offer him his freedom, but she could not let him go yet. She clung to him, caressing him and crooning to him.

FOR long minutes she held him there and Colt had not the heart to tear himself away.

At last she released him and pointed toward the opening in the inner wall.

"Go—taking the heart of Nao with you!" she said. "I shall never see you again, but at least I shall always have the memory of this hour to carry through life with me."

Wayne Colt stooped and kissed her hand, the slender, savage little hand that had but just now killed, that her lover might live—though of that Wayne knew nothing.

She pressed her dagger with its sheath upon him that he might not go out into the savage world unarmed; then he turned away from her and moved slowly toward the inner wall. At the entrance to the opening he paused and turned about. Dimly, in the moonlight, he saw the figure of the little priestess standing very erect in the shadows of the

ancient ruins. He raised his hand and waved a final, silent farewell.

A great sadness depressed Colt as he passed through the inner wall and crossed the court to freedom, for he knew that he had left behind him a sad and hopeless heart in the bosom of one who must have risked death, perhaps, to save him—a perfect friend of whom he could but carry a vague memory of a half-seen lovely face, a friend whose name he did not know, the only token of whom he had carried away with him were the memory of hot kisses and a slender dagger.

And thus, as Wayne Colt walked across the moonlit plain of Opar, the joy of his escape was tempered by sadness as he recalled the figure of the forlorn little priestess standing in the shadows of the ruins.

CHAPTER XIII

Lost In the Jungle

IT was some time after the uncanny scream had disturbed the camp of the conspirators before the men could settle down to rest again.

Zveri believed that they had been followed by a band of Oparian warriors, who might be contemplating a night attack, and so he placed a heavy guard about the camp; but his blacks were confident that that unearthly cry had broken from no human throat.

Depressed and dispirited, the men resumed their march the following morning. They made an early start and by dint of much driving arrived at the base camp just before dark. The sight that met their eyes there filled them with consternation. The camp had disappeared and in the center of the clearing where it had been pitched a pile of ashes suggested that disaster had overtaken the party which had been left behind.

This new disaster threw Zveri into a maniacal rage, but there was no one present upon whom he might lay the blame, and so he was reduced to the expedient of tramping back and forth while he cursed his luck in loud tones and several languages.

From a tree Tarzan watched him. He too was at a loss to understand the nature of the disaster that seemed to have overtaken the camp during the absence of the main party, but he saw that it caused the leader intense anguish and the ape-man was pleased.

The blacks were confident that this was another manifestation of the anger of the malign spirit that had been haunting them and they were all for deserting this ill-starred white man, whose every move ended in failure or disaster.

Zveri's powers of leadership deserve full credit, since from the verge of almost certain mutiny he forced his men by means of both cajolery and threat to remain with him. He set them to building shelters for the entire party and immediately he dispatched messengers to his various agents, urging them to forward necessary supplies immediately. He knew that certain things he needed already were on the way from the Coast—uniforms, rifles, ammunition. But now he particularly needed provisions and trade-goods.

To insure discipline, he kept the men working constantly, either in adding to the comforts of the camp, enlarging the clearing or hunting fresh meat.

And so the days passed and became weeks; meanwhile Tarzan watched in waiting. He was in no hurry, for hurry is not a characteristic of the beasts. He roamed the jungle often at a considerable distance from Zveri's camp, but occasionally he would return, though not to molest them, preferring to let them lull themselves into a stupor of tranquil security, the shattering of which in his own good time would have dire effect upon their morale. . . .

To the camp of Abu Batu, on the border of the Galla country, word had come from spies he had sent out that Galla warriors were gathering to prevent his passage through their territory. The Sheik, weakened by the desertion of so many men, dared not defy the bravery and numbers of the Galla warriors, but he knew that he must make some move, since it seemed inevitable that pursuit must overtake him from the rear if he remained where he was much longer.

At last scouts whom he had sent far up the river on the opposite side returned to report that a way to the west seemed clear along a more northerly route, and so breaking camp, Abu Batu moved north with his lone prisoner.

Great had been his rage when he discovered that Ibn Dammuk had stolen La, and now he redoubled his precaution to prevent the escape of Zora Drinov.

So closely was she guarded that any possibility of escape seemed almost hopeless. She had learned the fate for which Abu Batu was reserving her and now, depressed and melancholy, her mind was occupied with plans for self-destruction. For a time she had harbored the hope that Zveri would overtake the Aarabs and rescue her, but this she had long since discarded, as day after day passed without bringing the hoped-for succor.

She could not know, of course, the straits in which Zveri had found himself. He had not dared to detach a party of his men to search for her, fearing that in their mutinous state of mind they might murder any of his lieutenants that he placed in charge of them and return to their own tribe, where, through the medium of gossip, word of his expedition and its activities might reach his enemies; nor could he lead all of his force upon such an expedition in person, since he must remain at the base camp to receive the supplies he knew would presently be arriving.

Perhaps, had he known definitely the danger that was

Ibn Dammuk moved to draw his pistol. In that instant Colt was upon him again.

confronting Zora, he would have cast aside every other consideration and gone to her rescue, but being naturally suspicious of the loyalty of all men, he persuaded himself that Zora had deliberately deserted him—a half-hearted conviction that had at least the effect of rendering his naturally unpleasant disposition infinitely more unbearable, so that those who should have been his companions and his support in his hour of need contrived to keep out of his way as much as possible.

And while these things were transpiring, little Nkima sped through the jungle upon a mission. In the service of his beloved master, little Nkima could hold to a single thought and a line of action for considerable periods of time at a stretch, but eventually his attention was certain to be attracted by some extraneous matter and then, for hours perhaps, he would forget all about whatever duty had been imposed upon him, though when it again occurred to him he would carry on without any realization of the fact that there had been a break in the continuity of his endeavor.

Tarzan was of course entirely aware of this inherent weakness in his little friend, but he knew too from experience that however many lapses might occur Nkima would never entirely abandon any design upon which his mind had been fixed, and having himself none of civilized man's slavish subservience to time, he was prone to overlook Nkima's erratic performance of a duty as a fault of almost negligible consequence. Some day Nkima would arrive at his destination. Perhaps it would be too late. If such a thought occurred at all to the ape-man, doubtless he passed it off with a shrug. . . .

But time is of the essence of many things to civilized man. He fumes and frets and reduces his mental and physical efficiency if he is not accomplishing something concrete during the passage of every minute of that medium which seems to him like a flowing river, the waters of which are utterly wasted if they are not utilized as they pass by.

Imbued by some such insane conception of time, Wayne Colt sweated and stumbled through the jungle, seeking his companions as though the very fate of the universe hung upon the slender chance that he should reach them without the loss of a second.

The futility of his purpose would have been entirely apparent to him could he have known that he was seeking in the wrong direction for his companions. Wayne Colt was lost. Fortunately for him he did not know it—at least not yet; that stupefying conviction was to come later.

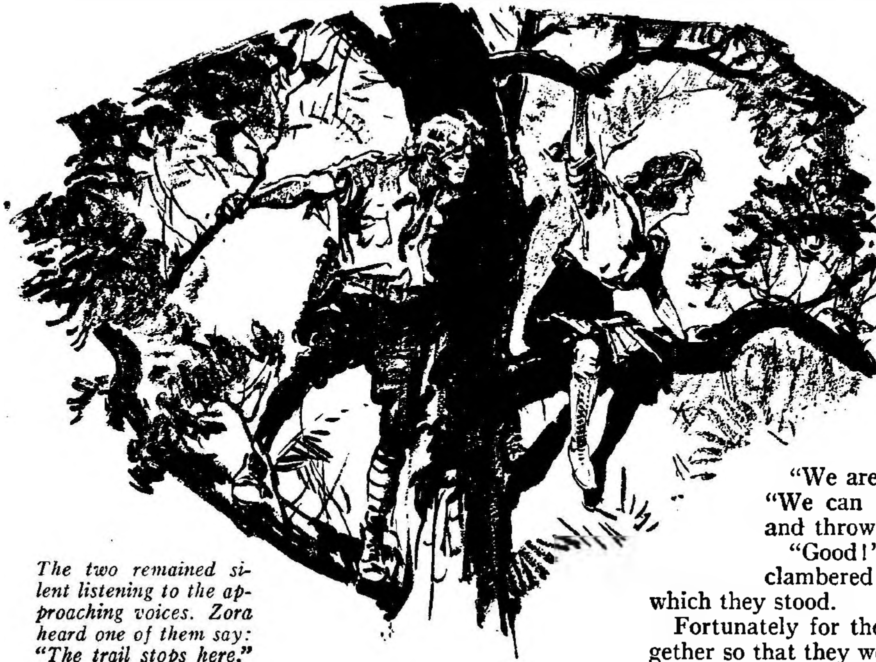
Days passed; still his wanderings revealed no camp. He was hard put to it to find food and his fare was meager and often revolting, consisting of such fruits as he had already learned to know and of rodents, which he managed to bag only with the greatest difficulty and an appalling waste of that precious time which he still prized above all things. He had cut himself a stout stick and would lie in wait along some tiny runway where observation had taught him he might expect to find his prey, until some unwary little creature came within striking distance. He had learned that dawn and dusk were the best hunting hours for the only animals that he could hope to bag—and he learned other things as he moved through the grim jungle, all of which pertained to his struggle for existence. He had learned, for instance, that it was wiser for him to take to the trees whenever he heard a strange noise. Usually the animals got out of his way as he approached, but once a rhinoceros charged him and again he almost stumbled upon a lion at his kill. Providence intervened in each instance and he escaped unharmed, but thus he learned caution.

About noon one day he came to a river that effectually blocked his further progress in the direction that he had been traveling. By this time the conviction was strong upon him that he was utterly lost, and not knowing which direction he should take, he decided to follow the line of least resistance and travel downstream with the river, upon the shore of which he was positive that sooner or later he must discover a native village.

He had proceeded no great distance in the new direction, following a hard-packed trail, worn deep by the countless feet of many beasts, when his attention was arrested by a sound that reached his ears dimly from a distance. It came from somewhere ahead of him and his hearing, now far more acute than it ever had been before, told him that something was approaching. Following the practice that he had found most conducive to longevity since he had been wandering alone and ill-armed against the dangers of the jungle, he flung himself quickly into a tree and sought a point of vantage from where he could see the trail below him. He could not see it for any distance ahead, so tortuously did it wind through the jungle. Whatever was coming would not be visible until it was almost directly beneath him but that now was of no importance. This experience of the jungle had taught him patience, and perchance

he was learning also a little of the valuelessness of time, for he settled himself comfortably to wait at his ease.

The noise that he heard was little more than an imperceptible rustling, but presently it assumed a new volume and a new significance, so that now he was sure it was some one running rapidly along the trail, and not one but two—he distinctly heard the footfalls of the heavier creature mingling with those he had first heard.



The two remained silent listening to the approaching voices. Zora heard one of them say: "The trail stops here."

Then he heard a man's voice cry "Stop!" Now the sounds were very close to him, just around the first bend ahead. The sound of running feet stopped, to be followed by that of a scuffle and strange oaths in a man's voice.

And then a woman's voice spoke. "Let me go! You will never get me where you are taking me alive."

"Then I'll take you for myself now," said the man.

Colt had heard enough. There had been something familiar in the tones of the woman's voice. Silently he dropped to the trail, drawing his dagger, and stepped quickly toward the sounds of the altercation. As he rounded the bend in the trail he saw just before him only a man's back—by thôb and thorîb evidently an Aarab—but beyond the man and in his clutches Colt knew the woman was hidden by the flowing robes of her assailant.

Leaping forward he seized the fellow by the shoulder and jerked him suddenly about; as the man faced him Colt saw that it was Abu Batu and now he knew too why the voice of the woman had seemed familiar—she was Zora Drinov.

Abu Batu grew purple with rage at this interruption, but great as was his anger, so too was his surprise great, as he recognized the American. Just for an instant he thought that possibly this was the advance guard of a party of searchers and avengers from Zveri's camp, but as he observed the unkempt, disheveled, unarmed condition of Colt he realized that the man was alone and doubtless lost.

"Dog of a Nasrâny!" he cried, jerking away from Colt's grasp. "Lay not your filthy hand upon a true believer!" At the same time he moved to draw his pistol. In that instant Colt was upon him again, and the two men went down in the narrow trail, the American on top.

What happened then, happened very quickly. Abu Batu drew his pistol; in doing so he caught the hammer in the folds of his thôb and the weapon was discharged. The bullet went harmlessly into the ground, but the report warned Colt of his imminent danger and in self-defense he ran his blade through the Sheik's throat.

As he rose slowly from the body of the Aarab, Zora Drinov grasped him by the arm. "Quick!" she said. "That shot will bring the others. They must not find us."

He did not wait to question her, but, stooping, quickly salvaged Abu Batu's weapons and ammunition, including a long musket that lay in the trail beside him; then with Zora in the lead they ran swiftly up the trail, down which he had just come.

Presently, hearing no indication of pursuit, Colt halted the girl.

"Can you climb?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied. "Why?"

"We are going to take to the trees," he said. "We can go into the jungle a short distance and throw them off the trail."

"Good!" she said, and with his assistance clambered into the branches of a tree beneath which they stood.

Fortunately for them, several large trees grew close together so that they were able to make their way with comparative ease for a full hundred feet from the trail, where, climbing high into the branches of a great tree, they were effectually hidden from sight in all directions.

When at last they were seated side by side in a great crotch, Zora turned toward Colt. "Comrade Colt!" she said. "What has happened? What are you doing here alone? Were you looking for me?"

The man grinned. "I was looking for the whole party," he said. "I have seen no one since we entered Opar. Where is the camp and why was Abu Batu pursuing you?"

"We are a long way from the camp," replied Zora. "I do not know how far, though I could return to it if it were not for the Aarabs." And then briefly she told the story of Abu Batu's treachery and of her captivity. "The Sheik made a temporary camp shortly after noon today. The men were very tired and for the first time in days they relaxed their vigilance over me. I realized that at last the moment I had been awaiting so anxiously had arrived and while they slept I escaped into the jungle. My absence must have been discovered shortly after I left and Abu Batu overtook me. The rest you witnessed."

"Fate has functioned deviously and altogether wonderfully," he said. "To think that your only chance of rescue hinged upon the contingency of my capture at Opar!"

She smiled. "Fate reaches back farther than that," she said. "Suppose you had not been born?"

"Then Abu Batu would have carried you off to the harem of some black sultan, or perhaps another man would have been captured at Opar."

"I am glad that you were born," said Zora.

While listening for signs of pursuit, they conversed in low tones, Colt narrating in detail the events leading up to his capture, though some of the details of his escape he omitted through a sense of loyalty to the unknown girl who had aided him. Neither did he stress Zveri's lack of control over his men, or what Colt considered the leader's inexcusable cowardice in leaving the American and Romero to their fate within the walls of Opar without attempting to succor them, for Colt believed that the girl was Zveri's sweetheart.

"What became of Comrade Romero?" she asked.

"I do not know," he said. "The last I saw of him he was fighting off those crooked little demons."

"Alone?" she asked.

"I was pretty well occupied myself," he said.

"I do not mean that," she replied. "Of course, I know you were there with Romero, but who else?"

"The others had not arrived," said Colt evasively.

"You mean you two went in alone?" she asked.

Colt hesitated. "You see," he said, "the blacks refused to enter the city, so the rest of us had to go in or abandon the attempt to get the treasure."

"But only you and Miguel did go in. Is that not true?"

"I passed out so soon, you see," he said with a laugh, "that really I do not know exactly what did happen."

The girl's eyes narrowed. "It was beastly!" she said quietly.

As they talked, Colt's eyes were often upon the girl's face. How lovely she was, even beneath the rags and the dirt that were the outward symbols of her captivity among the Aarabs. She was thinner than when he had last seen her and her eyes were tired and her face drawn from privation and worry. But, perhaps by very contrast, her beauty was the more startling. It seemed incredible that she could love the coarse, loud-mouthed Zveri.

Presently she broke a short silence. "We must try to get back to the base camp," she said. "It is vital that I be there. So much must be done; so much that no one can do but me."

"You think only of the cause," he said, "never of yourself. You are very loyal."

"Yes," she said in a low voice. "I am loyal to the thing I have sworn to accomplish."

"I am afraid," he said, "that for the past few days I have been thinking more of my own welfare than of that of the proletariat."

"I am afraid that at heart you are still bourgeois," she said, "and that you cannot yet help but look upon the proletariat with contempt."

"What makes you say that?"

"Often a slight unconscious inflection in the use of a word alters the significance of a whole statement, revealing a speaker's secret thoughts."

Colt laughed good-naturedly. "You are a dangerous person to talk to," he said. "Am I to be shot at sunrise?"

She looked at him seriously. "You are different from the others," she said. "I think you could never imagine how suspicious they are. What I have said is only in the way of warning you to watch your every word when you are talking with them. Some of them are narrow and ignorant and they are already suspicious of you because of your antecedents. They are sensitively jealous of a new importance which they believe their class has attained."

"*Their* class?" he asked. "I thought you told me once that *you* were of the proletariat?"

If he had thought that he had surprised her and that she would show embarrassment, he was mistaken. She met his eyes squarely and without wavering. "I am," she said; "but I can still see the weaknesses of my class."

He looked at her steadily for a long moment, the shadow of a smile touching his lips. "I do not believe—"

"Why do you stop?" she asked. "What is it that you do not believe?"

"Forgive me," he said. "I was starting to think aloud."

"Be careful, Comrade Colt," she warned him. "Thinking aloud is sometimes fatal."

Further conversation was interrupted by the sound of the voices of men. "They are coming," said the girl.

Colt nodded, and the two remained silent, listening to the sounds of approaching voices and footsteps. The men came abreast of them and halted and Zora, who understood the Aarab tongue, heard one of them say, "The trail stops here. They have gone into the jungle."

"Who can the man be who is with her?" asked another.

"It is a Nasrâny. I can tell by the imprint of his feet."

"They would go toward the river," said a third. "That is the way that I would go if I were trying to escape."

"*Wullah!* You speak words of wisdom," said the first speaker. "We will spread out here and search toward the river. But look out for the Nasrâny—he has the pistol and the musket of the Sheik."

The two fugitives heard the sound of pursuit diminishing in the distance as the Aarabs forced their way into the jungle toward the river. "I think we had better get out of this," said Colt, "and while it may be pretty hard going I believe that we had better stick to the brush for awhile and keep on away from the river."

"Yes," replied Zora, "for that is the general direction in which the camp lies." And so they commenced their long and weary march in search of their comrades.

They were still pushing through dense jungle when night overtook them. Their clothes were in rags and their bodies scratched and torn, painful reminders of the thorny way.

Hungry and thirsty, they made a dry camp among the branches of a tree, where Colt built a rude platform for the girl, while he prepared to sleep upon the ground at the foot of the great bole. But to this Zora would not listen.

"That will not do at all," she said. "We are in no position to permit ourselves to be victims of every silly convention that would ordinarily order our lives in civilized surroundings. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration, but I would rather have you up here in the tree with me than down there where the first hunting lion that passed might get you." And so with the girl's help, Colt built another platform close to the one that he had built for her and as darkness fell, they stretched their tired bodies on the rude couches and sought to sleep.

Presently Colt dozed and in his dream he saw the slender figure of a star-eyed goddess, whose cheeks were wet with tears; but as he took her in his arms and kissed her he

Though she fought to regain her freedom, To-yat lifted her lightly to his hip and lumbered off into the jungle.

saw that she was Zora Drinov. Then a hideous sound from the jungle below awakened him with a start, so that he sat up, seizing the musket of the Sheik in readiness.

"A hunting lion," said the girl in a low voice.

"Phew!" exclaimed Colt. "I must have been asleep, for that certainly gave me a start."

"Yes, you were asleep," said the girl. "I heard you talking"—and he felt that he detected laughter in her voice.

"Was I, really?"

"Yes. I wonder who you were talking to?"

"I wonder," said Colt, recalling that in his dream the figure of one girl had merged into that of another.

The lion, hearing their voices, moved away, growling. He was not hunting the hated man-things.

CHAPTER XIV

Down Trails of Terror

SLOW days dragged by for the man and woman searching for their comrades. Days filled with fatiguing effort, most of which was directed toward the procuring of food and water for their sustenance. Increasingly was Colt impressed by the character and personality of his companion. With apprehension he noticed that she was gradually weakening beneath the strain of fatigue and the scant and inadequate food he had been able to procure for her. But still she kept a brave front and tried to hide her fatigue from him. Never once had she complained. Never by word or look had she reproached him for his inability to procure sufficient food, a failure which he looked upon as indicative of inefficiency. She did not know that he himself often went hungry that she might eat, telling her when he returned with food that he had eaten his share where he had found it, a deception that was made possible by the fact that when he hunted he often left Zora to rest in some place of comparative security.

He had left her thus one day, safe in a great tree beside a winding stream. She was very tired. It seemed to her that now she was always tired. The thought of continuing the march appalled her, yet she knew that it must be undertaken. She wondered how much longer she could go on before she sank exhausted for the last time. It was not, however, for herself that she was most concerned, but for this man—this scion of wealth and capitalism and power, whose constant consideration and cheerfulness and tenderness had been a revelation to her. She knew that when she could go no farther, Colt would not leave her—and that thus his chances of escape from the grim jungle would be jeopardized and perhaps lost forever. But from thought of death she shrank, not because of the fear of death—as well might have been the case—but for an entirely new reason, the sudden realization of which gave her a distinct shock. The tragedy of this sudden self-awakening left her numb with terror. It was a thought that must be put from her, one that she must not entertain; yet it persisted.

Colt had gone farther afield than usual that morning in his search for food, for he had sighted an antelope and, thrilled by the contemplation of so much meat in a single kill, and what it would mean for Zora, he had clung doggedly to the trail, lured on by an occasional glimpse of his quarry in the distance.

The antelope was only vaguely aware of an enemy, for he was upwind from Colt and had not caught his scent, while the occasional glimpses he had had of the man had served mostly to arouse his curiosity, so that though he moved away he stopped often and turned back in an effort to satisfy his wonder. Presently he waited a moment too long and Colt chanced a long shot. As the animal dropped, the man gave a loud cry of exultation. . . .

As time, that she had no means of measuring, dragged on, Zora grew increasingly apprehensive on Colt's account. Never before had he left her for so long a time and she began to construct all sorts of imaginary calamities which might have overtaken him. She wished now that she had gone with him. If she had thought it possible to track him, she would have followed him, but she knew that that was impossible. However, her forced inactivity made her restless. Her cramped position in the tree became unendurable and assailed by thirst, she lowered herself to the ground and walked toward the river.

She had drunk and was about to return to the tree when she heard the sound of something approaching from the direction in which Colt had gone. Instantly her heart leaped with gladness; her depression and even much of her fatigue seemed to vanish and she realized suddenly how very lonely she had been without him. How dependent we are upon the society of our fellow-men we seldom realize until we become the victims of enforced solitude, and there now were tears of happiness in Zora Drinov's eyes as she advanced to meet Colt. Then the bushes before her parted and there stepped into view before her horrified gaze, a monstrous hairy ape!

To-yat, the king ape, was as much surprised as the girl, but his reactions were almost opposite. It was with no horror that he viewed this soft white she Mangani. To the girl there was naught but ferocity in his mien, though in his breast was an entirely different emotion.

He lumbered toward her and as though released from a momentary paralysis, Zora turned to flee—but how futilely she realized an instant later, as a hairy paw gripped her roughly by the shoulder.

For an instant she had forgotten the Sheik's pistol that Colt always left with her for self-protection. Jerking it from its holster she turned upon the beast, but To-yat, seeing in the weapon a club with which she intended to attack him, wrenched it from her grasp and hurled it aside. Then, though she struggled and fought to regain her freedom, he lifted her lightly to his hip and lumbered off into the jungle in the direction he had been going.

COLT tarried at his kill only long enough to remove the feet, head and viscera, by that much reducing the weight of the burden he must carry back to camp, for he was aware that privation had greatly reduced his strength.

Lifting the carcass to his shoulder he started back toward camp, exulting in the thought that for once he was returning with an ample quantity of strength-giving meat.

As he staggered along beneath the weight of the small antelope, he made plans that imparted a rosy hue to the future. They would rest now until their strength returned and while they were resting they would smoke all of the meat of his kill that they did not eat at once; thus they would have a reserve supply of food which he felt would carry them a great distance. Two days' rest with plenty of food would fill them with renewed vitality.

As he started laboriously along the back trail, he began to realize that he had come much farther than he had thought, but it had been well worth while even though he reached Zora in a state of utter exhaustion. He did not fear but that he would reach her, so confident was he of his own powers of endurance and the strength of his will.

As he staggered at last to his goal he looked up into the tree and called her by name. There was no reply and in that first brief instant of silence, a dull and sickening premonition of disaster crept over him. He dropped the carcass of the deer and looked hurriedly about.

"Zora! Zora!" he cried, but only the silence of the jungle was his answer. Then his searching eyes found the pistol of Abu Batu where To-yat had dropped it and his

"Kill!" said La. The lion crouched and charged—while Hajellan stood paralyzed with fright.

worst fears were substantiated, for he knew that if Zora had gone away of her own volition she would have taken the weapon with her. She had been attacked by something and carried off, of that he was positive, and presently as he examined the ground closely he discovered the imprints of a great man-like foot.

A sudden madness seized Wayne Colt. The cruelty of the jungle, the injustice of Nature, aroused within his breast a red rage. He wanted to kill the thing that had stolen Zora Drinov. He wanted to tear it with his hands and rend it with his teeth. All the savage instincts of primitive man were reborn within him, as, forgetting the meat that the moment before had meant so much to him, he plunged headlong into the jungle upon the faint spoor of To-yat the king ape. . . .

La of Opar made her way slowly through the jungle after she had escaped from Ibn Dammuk and his companions. Her native city called to her, though she knew that she might not enter it in safety. But where else was there in all the world that she might go? Something of a conception of the immensity of the great world had been impressed upon her during her wandering since she had left Opar and the futility of searching any farther for Tarzan had been indelibly impressed upon her mind. So she would go back to the vicinity of Opar and maybe some day again Tarzan would come there. That great dangers beset her way she did not care, for La of Opar was indifferent to a life that had never brought her much of happiness. She lived because she lived and it is true that she would strive to prolong life because such is the law of Nature, which imbues the most miserable unfortunates with as powerful an urge to prolong their misery as it gives to the fortunate few, who are happy and contented, a similar desire to live.

Presently she became aware of pursuit, so she increased her speed and kept ahead of those who were following her. Finding a trail, she followed it, but if it permitted her to increase her speed, she knew that it would permit her pursuers also to increase theirs and now she could not hear them as plainly as she had before when they were pushing their way through the jungle. Still she was confident that they could not overtake her and she was moving swiftly on when a turn in the trail brought her to a sudden stop, for there, blocking her retreat, stood a great maned lion. This time La remembered the animal, not as Jad-bal-ja, the hunting mate of Tarzan, but as the lion that had rescued her from the leopard, after Tarzan had deserted her.

Lions were familiar creatures to La of Opar, where they were often captured by the priests while cubs and where it was not unusual to raise some of them occasionally as pets, until their growing ferocity made them unsafe. Therefore, La knew that lions could associate with people without devouring them and, having had experience of this lion's disposition and having as little sense of fear as Tarzan himself, she quickly made her choice between the lion and the Aarabs pursuing her and advanced directly toward the great beast, in whose attitude she saw there was no immediate menace. She was a sufficient child of nature to know that death came quickly and painlessly in the embrace of a lion and so she had no fear but only a great curiosity.

Jad-bal-ja had long had the scent-spoor of La in his nostrils as she moved with the wind along the jungle trails and so he had awaited her, his curiosity aroused by the fainter scent-spoor of the men who trailed her, and now as she came toward him along the trail he stepped to one side that she might pass and, like a great cat, rubbed his maned neck against her legs.

La paused and laid a hand upon his head and spoke to him in low tones in the language of the first man—the language of the great apes that was the common language of her people, as it was Tarzan's language. . . .

Hajellan, leading his men in pursuit of La, rounded a bend in the trail and stopped aghast. He saw a great lion facing him, a lion that bared its fangs now in an angry snarl, and beside the lion, one hand tangled in its thick black mane, stood the white woman.

The woman spoke a single word to the lion in a language that Hajellan did not understand. "Kill!" said La in the language of the great apes.

So accustomed was the high priestess of the Flaming God to command that it did not occur to her that the beast might do other than obey and so, although she did not know that it was thus that Tarzan had been accustomed to command Jad-bal-ja, she was not surprised when the lion crouched and charged.

Fodil and Dareyem had pushed close behind their companion as he halted and great was their horror when they saw the lion leap forward. They turned and fled, colliding with the blacks behind them, but Hajellan only stood paralyzed with fright as Jad-bal-ja reared upon his hind feet and seized him, his great jaws crunching through the man's head and shoulders, cracking his skull like an egg-shell. He gave the body a vicious shake and dropped it. Then he turned and looked inquiringly at La.

In the woman's heart was no more sympathy for an enemy than in the heart of Jad-bal-ja—she only wished to be rid of them. She did not care whether they lived or died and so she did not urge Jad-bal-ja after those who had escaped. She wondered what the lion would do now that he had made his kill and knowing that the vicinity of a feeding lion was no safe place, she turned and moved on along the trail. But Jad-bal-ja was no eater of men, because he was young and active and had no difficulty in killing prey which he relished far more than he did the salty flesh of man. Therefore, he left Hajellan lying where he had fallen and followed after La along the shadowy jungle trails.

A black man, naked but for a gee-string, bearing a message from the Coast for Zveri, paused where two trails crossed. From his left the wind was blowing and to his sensitive nostrils it bore the faint odor that announced the presence of a lion. Without a moment's hesitation, the man vanished into the foliage of a tree that overhung the trail.

Perhaps Simba was not hungry, perhaps Simba was not hunting; but the black messenger was taking no chances. He was sure that the lion was approaching and he would wait here where he could see both trails until he discovered which one Simba took.

Watching with more or less indifference because of the safety of his sanctuary, the negro was ill-prepared for the shock which the sight which presently broke upon his vision induced. Never in the lowest steps of his superstition had he conceived such a scene as he now witnessed and he blinked his eyes repeatedly to make sure that he was awake. But no there could be no mistake. It was indeed a white woman—almost naked but for golden ornaments and a soft strip of leopard-skin beneath her narrow stomacher—a white woman who walked with the fingers of one hand tangled in the black mane of a great golden lion.

Along the trail they came and at the crossing they turned to the left into the trail that he had been following. As they disappeared from his view the black man fingered the fetish that was suspended from a cord about his neck and prayed to Mulungo, the god of his people—and when he again set out toward his destination he took another and a more circuitous route.

OFTEN, after darkness had fallen, Tarzan had come to the camp of the conspirators and perching in a tree above them listened to Zveri outlining his plans to his companions, so that the ape-man was now entirely familiar with what they intended.

Now, knowing that they would not be prepared to strike for some time, he was roaming the jungle far away from the presence of man, enjoying to the full the peace and freedom that were his life. He knew that Nkima should have reached his destination by this time and delivered the message that Tarzan had dispatched by him. He was still puzzled by the strange disappearance of La and piqued by his inability to pick up her trail. He was genuinely grieved by her disappearance, for already he had plans well formulated to restore her to her throne and punish her enemies, but he gave himself over to no futile regrets as he swung through the trees in sheer joy of living, or when hunger overtook him, stalked his prey in the grim and terrible silence of the hunting beast.

Sometimes he thought of the good-looking young American to whom he had taken a fancy in spite of the fact that he considered him an enemy and had he known of Colt's now almost hopeless plight it is possible that he would have come to his rescue. But he knew nothing of it and so, alone and friendless, sunk to the uttermost depths of despair, Wayne Colt stumbled through the jungle in search of Zora Drinov and her abductor. Already he had lost the faint trail and To-yat, far to his right, lumbered along with his captive, safe from pursuit.

WEAK from exhaustion and shock, thoroughly terrified now by the hopelessness of her hideous position, Zora had lost consciousness. To-yat feared that she was dead, but he carried her on nevertheless that he might at least have the satisfaction of exhibiting her to his tribe as evidence of his prowess and, perhaps, to furnish an excuse for another Dum-Dum. Secure in his might, conscious of few enemies that might with safety to themselves molest him, To-yat did not take the precaution of silence, but wandered on through the jungle heedless of all dangers.

Many were the keen ears and sensitive nostrils which carried the message of his passing to their owners, but to only one did the strange mingling of the scent-spoor of the bull ape with that of a she Mangani suggest a condition worthy of investigation. As To-yat pursued his careless way another creature of the jungle, moving silently on swift feet, bore down upon him, and when from a point of vantage keen eyes beheld the shaggy bull and the slender, delicate girl, a lip curled in a silent snarl and a moment later To-yat the king ape was brought to a snarling, bristling halt as the giant figure of a bronzed Tarmangani dropped lightly into the trail before him.

The wicked eyes of the bull shot fire and hate. "Go away," he said. "I am To-yat. Go away or I kill."

"Put down the she," Tarzan demanded.

"No!" bellowed To-yat. "She is mine."

"Put down the she," repeated Tarzan, "and go your way, or I kill. I am Tarzan of the Apes."

Tarzan drew the hunting-knife of his father and crouched as he advanced toward the bull.

To-yat snarled and seeing that the other meant to give battle, he cast the body of the girl aside that he might not be handicapped.

As they circled, each looking for an advantage, there came a sudden, terrific crashing sound in the jungle downwind from them.

Tantor the elephant, asleep in the security of the depth of the forest, had been suddenly awakened by the growling of the two beasts. Instantly his nostrils caught a familiar scent-spoor—the scent-spoor of his beloved Tarzan—and his ears told him that Tarzan was facing in battle the great Mangani, whose scent was also in the nostrils of Tantor.

To the snapping and bending of trees, the great bull elephant rushed through the forest and as he emerged suddenly, towering above them, To-yat the king ape, seeing death in those angry eyes and gleaming tusks, turned and fled into the jungle.

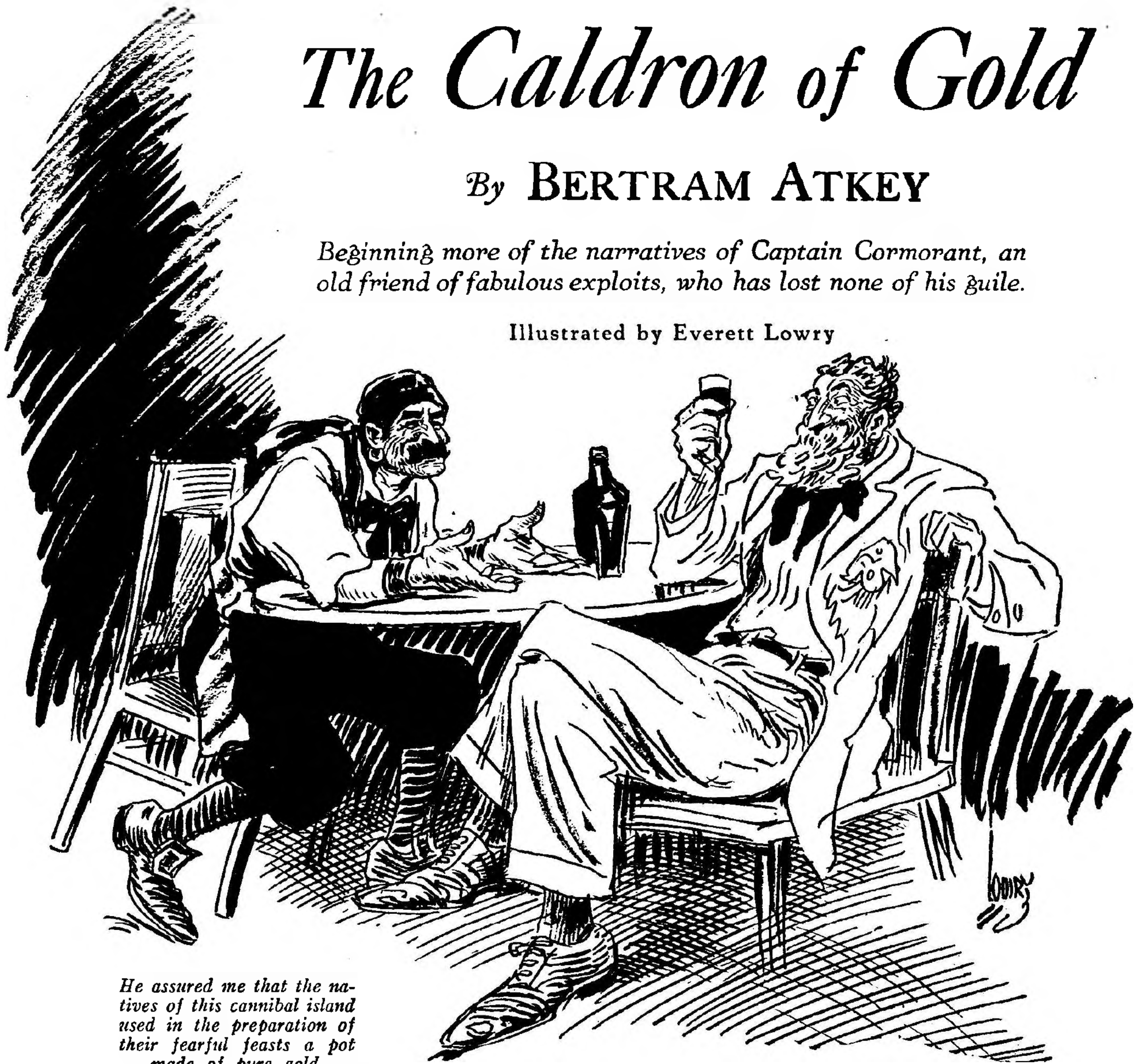
Tarzan is placed in grave danger—he is wounded and made prisoner by the ruthless Zveri —in the next thrilling installment of this vivid serial, in the forthcoming February issue.

The Caldron of Gold

By BERTRAM ATKEY

Beginning more of the narratives of Captain Cormorant, an old friend of fabulous exploits, who has lost none of his guile.

Illustrated by Everett Lowry



He assured me that the natives of this cannibal island used in the preparation of their fearful feasts a pot made of pure gold.

CAPTAIN LESTER CORMORANT, late of the Bolivian Light Horse—so he said—and his wife were spending an evening at home, and things for the hour immediately succeeding dinner had been quiet. They had tried half a dozen stations on the radio and, proving unlucky half a dozen times, had switched off, and settled down before the fire to think quietly.

It was just after the comfortable Louise awoke with a little start that Captain Cormorant, staring through half-closed eyes at the fire, had yawned with a cavernous liberality that he would have striven to modify had he known that his wife was watching him with her usual fond, if slightly sleepy, interest.

"Why, Lester, you have a broken tooth!" she exclaimed. "And I've never noticed it before! Does it hurt?"

"Eh, my love?" said the Captain drowsily, then pulled himself together. "Hurt? This tooth! Why, to tell you the truth, dear one, it does at times. Frightfully. A keen, stabbing, shooting pain. Then it goes off again. I must be seeing the dentist."

His eyes brightened a little.

"In fact, I intended to do so this week but,"—he laughed a trifle awkwardly, like a man who seems to feel that a little embarrassment is called for—"the fact is, dear heart, I am reluctant to—um—spend the money. I am a little overdrawn at the bank, as it happens, and I thought I would economize. That's really why. It's nothing, child, nothing at all."

He took a cigar, appearing not to notice his wife's look of concern.

"Lester! How can you do such a thing! To sit there with a stabbing, shooting pain liable to come into your tooth at any minute! Supposing you *are* overdrawn a little! I think it is *manly* to be overdrawn a little sometimes. I shall tell Mr. Hammerhead"—her lawyer and trustee of her very considerable fortune—"to attend to it at once!"

She glanced at the clock, rose and went to the telephone.

"But, my love, really—" said the non-moral Captain feebly. "No, really, I protest—this is too kind. It won't do at all. Louise, my love, please do not. I—really, it is time I bore my own burdens, as I bore them in the old, bitter days. Darling, I—er—insist!"

But he was too late altogether. By the time he had

managed to extricate his great length from his arm-chair, Louise was commanding the gentle Hammerhead—himself roused from light slumber at his private residence—to attend to the Captain's overdraft.

She turned, beaming with pleasure, from the telephone as the belated Cormorant came across the room to prevent her.

"So, you see, you needn't to have shooting pains in your tooth any longer, Lester!" she said, laughing, looking up to be kissed.

He bent down to two-thirds of his six feet six, a queer expression flitting over his face, and he enfolded her much as an anaconda might enlap something of which it was very fond.

He kissed her gently and a number of times. She let her weight onto his sinewy arms, closed her eyes, and thanked Cupid for him.

All the delicacies of the season were mine for the lifting of my little finger.

"I am, as you know, my darling, a man who from birth has been deprived of morals, good or bad, just as the poor mutes have been deprived, through no fault of their own, of speech, sacred or profane! Yet, if it were possible, for a good woman to create morals where none exist, you, dear heart, are that woman. Yes."

He kissed her until she gasped for breath.

"My God, Louise, I love you!"

It was true—though he had, as he freely confessed, married her for her money.

"Kindness, Louise! Kindness, that is the key to happiness! You are wiser than I am—for all my experience!"

He released her.

"I suppose, heart of mine, that no man in the world has been so liberally booted out of cities as I—owing to my infirmity—have been! I dare swear, sweetheart, that no poor, misunderstood, moralless wretch has met with greater or more unkindness at the hands—and feet—of the pious than I have. I have become so immune to harshness that harshness transforms me into a man of sheer steel—but kindness turns me into a man of wax. Ah, Louise! I hope I have not hurt you by the violence of my embrace!"

"Oh, *no,* Lester," sighed the happy wife. "I love you to be violent with me!"

Then they sat by the fire again and the butler's ministrations were called for.

"How did you get your tooth broken, Lester darling?" asked Louise presently.

The Captain drained his whisky and soda, eying her benignly over the rim of his glass.

He did not hasten to reply, for he knew she loved a story out of his immensely mottled past—and a good story needs thinking out, even by a born, a natural, a fluent and ingenious liar.

But at last he smiled.

"Why, soul of mine, there's quite a little story attached to this absurd broken tooth of mine," he said. "Quite a story."

"Oh, tell me, please!"

"Why, with pleasure, my darling!"

The lengthy, red-mustached adventurer thought for a moment. At last he said, with the air of one who makes up his mind about some point of great importance: "Yes, I suppose that I could honestly say that I bit my way out of the tomb at the cost of this tooth."

"Why, Lester! Were you in a position of great danger when it happened?" exclaimed his wife.

"Danger, my love! It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that, practically, I was dead and buried!"

"Good gracious, how terrible!"

"Yes, at the time I remember it struck me as fairly terrible!" he admitted. "But you shall hear for yourself."

He lubricated his glottis and began. . . .

The affair took place during a visit I once made to some of the pearling stations on the Australian coast. Things in general had not been going well with me. In some respects the Australians had failed rather signally to live up to my expectations. I never attempted at any time to conceal from them my infirmity—my unhappy lack of any manner of morals, good or bad—and perhaps that was a mistake, an error of judgment. I am, as you know, dearest, a man of frank nature and I do not hesitate to tell the truth.

If a man unhappily born with no arms drifts into any town in the world he hardly needs to point out his plight to be overwhelmed with kindness, sympathy and hospitality! But if a poor devil—pardon my warmth, darling—who has unhappily been born without any morals, chances into the same town, is he received with kindness, sympathy and hospitality? Not to any permanent extent. He becomes almost instantly the subject of intense concentration by specialists in violence—police, vigilantes, committees of public safety and so on. Illogical, but alas, true—too true.

Shocked and sorry and perhaps a little bitter at my reception in the larger towns, I drifted north to take a look around the pearling stations. They are of a rougher type up there, Louise, and, to their shame, they are of an intensely *suspicious* nature. They appear to be obsessed by the notion that one is, so to put it, after their pearls!

But in spite of the cold reception I received there, I made a few friends. Among them was a copra trader—a low brute called Copover, but with a wide knowledge of those seas. It was this person who told me of the caldron of gold. He assured me that the natives of the cannibal island known as Hashu invariably used in the preparation of their fearful feasts—a practice now long stamped out—a pot or caldron made of pure gold. No gold exists or is found on those coral islands and it was supposed that this valuable utensil must have been obtained centuries before, probably from the wrecked vessel of some Spanish explorer.

"That caldron would make a charming little souvenir of one's visit to the islands," I said. But the ruffian Copover laughed heartily at my chance observation.

"A lot of guys have thought of that," he said. "If I've seen one lunatic set sail to fetch that cooking pot home I've seen twelve in the last ten years. Never knew one to come back with it, however—though I'm willing to bet they all made its acquaintance. They're a very capable crowd of murderers, them Hashus! If you got any idea of going to fetch that pot of their'n you'd better can it, stranger—or it'll can you!"

But it has not been my practice to permit myself to be easily alarmed, heart of gold, and I set about making inquiries.

Three nights later I sailed alone in the man Copover's cutter for the group of cannibal islands of which Hashu might be called the capital. Copover probably would have insulted me before long, so I had no compunction about borrowing his cutter. In any case, I forgot to mention the loan to him.

But single-handed sailing in the South Seas is at best a risky enterprise, my Louise, and, at its worst, is a form of suicide the only merit of which is its entire lack of publicity. And not to weary your charming ears with a long and rather harrowing sea story, I will say at once that three weeks later I, starved into a living skeleton, was cast up on the beach of a small desert islet. This later proved to be one of many such islets outlying the group of which Hashu was the biggest if the most uncomfortable.

I venture to affirm that no being more destitute has ever been thrown up by the sea anywhere, at any time. I had nothing but the clothes I was cast up in and a tin flask, pint size, of a medicine which I, personally, invented and which I regard to this day as invaluable in the tropics. No family there should be without it. It is, in those climes, the true elixir of life. It is of course a medicine rather than a beverage, my darling—consisting as it does mainly of chlorodyne, chloroform, opium and very pure alcohol. I called it "Cormorant's Elixir" and explorers have spoken of it in terms which I should blush to repeat to you, my own. Indeed—but that is another story.

How long I lay unconscious on that beach I do not know. Possibly several days—I do not know, I cannot tell. But presently I became sufficiently conscious to feel some one or something fumbling over me. I felt my jaws opened, and a trickle of fresh water on my tongue. I felt my wrists and temples being chafed. I felt a curious, faintly stimulating sort of broth tasting of fish oil, banana and coconut milk poured, from time to time, between my teeth.

This sort of thing continued for some while. Then I emerged from my semi-swoon and opened my eyes to gaze into those of a woman!

Yes, dear heart—the eyes of a young woman.

She was, of course, a savage, and when I say that she was beautiful I mean, of course, for a savage. Which implies that she was tattooed all the colors of the rainbow and, to be frank, a great many more than any rainbow whose performance I have witnessed ever exhibited.

Yes, love, where that savage young lady was humanly tattooable she was tattooed. Still, she looked pretty to a man in my circumstances. I confess it. She had saved my life, in any case, and if she had been ninety years old and plain even for a savage I, being, I believe, an aristocrat at heart, should chivalrously have considered her whatever she cared to be considered—pretty, say.

Pray do not misunderstand me, I entreat you, star of my life, when I say that the matter seemed to develop with great speed.

Within an hour I was able to eat. She fed me. Within two hours I was able to stand on my feet. She helped me up. Within three hours I was capable—with her lines and hooks—of catching fish. She cooked them.

I found oysters. She opened them. I ate them. I found some coconut-bearing trees. She climbed them—that sort of thing. It went on for some days.

I began to catch up—to fill out—to put on weight. I spent most of my day devouring whatever there was to be devoured. And my nights I passed in the deep and healing sleep essential to a man in my situation. Then, as I slowly recovered my normal poise and balance, I noted a curious thing. Every evening just before the falling of the darkness, Tattoolah—my name for her—disappeared out to sea, only to reappear at dawn with fish and other delicacies.

Whether this was due to a very natural and praiseworthy modesty, a very right and proper shrinking from the idea of sleeping on a desert islet occupied by a strange he-foreigner, I did not know.

But I was soon to learn.

In the daytime, we got to know each other extremely well, as nurse and invalid naturally do, and I confess I came to believe that the young thing loved me, she was so incessantly, so indefatigably, attentive to me. I was not permitted by her to go hungry for one second. On the contrary, to use a vulgarism, I lived like a fighting cock.

Fish, nuts, fruit—all the delicacies of the season—were mine for the lifting of my little finger. Crabs, lobsters, oysters—a thousand luscious sea tit-bits of that description—they became commonplace to me. Tattoolah was indefatigable. So much so that I fear she came near to overdoing it.

At any rate, she seemed not very well one evening just before she went to her canoe. Sympathizing deeply with her—for, in spite of my non-moral affliction, I think I may reasonably claim to be of a sympathetic turn of mind—I gave her a pull of the half-pint of elixir remaining to me.

With an eloquent look from her eyes, dark, deep and lustrous, under their tattooed lids, she took a draught.

It revived her instantly. Her eyes started out of her head and she immediately started out to sea, paddling strongly. . . . .

In twenty seconds, without a sound, I had that cannibal confounded and confused.

As events proved, she never forgot that taste of my Elixir of Life—fortunately for me, dear love, as you will see.

The delicious, dreamy days went by, one by one, I was no longer the miserable wicker-work of bones and sea-salted skin which had been thrown up by the waves so short a time ago.

No, love, I had become portly—in fact, fat. Naturally, I had no mirror, but I had what is better than a mirror. I had "instinct." Apart from a growing disinclination to move more than a few steps in any direction, I found myself becoming tired of fish, fried or broiled or otherwise. Nuts I found myself turning from, and fruit failed to attract me.

Tattoolah caught crabs for me. I let them alone. She left lobsters lying where my eyes would fall on them when I awoke. I recoiled from these lobsters.

She dived and brought up all sorts of delicacies—*bêche de mer*, young shoots of seaweed, baby-octopi, squids and so forth. No. I had a sufficiency of fish-food.

BY this time I realized it—I was frightfully fat. I could feel how my cheeks bulged out like sails—under my beard. I cut my foot on a shell on the beach one day.

"Hullo," I said. "Something's been cut down there! I fancy I've cut my foot!" But it was pure guesswork. As far as I could feel it was my *foot*—but as far as I could *see* it might have been my knee. My feet had ceased to be visible. When I looked over to try to see them I found that I got in my own way.

Too fat or, at any rate, quite fat enough! As, indeed, I discovered within twenty-four hours of coming to that conclusion.

I was not alone in my decision that I was fat enough. Tattoolah and her friends evidently thought so too. That night, as I slept peacefully, dreaming that Tattoolah had brought me for my breakfast a glorious dish of steak, fried potatoes and coffee, I was set upon—in my sleep, dear heart—by not less and probably more than a hundred Hashu cannibals!

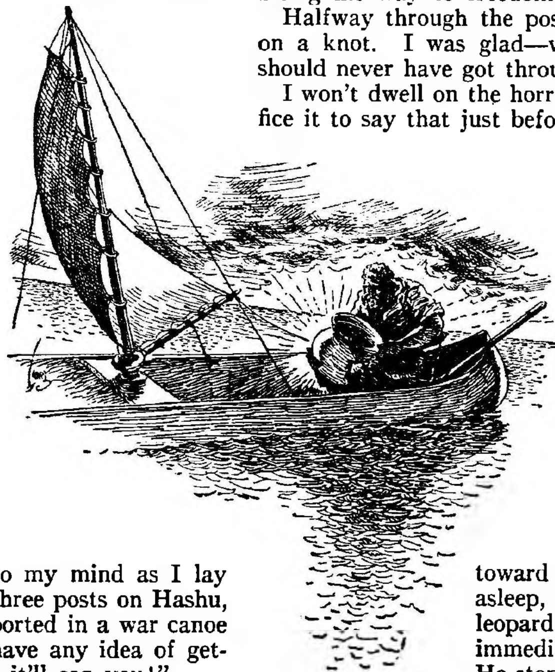
They were led and guided by none other than the female Tattoolah! Yes, dearest of all, I have never in the whole of my wide experiences been more deceived in any living female than I was in Tattoolah! I believed she loved me. She did. But not in the way I fancied.

She had cared for me and nursed me back to health. From a thin sack of bones she had built me up to—I make bold to say—a fine, big, portly figure of a man. I had more than once suspected that she intended to ask my hand in marriage when I was well nourished and prosperous in appearance again. But that, golden heart, was an illusion.

She needed me—but not as a husband.

She designed me to be—her twenty-first birthday feast! Yes, Louise, I was to be her and her friends' sumptuous repast on the occasion of her birthday!

The comment of Copover came to my mind as I lay bound by the neck to the center of three posts on Hashu, to which island I was at once transported in a war canoe amid universal rejoicing. "If you have any idea of getting that caldron of gold, can it—or it'll can you!"



The man had been right—absolutely right!

It was just after nightfall that I found myself bound to the post—the main larder post of the tribe—and I realized that my time was short. With the first peep of dawn the cooks would come for me. I had gleaned a smattering of their tongue and that, I gathered, was the general arrangement.

The feast at which I was designed to figure as the most important item was fixed for midday. They had had an enemy or two from a neighboring island for supper. Gradually the whole cannibal tribe settled down to sleep, and long before midnight I was the only person in the neighborhood who was passing a restless night.

But in those days it was not my custom to yield tamely and I set my brains to work. I perceived that I lay full length on the ground with only my head roped to the post—an ingenious and almost entirely safe way of tying one.

The rope passed round the base of the post and twice round my neck—so tightly that my face was jammed hard against the post. My hands were tied but not my feet. It was, as those heathen hounds realized only too well, quite unnecessary to tie my feet. For while, if I lay still, I was reasonably free from pain, the instant I moved or wriggled I was agonized by the rope. Had I tried to move my body in any direction I should first have dislocated my jaw and if I still persisted I should have broken my neck.

But they had overlooked one thing—the post was pressed close against one side of my mouth!

In those days I had teeth that were like the teeth of a saw—a pair of saws—and it was upon these superb teeth of mine that I now staked my life.

I started to bite through the post, Louise. It was, I figured, about six inches in diameter—and I had about five hours to do it in.

Never, dear heart, shall I forget that night—never! Figure it to yourself. The darkness-enshrouded island, the gross snoring of the sleeping cannibals, the crash of the distant sea, the drone of the wind through the palms. And under those South Sea sounds another sound—low, grim, ceaseless—a sound of gnawing! Like a beaver! The sound of Lester Cormorant making his last bid for life—biting his way to freedom, to England and home.

Halfway through the post this tooth went, then broke on a knot. I was glad—without the sharp edge left I should never have got through the knot.

I won't dwell on the horrors of that night, darling; suffice it to say that just before dawn I ground through the last tough fiber. As the post fell the rope slipped down and off the gnawed end and I was free. It was a simple matter to gnaw the rope on my wrist. For a moment I lay still, listening tautly to ascertain whether the sound of the fallen post had awakened any of the cannibals.

It had—one—the Chief. I heard him stir. He awoke none of the others, but I heard a sound like a man crawling on his hands and knees through the sand toward me. I lay still, feigning to be asleep, but ready to spring, like a leopard, upon him. But he did not immediately crawl within my reach. He stopped a yard away, and I heard

a whisper through the dark. "White man, do you sleep?" I made out in frightfully broken English.

I made no answer. I merely waited, tense as a tiger, for the low tough to crawl within my reach.

But he did not. On the contrary he continued to whisper in the disgustingly broken English which he had picked up Heaven knows how:

"White man, you savee you dash me big bottle 'lixir-drink, me unhitch you one time, dash you canoe and you pulla da freight. You buya da pup, you savvy, Mister, one big bottle stomach fire, you sling the hook by my canoe. Yessir! 'Lixir-drink, burna da tum, say, boy, slinga da hook, you no cookee, you go free, aye, aye, sir!"

Picture it, dearest! Me—crouching, tiger-taut on the sand, listening to that fearful farrago of bilgewater English hissed through the darkness at me by the Chief of the tribe—a treacherous ruffian, so debased by his lust for liquor that he was perfectly prepared, even anxious, to release me and let me hurry away in a canoe if only I would give him a big bottle of my Elixir of Life. At least, that was how I translated the suggestion which came through the darkness to me then.

You see, heart of mine, they had stolen my remaining half-pint of elixir when they had captured me, and the Chief had had, for his share, just enough to make him anxious for more—so anxious that he was entirely willing to lose the tribe a good meal to get what he wanted.

Well, it was not for *me* to grumble about this dusky tough's lack of public spirit. I thought for a moment, then whispered back, so that it went like the hiss of a snake to his huge and listening ears.

"Hey, yes, you son of a sea-cook! *Ah, oui, m'sieu!* Me gotta plenty mucha da bot' buried in the sand. Me gotta forty bottle—feefty bottle—all buried. Enough to give the hull, darned tribe of yez earthquakes in the stummicks for a month. You savee—you belonga dem bottle you get paralyzed one time. You dash me canoe me dash you dem bottle. Come closer, bo, and let me tell you whar dat treasure's hid up waiting for you!"

Conceive me talking so, my love! Yet I did—for my life—and the creature understood, for he came closer.

In his greed he carelessly squirmed within my reach.

And a second later I was on him like an alligator. You, with your swift sympathy, dearest one, will realize that it was a question of life or death. It was no real desire of mine to be rough with the wretch, but I had to be efficient. One mistake would have precipitated the whole herd of cannibals onto me. I had a fair experience in the art of swift violence in those days. The nature of the life which my deplorable affliction had driven me to lead demanded a perfect—if I may say so—technique in the field of stark plug-ugliness.

In twenty seconds, without a sound, I had that cannibal confounded and confused.

Within a minute, I had him roped to Post No. 3, gagged with his own hair, his hands bound, and buried to the chest in sand. Fully alive to the remote possibility of his escaping as I had escaped I had examined his teeth while he was still under the effects of the—so to describe it—the anæsthetic I had administered with my fist.

I found that he had no teeth—of his own. The man was wearing a set of false teeth—yes, love, artificial dentures, top and bottom—ill-fitting, cheap, and probably stolen from some former unhappy victim of the Hashus.

That explained why the Chief felt little interest in Tattoolah's forthcoming birthday feast. Much comfort and easy living has made me soft—even tender—in these days, dear heart. But in *those* days, darling, I was a man of wire and whipcord under my portliness. It was not difficult to realize that to a cannibal with false teeth designed for some other person I was a far less attractive item of the menu than a bottle or two of my elixir.

When I looked over to try to see my feet I found that I got in my own way.

I left him tied up in my place—at another post—and silently crawled—whither?

To the canoes, you will naturally say, dear heart? No, I remembered the caldron of gold.

With the silence of a serpent I crawled toward this utensil—which I had seen set up in position scarcely ten yards from my post not many hours before. I raised it in my arms and staggered down the beach with it.

I selected in the first faint streaks of the coming dawn the fastest-looking sailing canoe on the beach, put in the caldron—I remember it struck me at the time as being curiously light for gold—and paddled clear of the island.

I set my sail, the wind freshened up and, to cut a long story short, dearest Louise, even as presently the sun appeared over the eastern horizon so the last lingering tree-top of the island of Hashu disappeared under the western horizon.

Then I examined the caldron of alleged gold.

It was pure brass. I might have known it.

Then in the friendly rays of the rapidly rising sun I set sail for Australia, which after many days and a myriad vicissitudes I reached in safety!

THE CAPTAIN ceased, and gratefully accepted from the fair hands of his thrilled and adoring wife a large glass of stimulating refreshment.

"Thank you, my El Dorado, thank you," he said, and wiped his great mustache.

"It seems an extraordinary way of losing half a tooth, Lester, doesn't it?" she said, quite innocently and entirely without sarcastic intent.

"Indeed it does, my love," agreed the Captain heartily. "But then, I am, God help me, through no fault of my own, an extraordinary man!"

"Indeed, indeed you are, Lester!" said Louise, and pressed a kiss on his bald spot. "But I, for one would not have you otherwise!"

Grudge Battle

By

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

Fighting was this Southerner's way of saving the family fortunes; but when his father's old traditions encountered the modern prize-ring, he faced his hardest battle.

Illustrated by Harry Lees

CARLOS FAUQUIER was born on the first day of an unfortunate four-year conflict once known as the Civil War and more recently as "the war between the States."

He was a Marylander, sixth descendant of a locally regal line and of super-regal Fauquier traditions. From birth, his contacts with the outer world were few, for his parents had enough money to keep up their secluded estate along the best models of the old-time Southern plantations, and to engage tutors for their son.

The death of his father left Carlos sole master of the ancient five-hundred-acre hierarchy and sole inheritor of the parental traditions.

Carlos married his Fauquier cousin who had been his father's ward, and dwelt on his estate in early nineteenth-century royal pomp. There in due time his son Beauregard Fauquier was born; and there the boy was instructed duly and drearily in all the family traditions.

Young Beauregard stepped out of the first 1860's into the middle 1920's when he went to the University of Virginia as a stalwart freshman. There his bulk and abnormal strength made him immediately a college figure. The magniloquent name of "Beauregard" was quickly shelved for "Beau."

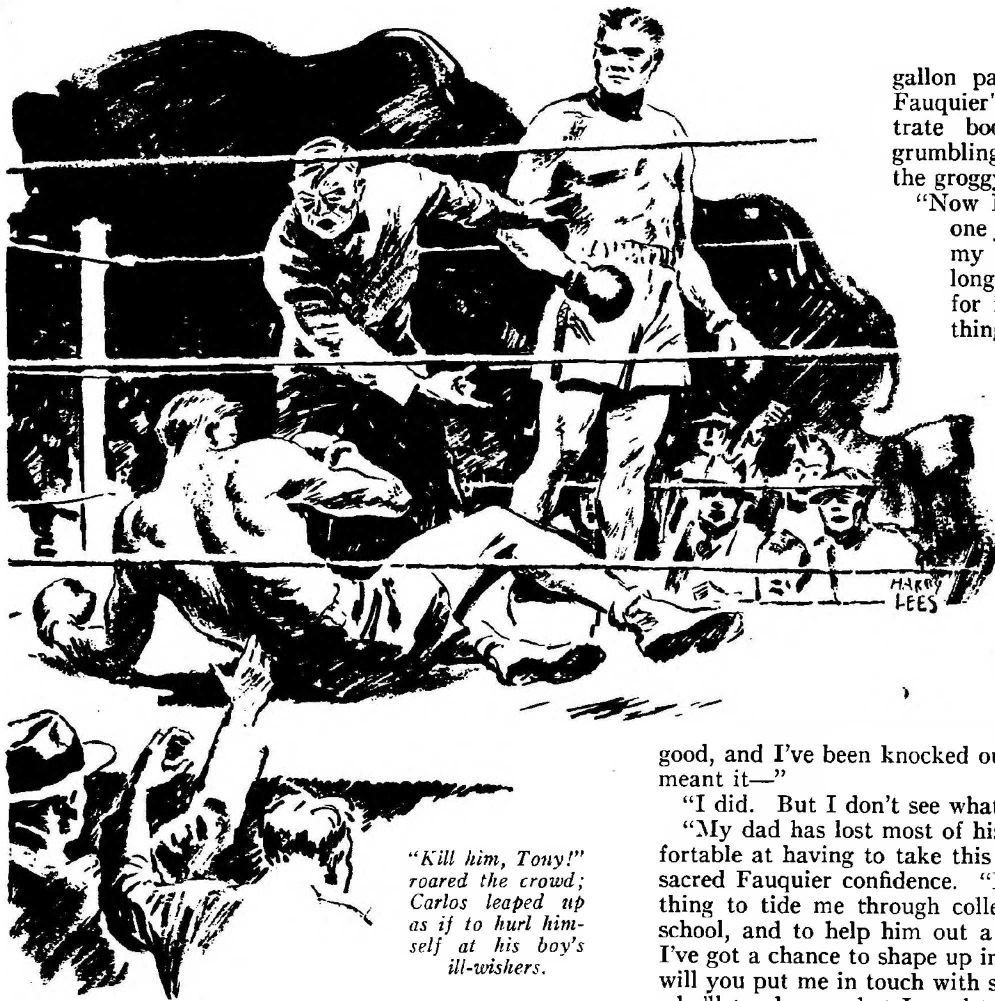
His father would have stormed at this low familiarity of shortening the sacred cognomen. But his father had other and more important worries just then. A railroad, whose dividends had formed the bulk of the Fauquier fortune for two generations, went on the rocks. Dividends stopped with a nauseous abruptness. All the facts that Carlos could glean from his lawyer's patient and repeated explanations was that his income must now be counted in fewer hundreds than its former thousands—this and a damnably insulting suggestion that something more might be saved from the wreck by renting or selling some of the sacred Fauquier acreage to small truck-farmers and to development concerns.

Beau Fauquier read a paternal letter on his way to McCuen's gymnasium for his daily half-hour boxing lesson. He saw through Carlos' pompously brave phrases the pitiful bewilderment and financial terror of the luckless old man. Beau knew his father was a child in all worldly matters; he realized what the sweeping away of his income must mean to him, and fiercely he yearned to be of use to the stricken oldster he loved. But it was not until he was in the gym, stripped, and drawing on his stained boxing-gloves that even the most fantastic of help-projects came to his worried mind. He faced McCuen the instructor, an apelike and bald middleweight whose star pupil he had been for nearly two years.

"Do me a favor, Mac," he demanded. "Cut out the slapping match today, and come for me the way you used to tackle the chaps you met in the ring. I mean, sail into me for all you're worth; and let me come back at you the best I can. I want to see how long I can last. I—"

"Fine!" McCuen grinned. "Fine and likewise grand. I've heard that spiel before, more'n once. I fell for it, first time, and it cost me the best-paying pupil I had. He got up and spit out a tooth, or maybe two, and said it had sure been one splendid session. And I never saw him again. He—"

Out snapped Beau Fauquier's left fist. Full in the talking mouth its half-shut fingers smote McCuen. The swat was more stinging than heavy. But it cut the teacher's underlip against one of his front teeth. It did more—the



"Kill him, Tony!" roared the crowd; Carlos leaped up as if to hurl himself at his boy's ill-wishers.

unwarranted blow before even the lesson had begun, set his Irish indignation ablaze. Forgotten was the meticulous care wherewith a steady and lucrative novice should be treated. Head down, McCuen bored in to the attack.

Beau met him foot to foot, not giving an inch of ground. The pupil used what skill he might in blocking or ducking his angry preceptor's assault. But he himself hammered away with a zest and punishing power that never before had he had a chance to bring into play.

Back and forth across McCuen's select boxing-academy's gym raged the fight. There was no question of rounds. There was more ferocity than science.

For perhaps three minutes they battled, Beau's fresh youth and his abnormal strength keeping him well-nigh on a par with the lighter and older man's infinitely greater ring-craft.

The end came with suddenness. Thrice, with awkward and slow futility, had McCuen sought to score the old scissors cross-counter to heart and to jaw. Feeling himself ridiculously safe from such a slovenly ruse, Beau drove his left for the face as he became aware with a boxer's instinct that McCuen was planning that same short-falling double counter for the fourth time.

That was the last thing whereof Beau Fauquier was clearly aware for more than a minute. Vaguely he saw the double counter launched—but with none of its earlier slow inefficiency; rather was it the unfollowable striking of a python!

Then from the skies a rainstorm descended on him. As the day was clear and as the gymnasium roof was tight, this phenomenon brought back Beau's lost interest in life and in his surroundings. McCuen was sloshing a two-gallon pailful of dirty water over Fauquier's buzzing head and prostrate body. The instructor was grumbling, more to himself than to the groggy victim:

"Now I'll be losing another good one just because I couldn't keep my fool temper where it belonged! But you sure asked for it, sir. That was a rotten thing to do to me. It—"

"You haven't lost me; you can't lose me!" babbled Fauquier drunkenly, as he sat up and blinked about him. "I'm sorry I hit you when your hands were down. But it was the only way to make you do what I'd been asking you to. You've said I was one of the few novices that had the stuff in him for a professional fighter. If that was a slice of hot air, then my idea is no good, and I've been knocked out for nothing. But if you meant it—"

"I did. But I don't see what in blue blazes—"

"My dad has lost most of his cash," said Beau, uncomfortable at having to take this simian ex-pugilist into the sacred Fauquier confidence. "It is up to me to do something to tide me through college and then through law-school, and to help him out a bit besides. If you think I've got a chance to shape up into even a pork-and-beaner, will you put me in touch with some square friend of yours who'll teach me what I need to learn and perhaps get me my first prelim' fight or two? I can pay him for his bother. Not a lot, but something. And will you make sure he'll keep his mouth shut? If my dad knew about it he'd feel worse than if he lost all the rest of his money and his home, too. He is still living about a century ago; and perhaps I can make enough money in the ring to keep him trotting along happily in that century for the rest of his days. How about it?"

It had been difficult for the young man to focus his mind and his eyes during the earlier part of his appeal. But his brain was clearing fast—as McCuen noted with mute approval.

"What I said about you, I said," answered the instructor, after a moment for mental digestion of the proposal. "And I'm saying it again. You got the build, you got the speed, you got the punch, you got the nerve. You can stand a tidy bit of punishment, even now. Natural boxing judgment you've got too—though it'll need a power of improving. If you're talking straight I won't turn you over to anyone at all. I'll put you in shape myself, and I'll see you get your start. I'll take that gamble. If you're anywhere near as good as I've got a hunch you are, I'll get my money back a few times over, some day. And I'll keep my mouth shut. They don't build 'em like you very often. And not one in two hundred has that murdering snap to his punch. I'm not saying you're champion timber, but you're near enough to it."

Ensued a period whose first weeks were a time of horror. Compared with the most rigid college athletic training, Beau's new regimen was as the Battle of the Marne to a cane-rush. His diet was watched like a chronic dyspeptic's. His waking hours, aside from such classes as he dared not

cut, were spent in sinew-racking labors in the gym and on the road.

Presently unprepossessing young men appeared, one after another, who at McCuen's behest took Beau on for anywhere from two to six rounds, the instructor howling red-hot censure or grudging approval to his pupil from the ring-edge. As time passed, the censure was less frequent, if no less virulent; and the praise waxed in volume.

"A morsel of education," exclaimed Beau. "I've given it to you in exchange for your nickel. I'll tell Dad I've landed some tutoring work."

Bit by bit, Fauquier passed through the inevitable phase of torment and bungling and depression which marks the emergence of every amateur boxer into a professional, and there was an exhilaration, gradual but increasing, that tingled through his whole made-over body.

"I'll coin cash out of this, all right," McCuen prophesied. "Not a fortune like I hoped maybe I might, first off, but enough to make it good and plenty worth my while. You're no Eighth Wonder, as the feller says. But you're a comer. You'll never be world-champ or anywhere near it—but there's a swad of rugged boys no better than what you are, that's pulling down fat money from the ring; and their managers aren't eating snow, neither. I wasn't more'n clearing expenses here when I took you on. I'll be buying my own house in a year or two, on what I make out of you."

Three months to the day from the outset of Beau's training, "Kid Berringer, of Nashville, Tennessee," fought a preliminary bout at one of the more obscure Philadelphia arenas. He was matched by his manager Colin McCuen, against Tanner Crehan, a doughty graduate of the dockyards.

The winner's end of the purse was only a hundred and fifty dollars; but Beau was as thrilled as though the purse were stuffed with a five-figure check and a championship belt. McCuen eyed him sourly as Fauquier stripped in the cubby-hole dressing-room. He read the eager face and the taut muscles as he could have read large print.

"That's what I've been warning you against, you big boob!" he snarled. "Thinks you: 'Me chance has came! Lemme at this Crehan dub and I'll rip him into small independent republics!' That means you'll go tearing into him with everything you've got except brains—which you've left at home along with your own name. Now listen to me:

"Just because you've finally got so you can hold your own with a few poor back-number pork-and-beaners in my gym don't you get the notion you can fight. Maybe you can; maybe again you can't. Nobody knows. Nobody is going to know till you've been in three fights at the very least. The crowd will get your goat if you let it. You'll try to please them instead of trying to please me when they tell you to go in and kill him. You'll sail in wide open. And then I'll be pouring water on you again while you ask me did he hit you with a sledge or only a car-crank. If you lose this fight by going against the orders I've gave you, you'll lose Colin McCuen for a trainer, and you'll lose what cash you've put up and you'll lose your chance of boosting your dad out of the hole he's fell into. Come along!"

The fight was scheduled for eight rounds. Working as McCuen bade him work and forcing his senses to shut out the increasing clamor of the crowd, Beau Fauquier knocked out his opponent early in the fifth round.

To Beau, the bout had seemed ridiculously easy. Almost from the outset he had felt that the victory was his and that he could seize it at any moment he might choose to. Yet he had followed obediently the between-round instructions of his trainer and the occasional cryptic words that were bawled at him by McCuen during the actual fighting.

"Don't go getting all puff-headed, now," commanded McCuen as he was rubbing down the sweating victor in the sub-arena dressing-room, "just because you happened to land a lucky punch on a twelfth-rate never-was'er. If I'd known Crehan was such a lump of cheese I'd never have gave him to you for your first fight. You didn't do bad; I'll hand you that. But he was easy meat for a fly-weight cripple. Now you get into your clothes, and I'll come back here for you in ten minutes."

Between the dressing-room and a ringside box above, Colin McCuen's laboriously assumed look of contempt changed to an ear-wide grin of utter bliss.

"Well," he demanded as he slipped into a box seat beside a tall man of clerical aspect, "was I right, or was I *dead* right?"

"He's all you said he was," answered the clerical-looking man, "and then a shade or two. He won't wipe up the Hudson or even the Schuylkill. But he's better than most. And he's got sense. He's got sense enough to play deaf to everybody but you when he's fighting. That counts him ten."

There was only one more preliminary fight, in "Kid Berringer's" ring career. In it, he was booed by the crowd for not finishing his man in a single round. Deaf to the booing, Beau obeyed orders and wore down his opponent into taking the final punch with something like relieved alacrity in the fourth round.

Next came a main bout on an off-night at the Philadelphia club where Fauquier had made his début. This time he had a far tougher opponent; but Beau accomplished his mission in the ninth round, gamely sustaining much punishment in the intervening twenty-four minutes of rapid action.

The newcomer was liked by the crowd. McCuen had scant trouble in getting the right engagements for him. By the end of the spring term at the university, real money in something more than mere homeopathic doses was beginning to filter in.

One morning, Fauquier arrived at the McCuen gym, and

demanded five cents from his puzzled trainer. McCuen handed over the nickel, saying:

"You can use the gym phone for nothing. You know that. If it's a girl—"

"The Pelasgians," observed Beau, "were the primitive inhabitants of Greece. In time the Hellenes descended from the North and gave their name to the land."

"Huh?" grunted McCuen, slack of jaw.

"That is a morsel of education," explained Beau solemnly. "I've given it to you in exchange for your nickel. That means I'm your paid tutor. Tomorrow I'll tell you about Jason and Theseus and the Argonautic expedition. The next day I'll slip you a real gem of inside news about the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle. Monday you'll be told there were two essayists, one named Lamb and the other Montaigne. I'm not certain I shan't tell you in time, about the Einstein relativity theory. (I don't know anything about it, but then neither does anyone else.) And, each and every day, you'll hand me over a nickel for educating you."

"I never did care for them highbrow jokes," protested McCuen. "Now here's one I heard last night about Mandy and the iceman. She—"

"Don't you get the point?" broke in Fauquier. "The term closes next week. That means I'll have to go home, or else I'll have to have a gilt-edged alibi for staying away. If I go home for three or four months, how about the summer fights? Even if I could train on the sly, how'd I account for the marks I'd be likely to get on my face? No, it couldn't be done. I've used up all the excuses there are for the black eyes and swollen noses I've carried onto the campus and into classrooms, this past eight months.

"I'm going to write to Dad, today, telling him truthfully that I've landed some tutoring work that'll keep me here and hereabouts most of vacation. I'll tell him it's enough to carry me through Junior year; and I'll send him ninety dollars a week, whenever I can, to prove how much I'm earning. He'll object, but he won't object too hard. He needs every cent he can raise and he needs all the let-up of expense he can get. Besides, tutoring is a 'gentleman's vocation'—he said so, once. No end of great Southern statesmen began their careers that way. Dad doesn't know enough about business to insist on details. He'll be proud of me; and he can find use for every dollar that I send home. I'll spend the last fortnight at home with him before I come back to the 'U', next fall. . . . Now, don't forget about those Pelasgians, Mac. I want to earn the nickels you give me. It isn't every ex-bruiser who can get educated for only thirty-five cents a week."

For old Carlos Fauquier, the next two years carried ever less urgent financial pressure. He glowed with pride in his son's intellectual prowess. Beauregard seemed to have a veritable genius for imparting knowledge to his less talented fellow-collegians and for exacting gratifyingly high fees for his services as a tutor. Not only did the youth support himself thus and pay his way through college; but he had overridden Carlos' none-too-forceful protest against his contributing larger and larger sums toward the half-beggared estate.

When the university course was ended—Beauregard scrambling through to graduation by an amazingly small margin for a lad so adept at tutoring others—the boy announced he had decided to go to the New York law-school where no doubt he could pick up a still larger crop of tutorial fees than at the university.

Then occurred what might well have happened any time or times during the past few years:

A Senior of the University of Virginia attended a prize-fight at Madison Square Garden. That night he wrote to his brother, a small-town editor, that the renowned Kid Berringer was really Beauregard Fauquier.

The editor was also local correspondent for a press association. He made a human-interest yarn of the revelation and put it on the wires. By rare good luck Carlos Fauquier's few close neighbors did not follow the sporting news of the day. Nor was the story of any vast news value to the world at large. Many pugilists fight under assumed names. That another of them should do so was of no vital concern to most of the public, especially as Kid Berringer was only one of several prominent light-heavyweights and was not even a recognized aspirant for championship laurels. Thus the tale all but fell flat; only a few sporting editors made perfunctory note of it.

A few months later Carlos Fauquier chanced to pay one of his rare business visits to his lawyer in Baltimore. He missed his home-bound train by two minutes, thus entailing a three-hour wait in and around the station. To while away the time he bought a sheaf of newspapers and settled himself on an uncomfortable bench in front of the train-bulletins. Not once in a year did Carlos so much as glance over any newspaper, except a tri-weekly journal much read in his father's youth and unchanged in any important feature since then.

Today he thumbed contemptuously the first of the evening papers he chanced to pick up from the heap on his lap. Page after page he turned. Then his spare old frame stiffened galvanically as one of two photographs caught his eye.

It depicted the head and bare throat of his son, Beauregard Fauquier.

There could be no doubt. It was a likeness, not a mere resemblance. In the same boxed frame was the visage of an uncommonly vulgar-appearing person, who was also bare of throat. Above the two photos was the legend, puzzling to the old man:

"WILL MEET TOMORROW IN GRUDGE FIGHT"

Beneath Beauregard's picture was the unfamiliar name, "Kid Berringer." The other photo was labeled "Tony Gehagan."

Old Carlos Fauquier became furious. The whole thing was absurd! More—it was actionable! How had this filthy sheet dared to steal or snap surreptitiously a photograph of Beauregard Fauquier—of any Fauquier for that matter—and print it in this scurrilous connection?

A grudge fight! A joint debate of sorts? Some new slant of law-school curriculum? Yes, in all probability. But what a damnably sensational way of announcing it! And on a page given over to racing charts and baseball games! Seventy years ago, a "grudge fight" would have implied a duel. But in that era of dignified journalism so flashy a name would never have been given to the sacred *duello,* nor would its

"I order you to beat that nameless brute to death, sir!"

principals' portraits have been blazoned forth in advance. No, it—

Again the spare old body stiffened. Again the veined right hand gripped the gold head of the malacca cane. Carlos Fauquier's perplexedly roving eye had fastened on a name in the center of one of a score of short detached paragraphs which comprised a column erratically called: "Gong Gossip." With twitching face he read:

There is an added interest to Baltimoreans in the "grudge battle" tomorrow night between Kid Berringer and Tony Gehagan, because Berringer is a son of Maryland. The Kid's real name is Beauregard Fauquier. His granddaddy was quite a figure in State politics a thousand or so years back.

"Grudge fights" are old stuff, of course, and have been pretty fishy ever since the time Heavyweight Goliath took on Kid David, the Judea featherweight, and was floored by Dave in Round One. But if Berringer's manager, Colin McCuen, and Tony's meal-ticket, Sim Horoson, are to be believed, these two boys are fairly mewing for each other's lifeblood. They spend twenty-five hours a day hating each other. It looks like a wakeful bout, as Tony and the Kid seem to have some kind of mortal feud that only a decisive licking can end. McCuen hints there's a girl behind it all.

Dazedly Carlos Fauquier read and reread. He twisted in dumb agony. Then he went into executive session with his outraged soul, and gradually a hiatus-starred continuity came out of the frantic cogitations.

Times had changed, right sickeningly. Even in Carlos' own boyhood the *duello* was dead in most civilized regions of America, though it had flourished in his father's youth. Now, apparently, it had been revived, and in a gruesome and ruffianly form. Hot-headed young men with grievances descended to the settlement of such grievances by the debasing mode of fisticuffs. More and worse, they permitted the sensational press to comment grossly on their private disputes.

THIS Tony Gehagan presumably was Beauregard's heart-rival. High words had arisen. Probably the Gehagan person had affronted Beauregard in a way the latter's fiery Maryland blood could not brook. A challenge had been given and accepted. Sooner than stain his white repute with even an unjust charge of cowardice, Beauregard had consented to sink to the vile public or semi-public issue of fisticuffs. But he had had the decency to do so under an alias, lest the historic name of Fauquier be smirched thereby.

Yes, that must be it. And the outrageous thing must be stopped at once, at whatever cost. That girl, too! What a daughter-in-law for a Fauquier! No really high-bred maiden would allow two suitors to use their admiration for her as excuse for such a guttersnipe form of bickering! Here, if anywhere, was an instance when age and wisdom and an innate instinct for the niceties of formal quarrels must come to the fore. Carlos Fauquier alone could hope to adjudicate this brawl in the way that a gentleman's quarrel should be settled.

Carlos went to a station telephone and called up the newspaper in which the abominable item and picture had appeared. An office-boy of ardent sporting tendencies answered the phone. To Carlos' stately and icy request that Tony Gehagan's present address be sought out for him, the boy replied with glib knowledge:

"Tony's training out at 9999 Blanksome Road, beyond Walbridge. And the Kid and his bunch landed in town this noon. They've took up their quarters at Kriegler's road-house, out on the—"

Carlos hung up the receiver while his informant was in mid-explanation. . . .

Tony Gehagan and his two sparring partners turned in at the gate of their training quarters, from a spell of road-work, and trooped along the path toward the porch. From a veranda chair arose a very long, very lean, and majestic figure, in impressive frock suit and black felt hat. Carlos Fauquier confronted Gehagan arrogantly as the trio came up the steps.

"Are you Mr. Anthony Gehagan, sir?" he queried with a civility which he liked to believe was as deadly as it was frigid.

"Yep," answered the fighter, "I'm Tony Gehagan. But I can't stop and jaw with anyone just now. I gotta get outa these sweaty clothes and have my shower and rub-down. See you some other time, Grandpa."

He made as though to go past the rigid figure and into the house. But Carlos barred his way.

"My card," he said icily, thrusting an oblong of white paper upon the hurrying pugilist. "I have the honor—at least, until now, I have deemed it an honor—to be the father of the gentleman whom you have bullied or hectored into promising to meet you in a degrading fist-fight. I shall not detain you long, sir—only long enough to forbid you to carry out your rowdy intentions. I shall see to it that my son withdraws from the affair. If you consider his withdrawal inconsistent with honor or with true courage, I shall be very glad to convince you to the contrary—if necessary by taking the quarrel off his hands. I trust I make myself clear."

With puckered forehead Gehagan turned dully to one of his two grinning sparring partners, a pork-and-beaner who had graduated from high-school to the ring, on the theory that an occasional easy hundred dollars was better than sixteen dollars a week on some more arduous job. The partner translated:

"He's the Kid's father. He says you've crowded the Kid into this fight and if you don't lay off'm him, the old gent is going to make you."

"Grandpa," observed Gehagan, mildly amused, "aint it kind of dangerous for you to be let out alone? Better toddle back to the Old Men's Home, or they're li'ble to dock you on your mush-and-gruel rations at supper. Chase along, now, and let me get these things off; I'm sweating, and there's a wind—"

"Sir," interposed Carlos, struggling for coherent speech, "you are an impertinent puppy, and you deserve to be treated as one! I am the more determined my son shall not soil his hands on you. Since you seem to shrink from transferring this quarrel to me—"

"Oh, go chase yourself back to the bone-yard!" laughed Gehagan, gently thrusting the infuriated patrician from between him and the door. "I'll be catching me a cold if I stay out in this wind any longer. Go back to the asylum and tell 'em that I said to learn you how to talk United States."

With a final mild shove he propelled the indignantly resisting Carlos aside from the doorway. Staggering at the thrust, Fauquier whirled about in a momentary flash of rage-sent strength, and smote his assailant full across the grinning face with his gold-headed malacca.

The impetus and the impact knocked the stick from his thin fingers and sent it clattering down the steps. But the slashing cut had drawn blood-beads athwart the fighter's forehead and cheek.

ALL mortal honor and glory unto Anthony Aloysius Gehagan! For while the first stab of pain bit into his swarthy visage, while his fists clenched and his muscles tautened, while his sparring partners stood petrified, while Carlos Fauquier flung himself into what he deemed a posture of warlike defense—the grin came back, if somewhat unconvincingly, to the young slugger's blood-pringled face.

With a move too quick for his victim to elude or even to anticipate, he darted forward and picked up Carlos in his mighty arms. As lightly and tenderly as a mother

might dandle a sick baby, Gehagan carried the kicking, snarling, wildly struggling old man down the steps and down the path to the gate. Placing Carlos gently in a sitting posture on the sidewalk, he turned back, fastening the gate behind him and making for the house. Only once did he pause—that was when he stooped to lift the malacca cane from the lawn and toss it over the fence alongside its impotently maddened owner. Then he calmly went indoors.

A half hour later as Beau Fauquier and McCuen were setting off from Kriegler's road-house for the barn across the way where an emergency gym had been fitted up for the last day of training, a taxi stopped in front of them. From it scrambled, with nearly as much speed as stiffness, the last man on earth by whom Beau wanted to be seen just then.

"Why, Dad!" he made shift to greet the flamingly irate head of the Fauquier family. "Where did you drop from? I—"

"I have seldom troubled you with parental commands, of late years," broke in Carlos, his voice hoarse and shaking. "My object in coming out here was to break that rule and to use all my fatherly authority to induce you to abandon the vulgarly fantastic enterprise you are embarked on. But—but I stopped elsewhere on the way here."

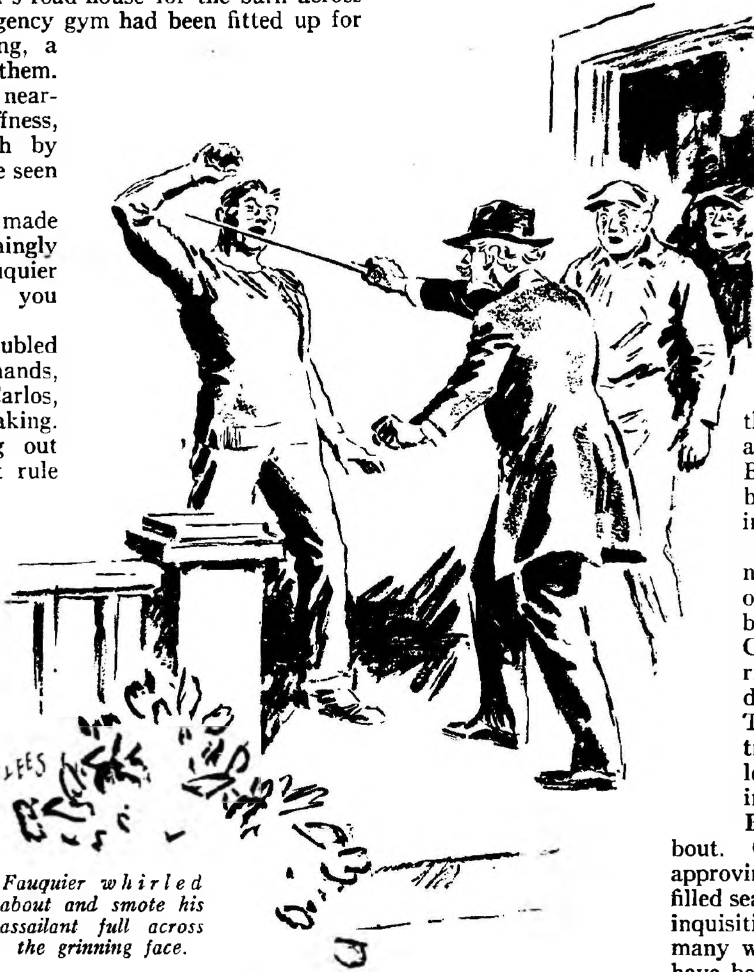
He choked, fought for breath and for his wonted calm flow of words, then burst forth:

"Beauregard, if you fail to kill that unspeakably foul wild beast in your combat with him tomorrow night—or if you fail to come as close to killing him as is humanly possible—you may consider my house closed to you!"

"*Dad!*"

"I mean it, sir! I am speaking with studied moderation. By all the authority with which fatherhood and affection and past services endow me, I order you to beat that nameless brute to death! Do you understand me, sir? You are to let no quixotic notions of chivalry or of false mercy deter you. This is a pious task placed upon you by your father—by the head of your family! —Well, sir? You will obey me?"

Beau stared pop-eyed at the fury-palsied body and suffused countenance of his sire. McCuen tugged at the younger man's sweater sleeve and slyly indicated the crumpled sporting-page which Carlos was brandishing. Beau and his trainer had read that page's references to the scion of the house of Fauquier not an hour before. Its presence in Carlos' fist explained in small part the torrent of words gushing from the lean old throat, but much was still cryptic.



Fauquier whirled about and smote his assailant full across the grinning face.

Beau's lips parted to ask details. But Carlos was speaking again:

"When you preferred the rowdy sport of boxing, to the gentlemanly art of fencing, as a little boy," he quavered wrathfully, "I admit I was disgusted at your choice. Now, I am selfish enough to rejoice at it. For it makes your victory the more sure. I have never attended an exhibition such as I gather this is to be. I never thought to. For it savors overmuch of low prize-fighting to suit my perhaps old-world taste. But I insist that you procure me admission to this combat of yours tomorrow. I shall not be content until, with my own eyes, I see my solemn orders obeyed. And now, take me where I can lie down. My head aches, and I—I am not quite myself!" . . . .

The Cestus Athletic Club had a roomy arena. Yet the following night that arena was all but full. Berringer and Gehagan both had strong followings in the fight world.

Just before the evening's main bout, a chum of McCuen's, Bernstein by name, conducted Carlos Fauquier into a ringside box and sat down close beside him. To Bernstein had been intrusted the hard duty of looking after this badly-in-the-way father of Kid Berringer during the bout. Carlos glowered in disapproving wonder at the tiers of filled seats. Why should morbid inquisitiveness drag forth so many witnesses to what should have been purely a personal affair? From the newspaper accounts he had expected to see a handful of onlookers; but no such assemblage as this. It was—it was indecent curiosity!

He was about to say so to Bernstein, when a ragged cheer drowned his half-uttered words. Followed by men with towels and a bucket, Tony Gehagan came down the aisle and vaulted lazily into the ring. He was swathed in a bathrobe; and he glanced about in grinning recognition of the applause. His idly roving gaze centered on the scowling and vibrating Carlos Fauquier. The grin spread into a chuckle. Carlos half-rose to his feet, the malacca stick grasped tight. Bernstein tugged briskly at the tails of his frock coat. Carlos sat down, withering Bernstein with a single terrible look.

Then, scarcely a minute later, the ragged applause broke out again, perhaps a little fuller in volume, as Beau Fauquier with McCuen and his handlers came into the ring. Beau and Gehagan favored each other with an elaborately rehearsed glare of mortal hate.

Gleefully the crowd settled back to watch. This bout

they decided, promised to be worth at least the moderate admission price.

Carlos Fauquier noted breathlessly the preliminary routine so puzzling to him. He saw his boy and the horrible Gehagan beckoned to mid-ring by a fat little man in shirt-sleeves. He saw the little man talking earnestly to them; he saw them refuse to shake hands, in a wrathful bit of dumb show; he heard the joyous murmur of the crowd at the refusal.

A bell clanged. Every outsider except the shirt-sleeved man left the ring in ridiculous haste. Carlos saw the two fighters, stripped to the waist and bare of legs, leave their corners and hasten toward each other, their hands muffled in pudgy maroon gloves instead of being left bare to do the work as Nature intended. He saw them dance and pirouette foolishly for an instant, their fat gloved hands weaving back and forth with no apparent meaning.

Then, so rapidly that his untrained eye could not wholly follow the maneuver, Carlos saw them come together with a clash, the gloves working like pistons. In the midst of the stirring encounter, they embraced, to Carlos' amazed horror. But the little man in shirt-sleeves was bustling in between them, calling to them and tugging at them. The embrace ended.

AS the fighters parted, Carlos saw Beau's left fist travel swiftly upward and find its goal under Tony Gehagan's chin. Gehagan teetered back on his heels. Instantly Beau was flying at him like an angry wildcat. The crowd was on its feet, shouting. Gehagan was backing shamblingly across the ring, both arms up, with elbows outward, trying to catch Beau's rain of blows. Against the farther ropes he was driven, just above Carlos' head. Once more, but this time feebly, he sought to embrace Beau. The little shirt-sleeved man shoved his way between them, speaking sharp words and pushing Beauregard back.

"Let him alone!" crackled Carlos fiercely to the referee. "Keep your slimy hands off my boy, you! He's giving that ruffian what he deserves."

His words went unheard in the crowd's happy bellow. Again the two were in mid-ring. Carlos thrilled at the viciousness of their close-quarters fighting. Just a little more of this and Beau would thrash the blackguard into helplessness!

From nowhere in particular the gong sounded. Instantly, the fighters ceased their fiery slugging. They straightened and turning their backs upon each other, they walked peacefully to their corners.

CARLOS was aghast at the pusillanimous meekness of his son. Even if Gehagan had wanted a breathing-spell, chivalry surely did not demand that Beauregard grant it to him!

While he was still expounding this thunderously to Bernstein at his side, a loud whistle cut in on his diatribe. Almost directly he heard the gong again. This time it seemed to be calling the warriors back to the duel whence it had driven them only a bare minute ago. For they were assailing each other with whirlwind vigor. The arena resounded to the thud of their blows.

Gehagan seemed to have recovered during the brief rest which Carlos so bitterly grudged him. Indeed, a few minutes later, after a flurry of mutual blows, his left fist crashed to Beauregard's chin, and his right followed it thither. Beau Fauquier fell flat on his back at one side of the ring. The crowd went crazy. Carlos prayed.

Then, while the shirt-sleeved man waved a pendulum arm above him, Beau began to struggle slowly to a sitting position and tried to regain his feet. Like a tiger, Gehagan leaped at him.

"Kill him!" roared the crowd in fifty raucous keys. "Kill the mucker! You've got him now, Tony!"

Carlos leaped up, brandishing his stick, as if to hurl himself at his boy's army of ill-wishers. Then, in the same breath, came the gong's clangor. Once more Beau and his opponent went to their corners, to be fanned and sponged and exhorted.

TOO soon, for Carlos, the whistle and the ensuing bell sounded for the opening of the third round. He saw Gehagan spring forward, tense and terrible. Sickly incredulous, he saw Beau arise totteringly from his stool and stumble toward his onrushing adversary. Beau's shoulders were sagging. His eyes were dull, his arms hung limp; his head rolled drunkenly.

Carlos' heart bled for the beaten and half-dead young gladiator. He yearned to climb up there and throw his own feeble body between the reeling victim and the murderous conqueror.

Wide open, and bent only on obeying the crowd's strident instructions to end the battle in a punch, Gehagan rushed in, despite a yell of caution from his manager. Too late Gehagan saw a lightning change in his slumpingly helpless foe; too late he sought to halt his own charge and to close his guard.

The "down-and-out" trick served the wholly recuperated Beau Fauquier as handily as it once served Bob Fitzsimmons in the second round of his fight with Sharkey in 1900. As Beau lurched artistically forward, he set himself and struck. With all his strength and skill and aided by his enemy's momentum, he drove his left fist into Gehagan's body, just at the spot where the ribs part. In what looked to Carlos like the same motion, his right glove crashed rendingly against Gehagan's jaw-point.

Gehagan fell, his knees turning to tallow. He fell on his face, not on his back—surest sign of a complete knockout.

Even Carlos Fauquier's vengeance was sated at sight of the awful look on the distorted face and at the helpless convulsive quivering of the prone man's muscles. Beauregard had obeyed his father's sacred command. Yes, Beauregard was a good boy—a good son!

YET, later, during supper at Kriegler's road-house, one lingering fear found voice. Half-timidly and with a new respect, Carlos addressed the victor:

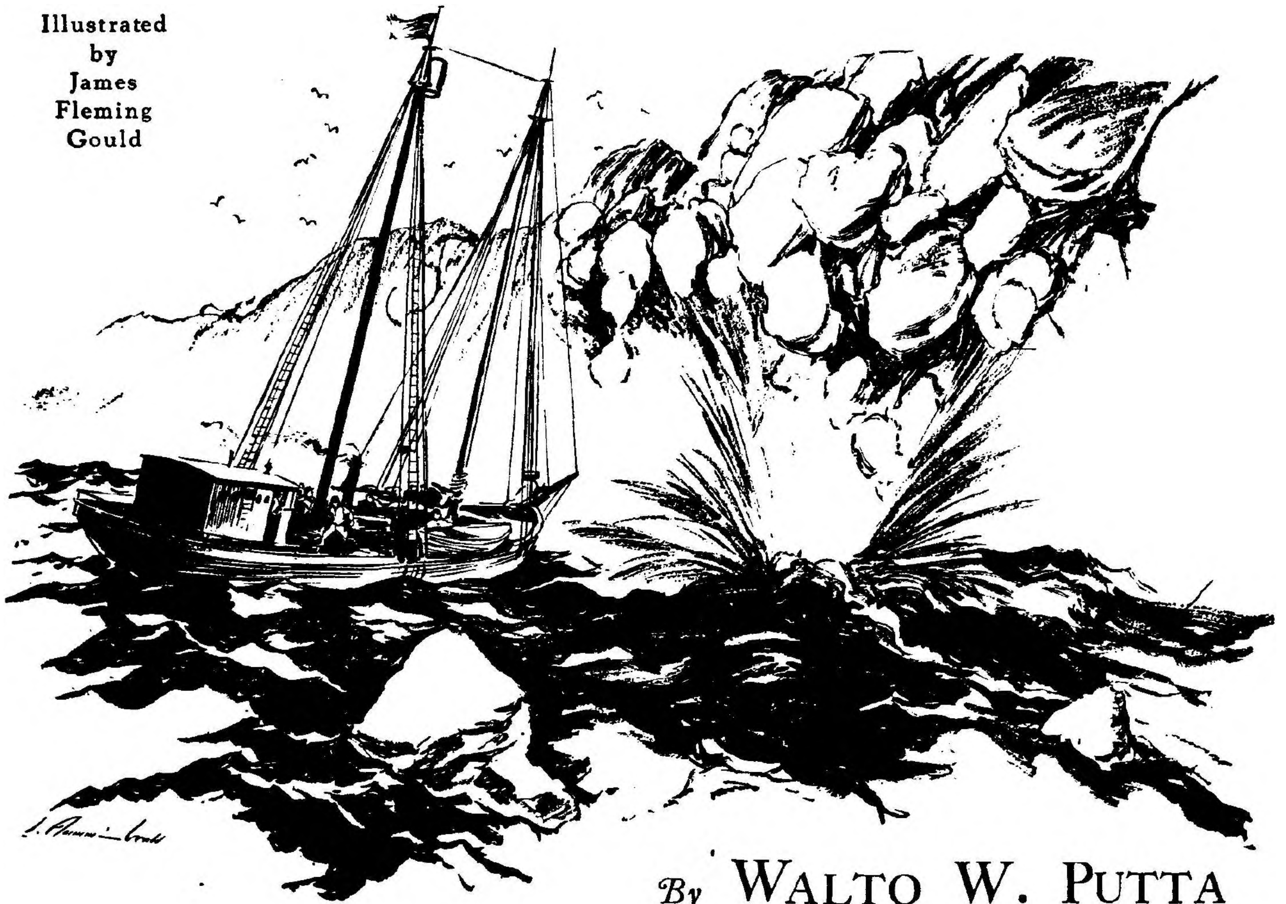
"You know I do not wish to interfere with your best happiness, my very dear lad. But this young lady—this young lady over whose favors the newspapers said you and that wretched man had the quarrel which culminated in tonight's combat— Are you—are you quite sure such a woman could make you happy? Forgive me if I am impertinent or if I seem to presume, but—"

"Dad," interrupted Beau, with a long sigh of renunciation, "I can see you don't want me to marry her. You always know best. Sooner than go against your wishes, I promise solemnly I'll never see her again."

"Oh, my own boy!" gabbled the overjoyed Carlos. "If you could know what a load you have lifted from my heart! I—"

"Besides," pronounced Colin McCuen, "I said right from the first, that that dame wasn't no match for a high-educated lad like Beau here! Why, believe me or not, sir, she's so illit'rate she don't even know about the Pelasgians being the prim'tive inhab'tants of—whatever joint they was the prim'tive inhab'tants of. What do you think of that, now, for a low-brow girl? And—and I'm doubting if she's got any real straight dope on the what-you-may-call-it of a right-angled triangle or— Hey, Beau! That's *my* shin you're kickin' so crool!"

Illustrated by James Fleming Gould



By WALTO W. PUTTA

Pirates of the Frozen Seas

The crew of Captain Putta's trading-vessel expected Arctic perils—and encountered them. What they didn't expect was the Russian Reds' reign of terror.

THE schooner *Iskum*, sailing from Vancouver to open a Siberian trade for the Phœnix Northern Trading Company, was commanded by Captain Walto Putta, who had considerable experience in the Arctic. Among the crew were Jumbo Thomas, the Captain's engineer and friend; Alex Nicholson, mate; Ira Diem, secretary and supercargo; Jack Oliver, ex-Marine, cook and steward; John Felkel, trader and auxiliary mate; and Dave Tripple, a fourteen-year-old nephew of one of the owners. Arriving at Indian Point, they discovered that the Soviet Government was in complete control of the Eskimos and the trading country. The Red representative Burgh would allow the *Iskum* no trading permit, and compelled them to go either to East Cape or Anadir for their permit. Faced with a loss in time and additional dangers in either route, they selected East Cape, to the north but shorter. Burgh, armed with two automatics, went along ostensibly as a passenger; they were to find out later they were virtually his prisoners. At East Cape they were again refused a permit, and sent on to Anadir. The disheartened crew began the perilous voyage through the ice-packed waters. They weathered the first hazards of ice-floes, and approached the entrance of Anadir Bay, solid with ice. *(This true adventure continues in detail:)*

MOVING forward under the favoring conditions of the ebb-tide, we had come within forty-five miles of Russian Spit, the north entrance to Anadir Bay, when we were attracted by a tall man down on the shore-ice, waving his parka violently at us. He appeared too tall for a native. Stopping and mooring to the shore-ice, we waited for him to come to us. He was young Mr. Coffin, whose father in Tacoma had wanted us to take letters to Anadir for him, but whose request I had refused on the ground that we would not be there. How sure we had been then that Anadir was not to see us that summer!

In no uncertain terms Mr. Coffin expressed his astonishment at finding a white man's boat on his coast at this early date. We kept him aboard for a visit, having many questions both to ask and to answer. Coffin's separation from the party with which he had come to Siberia brought forth our first inquiries. We learned that the rest of the Kelly party were up the Anadir River, as originally planned, but that he, on private prospecting tour with

two Russians he had met before in Alaska, had found a rich gold deposit and staked it as a partnership claim. He was hoping to be able to work this soon. In the meantime he had been collecting furs for the summer trade, having a camp not far from where we were then. He was as glad to see us as we were to see him.

When it came to plans for our going forward, he not only advised us as to conditions ahead, but offered his services as guide. He said as the ice was still solid in Anadir Bay and part way along the coast, we would do better to wait until it moved out than to run the risk of getting caught in it. He knew of a clear pool of water at the mouth of a small river not far ahead. He and his two partners had their camp near there, and he was familiar with the entire region.

By nip and tuck we made the mouth of this stream, which Coffin and his partners called Kolby River, but which I have failed to find mentioned in any of the charts or pilot-books I have examined. The river current came from under the shore-ice in nice little whirlpools of sufficient volume and strength to turn the ice in a way that kept a large pool of clear water around us.

Coffin's friends joined us here, and remained on board. They assured us that the ice up the river would not break for quite a while, moving as a rule only after the shore-ice had disappeared. By the second day we all gradually adjusted ourselves to the weeks of inactivity which appeared in prospect. Penny-ante strip-poker occupied some of us, while the lure of goose-hunting, which our guests told us could be enjoyed at a lake three miles up the river, kept Jumbo, a born sportsman, on the keen edge of expectation.

Of duck-shooting we had our fill right at the ship, for we were surrounded by ducks of many varieties all the time. To get all the birds we wanted for food, we had only to stick a .22 rifle out through a port-hole. Some of us went up to the mouth of the river on the ice, where we found the ducks even more plentiful, with geese also flying about, though none of these came within shooting distance.

When it became evident to me that we were in no danger from the ice for the present, I allowed Jumbo to go as far as the lake, Mr. Coffin having offered to take him there with his seven-dog team.

We all watched the two start off, Jumbo clinging to his precious shotgun, and Coffin shouting to his dogs in the local lingo as he manipulated them over the rough ice.

"*Crah! Crah! Pot! Pot! Bravo!* Midvid, you ——!" he yelled.

"*Crah,*" it seemed, meant in dog-talk, "to right," "*pot,*" "to left." Bravo was the name of one of the dogs, and Midvid that of the leader. The rest of the words, I understood perfectly!

WE were left with Mr. Coffin's Russian friends, from whom we were to learn many things not usually included in trading-vessel experience. The two were former residents of Nome and other parts of Alaska, and spoke English fluently. The elder, Michael Zebec,—or Mike, to use his companions' name for him,—was about forty years old, a tall dark fellow, standing about six feet four, and very lithe in his movements. He was less of a talker than the other, Dave Babakayoff, who was about twenty-seven —a clean-cut young chap of gentle manners and musical voice. They and Coffin—or "Zep," as they called him, from the command, "Zip!" he used often to his dogs—had discovered this rich placer up the Anadir River, and were only waiting for the Soviet Government to pass laws under which they would be allowed to work it.

Coffin was a devil-may-care type of American, amply able to look out for himself anywhere. He had showed us nuggets as big as my finger from their mine, but they said it was unsafe, under conditions now existing, to do any work on the claim, as the government would promptly confiscate everything. They expected matters soon to be straightened out; from this we gathered that both the Russians were of Soviet sympathies.

Mr. Felkel asked the two Russians about General Butchkaroff, formerly of the Czar's army.

"I met him in Nome last year," Felkel said, "and bought a large number of skins from him."

"Well," returned Dave Babakayoff, in his quiet voice, "we can now sell you General Butchkaroff's skin."

The remark, uttered quite casually, fell like a bombshell in our midst. We kept an awe-struck silence until Felkel managed to ask what had happened.

IN a matter-of-fact manner, his voice not revealing the slightest trace of emotion, Dave proceeded to tell us the story of the Anadir revolution, which involved the destruction of both Butchkaroff, governor at Petropavlovsk, and his entire army—as bloody a story as even Russia could have supplied.

According to him, Butchkaroff, in 1922, while administrator at Petropavlovsk, obtained a large number of furs along the Siberian coast by assuming police powers and putting an exorbitant tax on both natives and traders. Utilizing the gunboat he had at his command, as an official of the Czarist Government, he took his spoils to Nome and sold them—some of which were furs Felkel had bought. He then returned to Petropavlovsk and considered the incident closed.

During the following winter the Reds in Anadir became strong enough to overthrow the local Czarist *natchalnik*. They took a number of prisoners, and gained control of the city and the wireless station, over which they proceeded to send a message, in the name of the *natchalnik*, to Butchkaroff in Petropavlovsk. The message stated:

"A Red uprising has occurred. A number of prisoners taken. What shall we do with them?"

"Shoot them," came back the immediate reply.

The Anadir Reds thereupon shot their Czarist captives, this ruse being considered exceedingly clever, apparently, by both our Red guests aboard the *Iskum*.

The bodies of the executed prisoners, Dave went on to say, lay on the ice of the lagoon in the village for fourteen days before being finally dragged to the river and left to drift out to sea on the ice floes. Shortly afterward a small Red army took Petropavlovsk. Butchkaroff, with two hundred and fifty men, escaped to the interior. An equal number of Reds from Petropavlovsk, together with one hundred and fifty from Anadir, started after the fugitives, Dave and his friend being among the number.

"When we caught up to them," Dave related, "the General had only sixty men with him. They were all hiding in Chukchi tents, which we surrounded. We promised them amnesty if they would give themselves up. They at once came out, though clothed only in their underwear, and the weather was below zero. We left them standing in the snow while special emissaries went around to the Chukchis to ask how the men had been treating them. The Chukchis made many complaints, saying the soldiers had made overtures to their women, had eaten their food, and used their dog-teams, without ever paying for anything.

"'Aha!' said our Red commander. 'So that's how you treat the natives, is it? We were going to let you live, but now we have changed our minds!' Immediately afterward Butchkaroff and his sixty men were all shot."

We Americans were silent when that story ended. We

could not express approval of such cold-blooded wholesale murder as this, and yet it was plain to all of us that the fewer criticisms we offered, the better. We began to feel that we were ourselves in a very ticklish position.

Dave then spoke again, turning his talk into a somewhat safer channel.

"Midvid, the leader of Zep's dog-team, is one of Butchkaroff's dogs. He is a good dog now—but he wasn't then. The reason Zep got hold of him was because no one could do anything with him. He was too scared. He would sit around on the ice a long way off and watch what was going on, but would let no one near him. When the other dogs were being fed, he would dash in, snatch a bite, and run away again. We tried to get him into harness when we started to go back to Anadir, but he refused to be caught. Keeping alive by his tactics of snatching bits of food at each opportunity, he followed us all the way home, but still refused to become useful. We were about to shoot him when Zep came along and heard us talking. He asked to be allowed to make friends with the dog and train him if he could.

"It was interesting to watch the way he went about it. As Midvid would be sitting watching some distance off, he would walk toward him, and then turn in another direction and walk away again. The next time, he would go a little nearer before turning. Soon he was walking in a circle around the dog, each time making no attempt to come close before walking away again. The dog, his curiosity aroused, began to follow. Soon we got him in harness, and now he is the best leader on this coast."

It took some of the edge off our depressed mood to have a happy ending to one story, at least, out of the bloody horrors of the Russian revolution with which our predicament had brought us into this unexpected contact. But it was gruesome enough to reflect on a massacre so brutal that even a dumb animal had been terrified by it.

CHAPTER VI

DAVE BABAKAYOFF'S account of these local happenings impressed on me the realization that a reign of terror had occurred in Northeast Siberia, and that it had left behind it an atmosphere impregnated with hatred and cruelty.

I began to speculate as to the ultimate fate of the *Iskum* and her crew, anything but reassured by the change of attitude which had become apparent in Burgh. His former joviality had turned into cold indifference, and he began to throw out ominous remarks about our stopping at Gambell against his wishes. He also said, with sarcastic significance, that there were probably several boats at Anadir by this time.

I learned that he had had a conversation with Mr. Diem, from whom he had drawn out the information that the Phœnix Northern Trading Company was capitalized at eighty thousand dollars.

"He laughed contemptuously at that," Diem recounted, "saying the Soviet Government would not listen to any business proposition involving less than fifteen million dollars."

When I turned in that night, Jumbo and Mr. Coffin were not yet back from their hunting-trip, but I did not let that worry me. I had other things on my mind. I tossed for hours before I fell asleep at all, and then I experienced a series of terrible nightmares. One of these was interrupted at three in the morning by a commotion on deck. Jumbo and Zep had returned.

I suspected that the trip had not been an unqualified success, as Jumbo was loudly cursing his luck. When I learned the circumstances, I sympathized with him, though I could not help laughing. On their way back from the lake, with their bag of two geese, they had come to a crack in the shore-ice, half a mile from the beach, which opened at ebb-tide to a width of about four feet, and closed again at flood. The dogs had simply jumped over this. Mr. Coffin, doing as any experienced dog-team driver would in such a case, stepped off the seat of the sled and jumped after the dogs. Jumbo, new to the maneuver, stepped off a second too late, dropping into the dark, icy water with his beloved shotgun in his hands. The shock of the plunge made him let go of the gun, which promptly went to the bottom under twelve feet of ice. The bag of geese, ironically enough, floated long enough to let itself be rescued.

As soon as Jumbo got into dry clothes, we all went out with him to try to recover the gun, the light of the Northern summer dawn being already as strong as that of day. We had no luck, although Jumbo himself refused to give up hope or effort. For three days he kept at it, using leads with spikes on them, electric magnets, and other devices more or less appropriate. To locate the gun was a simple matter, as a magnet let down slowly on a fishing line would land right on top of it. But to get something that would take hold and lift was a problem.

I had given the matter up as a hopeless job when, on the third day, Coffin and Jumbo came aboard with the gun balanced triumphantly on its owner's shoulders.

The whole episode was a godsend in the way of diversion to me, as it served to take my mind out of the current of dark anticipation during these hours and days of enforced inactivity.

A lead now opened along the shore-ice. As a certain amount of ice had also broken away from the mouth of the river, we found ourselves in the additional danger of being shoved up on a reef. I decided we had better try our luck farther toward the south.

We said good-by to Coffin and his friends, not expecting to see them again. We moved on our way, reaching Russian Spit, the northern point marking the entrance to Anadir Bay, with comparative ease. Twelve miles separated Russian Spit from the arm of land on the south of the entrance, Geka Point, and between these two moved a vast and picturesque parade of broken ice, great high bergs, and flat floes, some of the last appearing to be several miles in area.

In order to be out of the line of march while considering the advisability of entering the bay, we moved to a scant strip of shore-ice near the end of the spit. Here the current ran swiftly, sometimes attaining four miles an hour. We stood our position through both an ebb and a flood-tide, the current steering the ice past us with a smoothness and grace that had majesty in it. We were watching the colossal North go out to join in the carnival of summer.

Occasionally an insignificant little berg would sheer off from the iron-bark sheathing on the *Iskum's* side, but I was gaining confidence in our position, and we remained.

ONE morning we were all seated on the forecastle head, smoking and speculating about the clear strip of water now evident in Anadir Bay, when an apparently insignificant iceberg rode rather close to the ship's side. As Alex Nicholson took up a boat-hook to push it away, something caught us under the keel. We were moored to a huge boulder of ice on the shore side by means of a bight of five-eighths-inch diameter plow-steel wire, but the impact of the harmless-looking berg against us made the *Iskum's* bow rise several feet, snapping that steel wire like a shoestring. No more than a foot of the berg was

Eleven double crosses marked the graves of his comrades who had been picked off one by one.

visible above the surface. After the contact it seemed to turn slightly, and then continued on its way, while the ship settled back to her normal water-line.

It was just another of the many close calls already experienced by the *Iskum*, but, as heretofore, luck was with us. If the berg had struck the boat on her side instead of under the keel, this story would have reached its climax right then.

The incident recalled to my mind the answer Harry Weeding, of the *Chukotsk,* gave Colonel Ashton when the latter asked him how large a part of an iceberg remains under water.

"Nine-tenths," said Weeding, in the unhesitating manner of one who knows his Arctic.

At the time this seemed to me a foolish statement, for I held to what I had been taught in school, that one-third of a berg appears above water, while two-thirds is submerged.

Now, however, I began to see where experience had given Weeding more accurate knowledge. Looking at the beach along the shore, I saw gigantic holes in the sand and gravel. It grew clear to me that the bergs, when loosening from the ground, carry large quantities of sand, gravel, and dirt with them, the weight of which, aside from the weight of the ice alone, is often enough to keep the berg almost totally submerged.

The strip of clear water in the bay had now widened to about three miles, but the ice from there on appeared to remain intact. An ice-ridge ranging in height from some twenty to sixty feet ran for approximately two miles in a north-and-south direction. By bearings on Mount St. Dionysius, Mount St. Mary, and Geka Point, I determined that the ice-ridge was at that position in the bay where the chart showed soundings of thirty feet—or three and a half miles inside the entrance. From this it became evident that the ridge of ice was solidly grounded, as about half or more of it showed above the surface.

An idea came to me. This ridge would remain where it was until gradually worn down by the currents. When the river-ice broke up, it would pass on either side of the ridge, leaving an area of clear water directly under it on the seaward side. Even with a tide-fall of seven feet, the surface current affected by the fresh water of the river was mostly in an outward direction, which made it unlikely that the ice would ever back up against the ridge once it had started out. Acting upon these calculations we moved in to the ridge, and moored to its seaward side.

Thirty miles remained between us and Anadir—unbroken ice, every yard of the way. Four miles nearer in lay Raid Reef, a five-mile stretch of foul ground. This would be easy enough to avoid in clear water, but to a ship taking a zigzag course among masses of broken ice, it would offer a menace, to say the least. The outer entrance to our retreat in the bay at times became blocked, while again streaks of clear ocean showed.

We put in a week of expectant waiting. The thirtieth of June arrived, and with it the probability of the breaking up of the river-ice at any moment. We were in a state of complete inactivity, and Burgh's attitude remained so gruff that an atmosphere of gloom pervaded the ship.

I felt the need of more strength and courage for the ordeals ahead than I now possessed. I had heard of the invigorating effect of sun-and-snow baths, and decided to try them out. They proved both a comfort and a stimulation. The conditions here were ideal, with the sun's rays reflecting from the white snow through a twenty-three-hour day. Laying a fur on the snow, and reclining on it *au naturel,* I basked in the Northern heat until I had absorbed all I felt I could. Then I would rub myself down with snow, getting a delightful, tingling sensation which made me feel more fit both physically and mentally.

The days dragged on until the fifth of July, with nothing doing in the expected break-up of the ice. On that day, Jack Oliver, bored with the deadly monotony of cooking meals for idle men on an idle ship, picked up a rifle and fired at an *ugruck* over on the solid ice about five hundred yards distant.

Instantly we realized that he had started something. As if in answer to his shot, the whole vast surface of the bay began to move. At first we felt rather than saw this, but it became more perceptible moment by moment, until soon the ice came in a rushing avalanche. I was alert enough now for action! In another instant we saw a white edge four feet thick appear on top of the ridge below which we were moored. The river-ice was moving on us.

"Full astern; cast off!" I shouted.

We had no more than backed out from our position when about a hundred tons of ice toppled down over the ridge, barely missing the jib-boom.

THE height of the ridge increased as floe after floe, pushed by the irresistible force of a sheet of ice thirty miles long, was telescoped to the top, to hang there a moment, and then tumble into the water on our side. From my height of fifty feet in the crow's-nest, I was still looking up at it; often it towered far above our masts. When the accumulated ice fell, it created swells in which the heavily laden *Iskum* rolled until her rails dipped under.

Then, within half an hour of the beginning of the movement, the high ridge itself became jarred from its hold on the ground by the ramming of the floes. As its last weight of top-ice slumped off, its submerged portion came to the surface end-up, like a stick thrown into a pond, after which the entire mass rolled back and forth seeking an equilibrium. Other floes and bergs of every fantastic shape were bobbing like corks over the whole sweep of the bay.

Wherever I looked, nothing stayed still long enough for me to define a course. And everything was on such

a colossal, elemental scale that I felt as if watching creation itself taking form out of the primal seas. It gave me the keenest regret of our voyage to think we had brought no motion-picture camera along. I doubt whether any one else has ever witnessed a similar spectacle at such close range, for under normal conditions no boat ever goes so near the mouth of a river as we were, before the ice breaks up.

Unfortunately the demand for action in the interest of safety cut short my time for observation. The danger arising from the toppling over of our very fortification was one I had not considered. Up there alone in the crow's-nest, I asked aloud questions as to the advisability of this or that move, and shouted the answer before the question was completed. Behind us, the mouth of the bay was blocked clean across, from Geka Point to Russian Spit. But something must be done at once.

AHEAD appeared a lead between two large floes as straight as the space between an opened parallel rule. Our one chance seemed to be to follow this. Already the *Iskum* had the appearance of a mere speck on the water in contrast with the huge bergs surrounding her. With a lump in my throat I told the little ship to go forward into this lead, reminding her that her very name meant, "Go there and come back." Of course I realized we were taking a long chance that the ice on either side, each floe many square miles in extent, would not come together and pinch us like a pin between two fingers. But what else could we do?

Then a cloud of vapor rose before us—a fog like a blanket. "Well, this will probably be the last," I thought. "It must be caused by the hot sun beating down on the newly opened surface of the cold water. But it's up to me to navigate my boat past Raid Reef among drifting masses of ice, fog or no fog."

I shouted down to Jumbo through the speaking-tube the deepest insult I could offer his pet engine:

"Give us all the r.p.m's you can get out of that cast-iron clicker of yours!"

To Alex Nicholson I called: "Keep that lead agoing! Four fathoms is enough line out."

If it were possible for a man to hold his breath for an hour at a stretch, I would say that I held mine for that time as we steamed ahead through the fog. Then my straining eyes glimpsed the farther end of the lead. We found ourselves among broken ice at that point, but what a relief to be out from between two scissors-edges! We had risked much in speeding up under such conditions, but less than we would have risked by loitering.

I gave a glance astern, and as I looked the two edges of the floes met behind us, forming a ridge of ice in place of the open lead we had miraculously negotiated. The floes were turning with the twisting currents, so that it was their ends that came together, instead of the long side-edges, but at that they formed an insurmountable barrier.

"We might have been able to back out," I reflected, "but this is better." And I called down to Jumbo to let up on the speed.

We were now again at our old game of "Dodge 'em," with the bergs on the offensive. For twenty-four hours the *Iskum* did all the dodging, and at that time we brought up in the face of a new problem.

"Three fathoms!" shouted Alex.

Through the fog which still prevailed I spied the edge of a vast field of white, and along it a strip of clear water.

"Raid Reef," I decided. "The ice on it hasn't moved."

Slowly I pushed the *Iskum* up to it, and moored head-on in two and a half fathoms of water. Apparently no danger offered here at low tide. Out of a choice of courses ranging all around the compass I had managed to make good three miles of distance in twenty-four hours.

I climbed down from the rigging, fagged from my long strain. Mr. Diem met me as I stepped on deck.

"Take a nap, Captain," he advised me with his cheery, big-toothed smile. "I'll watch her."

I needed rest, and went to my bunk with my usual orders to the crew to call me in case of any change in ice-conditions, wind, or weather. But I was sure I could not sleep. The burning question in my mind was, what lay beyond that reef which the fog held in a black secret? With another look out of the door to clear water, and a glance at Mr. Diem, now at the foot of our observation post in the crow's-nest, I lay down, and instantly fell asleep.

When I wakened, I jumped up with the hope that I might now see across the reef and penetrate the mystery beyond it. Surely enough, the fog had completely cleared, and the sun shone brightly on the muddy waters of the Anadir River. The only ice in sight besides that still covering the reef was a strip along the shore and the heavy pack about two miles eastward.

Mr. Diem greeted me with his persistent grin.

"How does that suit you, Captain?"

"How long has it been clear like this?" I countered, a question which served to check some of his hilarity.

"About six hours, Captain," he admitted. "I thought you wanted—"

"Thought—hell!" I shouted. "After all this, we're going to lie around and rot while Harry Weeding and others are dropping anchor at Anadir! What have we been doing the whole week but sleep? Still one day's run—

"Fine thing to do," he growled; "going out there without my permission!"

and you want to lose a race and business for the sake of sleep!"

The famous grin faded, and the *Iskum* went into action. Four hours later, at eleven o'clock on the night of July sixth, we cast anchor in four fathoms of water just north of Cape Alexander, two-tenths of a mile from the river-bank in front of the Government building at Anadir. It was only a village, but one of the most important towns on the Siberian coast, trading-post of both the Olaf Svensen and the Hudson Bay Companies.

NO other boats were in. We had won the race. I apologized to Mr. Diem for my explosion of temper, and everybody was happy. Jack Oliver was in particularly high feather, for he had fired the shot that loosened the ice and let us in. We reminded him that he had not hit the *ugruck* he had aimed at, but that failed to diminish his pride.

Although the hour was late, the entire population appeared to be on hand to meet the first boat of the season. They came also, it seemed, to greet our passenger Mr. Burgh, crowding around him as if he were a really important personage, as I suppose he was to them. This left the rest of us standing around by ourselves, but in the crowd we recognized, to our surprise, Mr. Coffin's two Russian friends, Michael Zebec and Dave Babakayoff.

More than that, Mike proved to be none other than the chief of police of Anadir. He exchanged a few words with us, saying that he and Dave had come down by dog-team soon after the *Iskum* started south. Dave, it seemed, was in the commissariat. They, of course, had brought word of Burgh's being on our ship.

The crowd began to move toward the Government house with Burgh, and Chief Mike, a commanding figure even though in civilian clothes, took Jumbo by the arm and told him to come along. Jumbo, however, objected to such escort, and we all returned to our ship, discussing this new development.

The next morning we were early astir, for we were eager to get to trading. From the deck I took a good look at the town. I saw a village of about four hundred permanent residents which was the center of a number of trading, mining, and reindeer camps. It presented a dreary appearance, the houses being mostly of wide sawn logs in their natural state. Corrugated-iron sheds were in evidence around the trading-posts.

The Svensen Company's buildings looked more attractive than those of the Hudson Bay people, being painted. A few igloos of walrus skin appeared here and there, although even the half-breeds and Eskimos, it seemed, lived in some sort of wooden houses. Rough, inadequate sidewalks of wood straggled along the streets in places. Large patches of snow remained in the unbuilt areas, but where the bare ground showed it was dry, mostly covered with rough gravel and pebbles.

Behind the town rose a hillside on which stood two high wireless towers with aërial attachments. I knew Mt. Dionysius stood beyond about ten miles inland, but as the day was dark and rainy, we could not see it. From the beach in front of the village the ice had cleared away. Large fragments were floating past in the muddy current, some being pushed by whirlpools into the counter-current along the beach. These drifted aimlessly in the up-river direction, and at times bumped the *Iskum's* stem or grazed her sides, but did no damage as they reëntered the seaward process in midstream again.

Of the Anadir River I had learned that it is navigable for three hundred miles, with no rapids in the entire stretch. I knew that many experienced prospectors were then waiting, both patiently and impatiently, for a time when the vast reaches, rich in gold, platinum, and other minerals which it taps, would be opened for exploration. Like our new acquaintances Mike and Dave, these were all watching for a Government move which would protect them in a more or less ruthless exploitation of these natural resources for the markets of the world.

None of our crew went ashore until after the chief of police had been aboard and given the boat a thorough inspection. He had with him a list of goods—merchandise, and certain canned foods, including vegetables—which he said the Government wished to buy. According to him, price was no object. Whatever we charged, the Government was willing to pay. For the present, however, he suggested that we just open an account with them. He would see to it that we were paid later.

Mr. Diem handled this end of the negotiations. He was a business-man of long standing, familiar with credits, and was anxious to impress on the Russians the fact that we were acting in all good faith in seeking trading privileges along their coast. He had no reason to doubt the honesty of the chief, and so promptly supplied the goods needed on the terms set forth.

Zebec completed his errand, after which he informed us we were from that moment at liberty to go ashore. He laid emphasis on the freedom we were to enjoy. We were to go any place we wished at any time, no restrictions whatever to be placed upon our movements. We did not see just what restrictions could have been imposed—but that was a knowledge reserved for later learning.

Mr. Burgh then came on board looking for one of his automatic pistols. It was missing, and he could not for the life of him see what had become of it. He searched the boat unsuccessfully, young Dave Tripple helping him, and after going ashore came back to take another thorough look. He finally decided that in some one of the several excitements we had been through, the gun must have fallen overboard. I did not understand quite how this could have happened, but as the weapon failed to turn up anywhere, I too accepted this conclusion.

We were none of us in a hurry to go into the village, for we expected to do a big business at once over the ship's railing, as is usual—the natives and traders coming on board with fox, sable, and squirrel skins, and taking away what we had to offer in exchange. But to our surprise no one seemed to be paying the least attention to our presence. Felkel, Diem, and I then went ashore to see what was doing there. The day developed into an exceptionally cold one, with hail falling heavily at intervals, and a northeasterly wind whipping it against our faces.

About the first person we met was the Olaf Svensen Company's trader, Mr. Lampe, who greeted us jovially and invited us to his company's post on the hill back of the village. He paid us many pleasant compliments on the appearance of the *Iskum*, and remarked that we had reached Anadir on an unusually early date.

I learned from various conversations here in Anadir the reason we had been unable to trade with any of the natives along the Siberian coast on our way, either before or after Burgh accompanied us. It was because the Red Government had taken away from all natives both their furs and their firearms, except such as they might have hidden from the guards.

CHAPTER VII

THE first and only boat in Anadir harbor continued to swing about in front of the Government house, with the natives eying her only from a distance. As for the

trading-permit for which we had come all the way from East Cape through seas of ice, we were told by Burgh and the other officials that it could not be issued until the Government's commercial expedition ship arrived from Vladivostok, although that might be any time now.

Meanwhile the chief of police and his aides made frequent trips to and from the *Iskum* in a red-painted launch, taking lists of the goods we carried, and helping themselves to what they needed. The six-foot-four chief was every inch an official these days, despite his absence of uniform. He wore American clothing—khaki-colored woolen pants, duck coat with sheepskin lining, and high laced boots, and on his dark head a lined cloth hat with ear-flaps. He carried a dog-whip, with which he was in the playful habit of swishing at objects along his path, wherever he might be.

He informed us, among other things, that all furs must be kept in the Government warehouse. Burgh also emphasized this point, and as he had listed all the skins we had on the ship, we had no choice but to turn over to them our entire collection for the season, including the two beautiful white fox furs intended for my wife. They took them ashore, but assured us the storing of them in the warehouse was a mere formality which should cause us no worry.

The most fortunate feature of our enforced stay here was the fact that we were permitted the freedom of the village, which gave us opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the true conditions under which the inhabitants lived. If this privilege had been revoked, the story of the *Iskum* and her escapes in 1923 would have been very different.

A FEW days after our arrival I went ashore, following my usual scrutiny of both land and water, hoping that our looked-for permit might be forthcoming by nightfall, although no sign of a ship now marked the horizon. On the beach I was delighted to meet a Russian named Andrea whom we had come to know the summer before. When we had stopped then at Whalen, the village north of East Cape, he had asked eagerly if he might join with us on our trading trip. We liked him personally, and let him come on, our friendly feeling not changing even when we learned later that he had been placed aboard the vessel as a Soviet spy:

He was a man of remarkable ability, and the greatest help to me in my Arctic navigation, particularly when we were waiting for leads to open in the packed ice. He would remain up in the rigging constantly at such times, observing all ice-movements and reporting them to me with accuracy. He was reticent about his personal affairs, but otherwise entered fully into our life on the ship, making himself of use to us in a variety of ways.

Remembering our pleasant relationship with him, I felt more than glad to meet him here, while he seemed equally pleased, offering his hand and inviting me to his house. He was a coastguard now, I quickly realized.

I went with him at once, for I was anxious for a chance to talk with him unobserved. The house to which he took me proved to be one of the wooden kind, neat and clean to an unusual degree, and occupied by a *kamsidahl* (half-breed) family. Andrea was evidently only a guest under the roof. This was the custom with all in authority in that country. They merely moved into the homes of the natives, who had no choice but to accept them meekly as members of the household, entitled to all privileges. Resistance would have been sheer folly, as had been demonstrated by many a case of intimidation, and even a few executions, at least under the Czarist regime.

Here, however, Andrea's presence was apparently not considered an imposition. The little children of the family came crowding around him as soon as we entered, bringing their grammars, arithmetics, and geography books for help with their lessons. He was teaching them, it seemed, and from the children's answers to his questions, both he and the entire family were having a merry and entertaining time of it.

When it came to questions from me, however, relating to the status of the *Iskum* in the harbor, he cautiously avoided anything definite. He gave the same explanation Burgh had—that when the Russian commercial expedition ship arrived, we would be granted our trading-permit. To my disappointment I could get nothing more than that.

Presently I found myself seated at the table with him and the genial raw-boned, brown-skinned head of the household. The stout and happy mother of the children filled our tea-cups from a silver samovar which shone with the last degree of polish. The three small children of the family played around us, while two older girls, about fifteen and seventeen, kept on at their knitting, occasionally raising their dark brown eyes to steal glances at the stranger. The hospitality of this superior *kamsidahl* family, the hot tea, and the kindly attitude of Andrea, combined to put me in a more cheerful mood. I began to believe that perhaps the coming of the commercial expedition ship was not a fairy-tale after all, and that before long the *Iskum* might be free to go about her business as promised.

Leaving Andrea, I decided to take a walk along the gravel spit. I noted the chief of police at a distance, but did not seek his society. We saw him swaying and swaggering about the village every time we came ashore, always swishing that long whip of his viciously at the dry hay on the sides of the road, at posts, or at any stray dog that had the poor judgment to get in his path.

I discussed the man with Felkel and Diem, arguing that he must retain this whipping-habit from some previous service with Cossacks, but Felkel assured me his manner was an exaggerated imitation of that of a hard-boiled United States marshal in one of the smaller Alaska towns.

As I walked along I saw ahead of me another man apparently out for a constitutional, whom I soon overtook. Introducing myself informally, I met a cordial response, the stranger promptly giving his name, "Ivan Ivanov."

The name was Russian, although its owner's appearance was strikingly Scandinavian. He had flaxen hair, blue eyes, rather a long nose with a slight elevation at the point, a ruddy complexion, and an athletic frame. He was about six feet tall. He proved to be a remarkable conversationalist, speaking in faultless English which I was confident had been acquired in an English university. Accepting my assurance that I would respect all confidences, he spoke freely of the unhappy political conditions of Russia, the country of which he was a citizen.

HE told a moving and significant story of being condemned to exile and death on this bleak coast.

"After the Reds took Anadir," he told me, "twelve of us who belonged to the Czarist party, although not in sympathy with its blindness and obstinacy, were not executed at the time. We were promised an amnesty. Although we knew this was only a piece of cruel mockery, we hoped that something might develop to prevent the useless sacrifice of our lives. Since then we have been brought to trial one at a time, separately, and in each case thus far the trial has resulted in the death-sentence and execution. We have all been allowed to walk around in the village as if free—but we knew from the first, as our captors knew, that a get-away was impossible. I am

the last, and any day may see me called for trial.

"How I should love to live! If free, I would attempt to show my countrymen the folly of these executions, and on the other hand, the value of considering every fresh idea brought forth—of discussing such ideas rationally, experimenting with those that offered hope, and discarding them if proved impracticable, but never refusing to try others. The only impractical thing, in the long run, is the bitter hatred and distrust the people have come to hold toward one another. It is this condition which gives opportunity to the heartless, the selfish, and the ruthless, to practise their tyranny unrebuked."

My own mind and heart were in a turmoil of protest against Russian abuses as I listened to him. It was one thing to read about political sufferings, from a safe retreat on American soil, but it was quite another to be walking beside a man doomed to die because of his principles of fair-play and humanitarianism, awaiting now, like a mouse between the paws of the cat, for the sharp teeth of Red ruthlessness to bite him from life.

On and on flowed Ivanov's story. He related numerous incidents of the most cold-blooded murder, committed by both the Reds and the Whites, as the two parties were then called. In Kolima a food-shortage led to the release of a number of prisoners, who were told that they were to be "given a chance." As the prison doors were flung open, they were ordered to run for their lives, but soldiers stationed at vantage-points along the way shot at them as they ran. Of course none escaped.

When at East Cape I had heard about this same execution, from the guards who came aboard our ship. They had commented on the particularly funny performance given by a certain skinny, long-legged fellow as he made long leaps on one leg after the other had been broken by a bullet. They told me also of a trader there who had been shot for daring to say he did not think certain practices of the officials were fair. After the revolution here at Anadir the report had been sent out that the wireless operator had gone crazy, but the truth seemed to be that he had been shot for sending messages objectionable to the Reds.

We finally reached a knoll on the hillside up from the shore, where we halted. I looked toward the graveyard which lay not far from where we stood, with the double cross of Russia above each grave.

"What," I asked, "is the Russian orthodox faith?"

Ivanov's eyes filled with tears. Unable to utter a word, he slumped down on a rock with his face in his hands. Eleven of those double crosses marked the graves of his comrades who had been picked off one by one. Was it in mockery or tragic truth that in my untheological mind this holy symbol of the Russian orthodox church should repeat itself with such sinister, slangy significance as,—*"Double-crossed"?*

Regaining his composure to some degree, Ivanov made a brave attempt to talk again.

But our strange conference was destined to a rude interruption. The chief of police came swinging up the slope toward us, his lithe form swaying with its usual insolent grace, his dog-whip in his hand.

Chief Mike came toward us, swishing and swaying.

I had scarcely time to assure my new friend that I was in accord with all he said before the official was within hearing. Chief Mike had developed a very arrogant, noisy manner with me of recent days. He now came toward us, swishing and swaying, like a full-rigged ship rolling in a dead calm. Ivanov rose as he approached, and started slowly back toward the village, while the chief stopped to talk with me.

"What about these big holes along the beach?" I asked him. "How do they come to give off such a nauseating smell?"

"When the salmon are running," he answered, "we fill the pits with the fish to serve as dog-feed through the winter."

We did not talk there long, for he had evidently come merely to put an end to my conversation with Ivanov. I hoped uneasily that the condemned man would suffer no bad results from having been seen with me. But as I went back to the village in company with the exalted chief, no mention of the other was made between us.

The chief's frequent demands on the *Iskum's* food supply had caused a meat shortage on board. As a consequence, four of us set out a little later in the day for a deer-men's camp which we had discovered with the aid of our glasses located on the far side of the river. We took our power dory—Diem, Jumbo, and myself—with little Allen as interpreter. I rather wondered if Allen had not been sent aboard the *Iskum* as a spy, as Andrea had been the season before; but he never made us the least trouble, being instead always helpful and cheerful.

We landed without incident on the north shore of the river, where the hardy deer-men came down to greet us, their heavy skin clothing hanging loose at their necks. With Allen's aid we negotiated for the purchase of a young reindeer, and said we would wait while they butchered it for us. Mosquitoes were thick here at the river's edge, and during our wait they became nearly unbearable. We were in the middle of a cloud of them which extended as far as we could see—the big, long-legged kind, that settle on your skin, spread out their front feet after the manner of a giraffe drinking from a pool, and proceeded to jab in with their sharp drilling-tools.

The women in the igloos were burning grass and driftwood in an effort to drive the pests away, so we sought one of these smoky shelters. But it was hard to determine which was the worst, the stinging insects or the reek of the igloo. We would stand this for a few minutes, and then dash out for a breath of clean air, remaining until so tortured by the mosquitoes that we dared the odor again. It afforded the women and children great amusement to watch us running in and out this way like creatures possessed.

On our return, the mosquitoes followed us almost to the ship, where the sea-wind scattered them.

We had scarcely emerged from the mosquito cloud when we caught sight of Chief Mike on the deck of the *Iskum*, swishing and crashing with his dog-whip at the rigging and the railings.

"Fine thing to do," he growled, as I stepped over the rail; "going out there without my permission!"

I at once took a conciliatory tone.

"But, Chief, you told me we were at liberty to go any

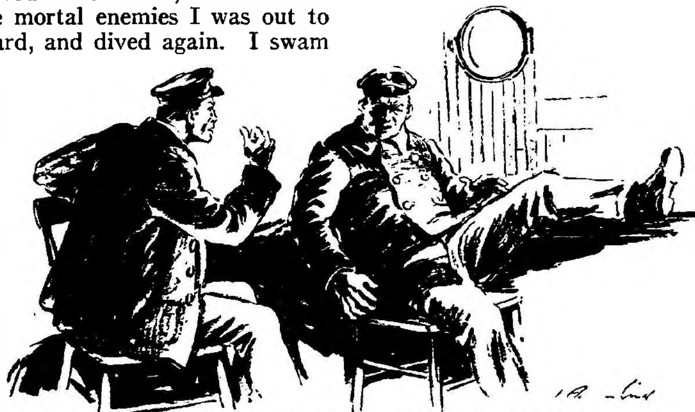
place we wished. And, besides, we had to have some meat."

He calmed down a bit at that. Taking a look at the reindeer we had brought aboard, he indicated the fleshy portion along the loin and asked if the cook would not cut a piece out along there for him. I agreed, and he accompanied the carcass to the fore-rigging where it was hung. When I was not present, he told Jack Oliver to cut out the other loin also, saying it was my orders.

I would put up with anything, I felt, until that commercial expedition ship got in, when I would present all my grievances at once. These local fellows, I reminded myself, were new to power, and it had naturally gone to their heads. The men sent out from the central Government would be more reasonable.

In about an hour after the chief had gone ashore again, I heard three shots fired in quick succession from the direction of the Government house. I stopped dead where I stood, chilled and stupefied. Could this mean the execution of Ivan Ivanov?

A terrible rage overcame me. I was obsessed by a passion to kill—to avenge. In a sort of frenzy of helpless rebellion, I tore off my clothing and jumped into the river. If I hadn't had some means of physical release, I should have gone mad, it seemed. Small chunks of ice went drifting by me. I dived under them, and wrestled with them, as if they were mortal enemies I was out to conquer. I climbed on board, and dived again. I swam to the beach and back, feeling powerful enough to push an iceberg out of my way. At the ship again, I came up out of the water and glanced toward the beach. To my surprise, most of the population were gathered there gazing in my direction. They had come to watch my crazy antics, probably thinking I was completely off my head.



"You don't mean that I may be forced to leave my ship here?"

Climbing on board, I picked up the glasses and took a careful survey of the crowd. Then I swept the streets with my gaze, and the hill beyond. Nowhere could I find Ivanov.

I did not know until later how my performance affected the natives who watched me from the beach, or what their reaction was to have on our future movements, but it certainly was a strange one. I dressed and went ashore. I met some of the villagers, who had always been friendly in their attitude, although permitted to do no trading with us. I asked them the meaning of the shots I had heard. They answered that some one had shot a dog. Then I asked what had become of Ivan Ivanov, and was told he had been taken to the guardhouse sometime earlier.

I went up to the Svensen post to see Mr. Lampe. He knew nothing about the late commotion—had not even heard the shots. He said very little when I told him what I feared, as others were in the room. He simply reached up to a shelf and took down a violin. It was his own instrument, on which, as he played, it seemed to me he expressed thoughts he could not utter in words. He seemed to have learned to shut his eyes and his ears to the ugly things going on around him, and find the relief he needed in the strains he drew from the strings. How that man could play! The rest of us were under a spell, and I, particularly, because of the strain my emotions had already endured. Any ordinary music would have had some such effect, I suppose, but this seemed of unearthly beauty.

At last he stopped. Before anyone had recovered enough to say a word, he laid down his bow and began working his right arm up and down, smiling.

"It's getting a little better," he said cheerfully. "It was paralyzed for a while. That is why I had to give up my music. I used to be the leader of the St. Paul symphony orchestra."

An orchestra leader, now employed as a trader on the coast of Soviet Siberia! He showed me pictures of his two daughters in Los Angeles, and talked desultorily until finally we were alone. Then, rivals though we were as employees of rival trading companies, we reached an intimate understanding which led to confidences.

"At the time of the revolution," said Lampe, "three other men worked here on this post, one American and two Russians. One of the Russians was a Red, and as such attended the Soviet meeting at which the decision was made to take us prisoners and confiscate the Company's property. He sneaked out without attracting attention and came to give the warning. We loaded up two dog-teams with food, guns, and ammunition, and made our escape to the hills.

"For two weeks we remained behind a barricade of boulders at the top of a hill which commands the approach from Anadir. We intended to fight to a finish in case of attack. But a messenger came then assuring us we were safe to return. Of course, we knew we could not hold out indefinitely where we were, and so we came down, although we had no great confidence in their promises.

"The Reds took over the Company's property and the furs our traders had brought in; they said all trading was in future to be carried on through Government channels only. They did nothing to me personally beyond stripping me of firearms. But I have had no chance to return home. The post is kept open through Svensen's influence; he has been for some time in Moscow negotiating for favorable terms, which he'll probably get eventually—but conditions will not be safe or pleasant here for a long time.

"Young fellow," he emphasized, shaking his head at me concernedly, "if I were you, I would get out while I still had a chance. And when you do go, give me the tip; I do not like to stay here. One never can tell what they will do next."

While we were talking, we heard a shout down in the village. We went to the door. Villagers were collecting along the street, calling, *"Parahot! Parahot!"* I felt a great hope. *Parahot* is the Russian for "steamboat."

CHAPTER VIII

THE steamer heralded was not yet in the harbor, being blocked by the ice we had met on our way into the bay. She communicated with the Anadir radio station that she had been for three weeks attempting an entrance. She was the *Baychimo,* of the Hudson Bay Company,

Captain Carroll commanding. The chief of police led me to believe that another steamer also lay outside. He said the commercial expedition for which we had now been waiting an entire week would soon be in.

Meanwhile, Mr. Diem busied himself with sending radio messages by way of the local station and the steamer. These were duly taken by the Anadir operator, and the officials assured him every effort would be made to get them through. However, not one was ever received.

ON July thirteenth, the chief of police visited the *Iskum* and presented himself in my cabin.

"I demand all the ship's papers," he said gravely.

"Why?" I countered.

"Er—Mr. Burgh wants to see them."

I handed over without argument everything except the ship's register. "Be sure you bring them back before the day is over," I said.

"Where is the register?" he demanded.

"Chief," I answered, "let me explain this to you. I am an American master mariner, licensed and sworn under the laws of the United States of America. In a foreign country I leave the ship's register with no one but an American consulate, and when I leave it there I demand a receipt for it."

Chief Mike laughed. "Don't be funny. You know we can get it from you."

"Yes," I replied, "if you take it—but I will not give it to you." He thereupon left the document in my possession, but told me to go ashore and see Mr. Burgh.

"Now, what do you care?" Burgh questioned when I appeared before him. "You only work for wages, and"—in a warning voice—"we are not in the habit of standing for a lot of nonsense."

I pleaded with him to get my point of view. I told him about four hundred American citizens, many of them working-people, owned stock in the Phœnix Northern Trading Company; I was eager to make a success of this trip and bring their ship back with a good load of furs, so as to give them a return on their investment. I reminded him also of the promises he had made us at East Cape and all the way to Anadir.

"When are those promises to be fulfilled?" I asked. "You will remember that in previous years the *Iskum* has left food for both natives and Russians who were in hard straits on these shores—some of them about to starve to death. Isn't that worth taking into account? But if we get no chance at all to trade before the other boats get in, we shall have lost all the advantages you held out to us as a result of arriving first. In that case, I shall have risked the boat, the life of the crew, your life, and my own, all for nothing."

Burgh's cold eyes pierced me with a look. His whole countenance expressed sneering contempt. I had dared to offer suggestions to a Soviet *natchalnik*—I had had the crust to ask him to make good his promises!

"Keep your papers," he returned curtly. "They make no difference, anyhow."

It was now the middle of July; the *Iskum* was still the only ship in the harbor. We had run short of drinking-water on board, and where we were anchored the water was brackish. I decided to move up the river far enough to insure our finding it fresh and there fill our tanks.

As we were heaving up anchor, the Red launch came alongside with three men, two of whom climbed aboard and said they wanted to go with us to visit a cannery in that direction. I made no objection, accepting them as every ship accepts passengers along unfrequented lanes in a land of few traveling facilities. But after we started, I discovered the two had revolvers concealed in their clothing.

This worried me. We had had no intention of running away. Why were these people so eager to keep us in port that they could not trust us even up the river without armed spies?

One of the guards, about forty years of age, was stockily built, with big strong hands, and broad shoulders which drooped slightly, as is the case with those who have worked hard from childhood. The roll in his walk proclaimed plainly that he was a former sailor. He was fair-haired, and wore a heavy blond handle-bar moustache. The other man, about thirty years old, was tall, dark, and handsome.

For fifteen miles we pushed against the grayish-colored river current. Then the men assured us we were beyond the influence of the sea.

Casting anchor half a mile off Cape Okhotsk, at a depth of three fathoms we waited a while to let the water clear before filling the tanks. This gave me the opportunity I had wanted to engage the older man in conversation.

He responded readily to my questions as to his marine experience, naming a number of Norwegian, British, and German ships on which he had sailed. Apparently it was a long time since he had had an interested listener; he grew very talkative and we soon reached the confidential stage.

When we got down to personal confidences, he told me Burgh was a fine fellow, but hard when crossed. He advised me to be very agreeable in all dealings with him, as he would go to unaccountable lengths if antagonized. It seemed that during an argument in his office one time he had shot three commissaries—just a playful way of showing the world he was a dangerous person to oppose.

"When the commercial expedition arrives," he said, "there will probably be a meeting of the Soviet, and they will then decide what to do about the *Iskum*. If you and your engineer make no trouble, it's more than likely they will let you run the boat, but the rest of the crew will have to go ashore to make room on the ship for our soldiers."

This would be a gracious concession indeed, I reflected in my surprised and unhappy mind. I took a few paces up and down the deck. Then I glanced up at the hill below which we were anchored. Two men were standing on top of the hill. Picking up the glasses for a closer look, I discovered a machine-gun near at the point they occupied.

"Oh, yes!" laughed my sailor-guard. "It would be foolish for you to try to get away."

"I have not even been thinking about leaving," I retorted. "Mr. Burgh has promised us a trading-permit."

"Well, whatever happens," he warned, "don't get excited. You see, we make our own rules and regulations here, and we show little respect for the hypocritical laws of the *bourgeoisie*. It's mighty lucky the rich man you had along last year is not with you this time, for we had just about made up our minds with regard to him. We have become powerful. We are in a position to command—to compel the world to pay more attention to us. You see this saltery here?" he continued, pointing to a low building on the shore. "Well, a crazy fellow came along last season thinking he could start the old capitalistic bunk. He put up four hundred barrels of salmon, intending to sell them; but we took over the place at the end of the season, simply telling him he had violated the fish and game laws. What right had he to that fish? The river belongs to one man as much as to another!"

FOR twenty-four hours we lay off Cape Okhotsk waiting for the water to settle enough for us to take it into our storage tanks, but it was no clearer at the end than at the beginning. The continuous sunshine now caused a constant loosening of the ice along the banks, which would slide down in great masses, plowing deep in the mud as they came and bringing it along to soil the current. At last we

took up what water we needed, dirt and all, and started back to our former anchorage.

As we rounded Cape St. Michael, on the south side of the river, within a mile of Anadir, we saw the Hudson Bay Company's big steamer anchored just east of the Cape. We were keenly delighted, for the aërial between the *Baychimo's* masts seemed to tell us we were now out of danger.

I steered the *Iskum* close by her, and saluted by dipping the flag, and giving three whistles. The chief of police, in a rowboat near by, waved his oars frantically and motioned to us with his hands, but when representatives of the American nation in foreign waters had a chance to say "How!" to representatives of the loyal old British merchant marine, no mere Bolshevik chief of police was going to stop us!

We anchored and left two men aboard. The rest of us piled into the Cape Cod power dory and split the water on our way to the *Baychimo*. Before we arrived, we could see Russian military officials and soldiers moving all about on her. After climbing aboard, I looked down into the main hatch and discovered improvised sleeping cots and many roughly dressed men and women on the 'tween-decks. From subsequent conversation with one of the men, I learned that these were school-teachers who were to be distributed along the Siberian coast.

WE strayed presently into the forecastle—the place to go on any ship if one wants straight information and unbiased opinions. In that historic and notorious compartment, seamen deal in facts and express individual points of view, regardless of possible damage to personal feelings. Conversation in general soon turned to windjammers as a class, and the full-rigged ship *Dalgonar* in particular, on which I had sailed as a boy.

"Did you know her?" a thin, red-faced sailor with a strong Scotch accent asked me.

"Yes," I returned. "Now, isn't that funny? I was shanghaied onto her in Talquahuano in 1907."

My new-found friend fairly shouted back at me: "I was on the *Salty Grace* anchored next to the *Dalgonar!* You must be the chap that had the scrap with that red-headed second mate! Let's have a drink on that!"

The bony little man produced a square bottle of genuine Johnny Walker, to make good his invitation, but I warned him to be careful on account of the Soviet prohibition law.

The whole crew went into a roar of laughter.

"Prohibition law!" repeated Scotty at the top of his voice. "These Russians pay no more attention to that than the man in the moon. The officials, military commandant, soldiers, and everybody, have been stewed to the gills from Petropavlovsk to here!"

I was much surprised. I said I had gained the impression from newspapers and gossip in general before coming to the coast that in Bolshevik Russia the laws were all strictly observed and if an official, in particular, was found violating the code, he was promptly executed.

Scotty proceeded to tell me many things which had been happening aboard the *Baychimo,* of the arrogance of the military officers in all dealings with the other Russians, official or not, and of continual fights and shooting-scrapes.

"It has not been a very pleasant voyage," he said. "The Russians are toting their guns all the time, and they're likely even to seize the *Baychimo* and hold her in Siberia."

As I was about to return to the *Iskum,* Captain Carroll, a short, stout, typical Britisher, did me the honor to invite me into his quarters. Our ubiquitous chief of police followed us, but the Captain, slamming the door on him, told him emphatically to stay out.

I felt a little uneasy. The Captain reminded me very much of Captain Icebester, of the *Dalgonar,* a man almost impossible to approach under ordinary conditions, or to engage in conversation at any time, though he often refereed the frequent bare-fisted fights on his ship's decks, and, regardless of the rank, nationality, or color of the combatants, always insisted on an absolutely square deal.

After all, whether or not either of the two may stress the fact, a wide gulf exists between the man who rises from the forecastle to a command and the one who is apprenticed and schooled for the position, never having to earn his bread and butter before the mast. I was thinking of this as I found myself alone with this British master mariner.

HE encouraged me to talk, however, showing himself most democratic in attitude. He wanted to know, first, how I got into Anadir harbor with that little wooden tub ten days ahead of him. My description of our quick passage aroused his amusement and intense interest.

Then I asked him whether or not he had seen the Russian commercial expedition ship for which we were anxiously waiting in order to get our trade-permit.

"The expedition is here on board," he answered, to my complete amazement. "No other boats are going to call at Anadir."

I felt as if a door had been slammed in my face—and one that had caught my fingers in the crack as it came to.

I told Captain Carroll the position in which this placed us, giving the whole story of our troubles.

"Can you send some wireless messages for us?" I asked him. "I am really alarmed for our safety."

"Only under exceptional circumstances are we able to get any messages through to St. Paul Island, and that will be nothing you can depend on."

St. Paul Island is one of the Pribiloff group, about three-quarters of the way between us and Unimak Pass, on the far side of the Bering Sea—the nearest United States wireless station.

"Do you think our situation here is serious?" I asked.

"I do," he admitted readily. "You can't depend on these Russians. The British Government has some kind of commercial agreement with them, and we are protected from home, but my experience has been—don't depend on anything these people tell you. And, as between commanding officers, I would hate to be in your shoes; I have seen too much over here. I wish I could do something for you—help you out of this safely. I may yet be able to do it."

"You don't mean," I said, "that I may be forced to leave my ship here?"

"They are likely to take it from you. These Reds recognize nothing but force, and you have no protection."

"Then tell me this, Captain Carroll," I said at last. "If I should leave here, would you follow me?"

"I sha'n't," he returned with finality.

"But supposing they put a gun against you and tell you to go?"

"Listen here, son. For forty years I have been going to sea, and have never yet been a pirate—and no Bolshevik or any other kind of combination is ever going to make one out of me. Don't be worried as far as I'm concerned. I am a Britisher, and the master of my ship."

His words consoled and heartened me—my one encouragement in a black pit of difficulty and indecision. I thanked him and took my leave.

"Good luck to you, son," was his final speech.

I was convinced I had nothing to fear from the S. S. *Baychimo*. But against that assurance my troubles stacked mountain-high.

Captain Putta's premonition of grave trouble ahead is a well-founded one—this authentic account comes to a strong climax in the next, the February, issue.

"Arrest *him*, Officer!" "On what charge?" interjected Mr. Townes icily.

Quick thinking and an excellent memory combine to outwit a clever scheme for blackmail.

Frogfront

By

ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Joseph Maturo

"NO, Ben— *Number, please? . . . . Waiting?* I said, 'United we'd starve, divided we feed.' Get me? *Number, please?*"

Juliet Drummond, switchboard operator at the Medusa Auto Agency, let Medusa's least stellar salesman—Ben Sanderson, at present draped over the railing beside her board—winnow the wheat from the chaff for himself in the conversation she was dividing between him and the invisible persons beyond her transmitter.

Many a corporation president has inadvertently become such, while thinking he was merely trying to do well enough in business to afford what his particular Juliet had already bought and charged to him. But Ben and his like were what made all that reputed room at the top of the business ladder. Ben didn't crowd; Ben didn't see that you had to do something to make yourself stand out above the mob! In him the urge for orchids, two cars, three servants, and four bathrooms—an urge of which Juliet was already conscious—was entirely dormant. . . . . Which, in turn, was why Juliet continued to let her blonde head rule her blind heart in respect to Ben.

"All right, honey; I'll show you yet," he returned good-naturedly, as he downed the dual desire to kiss her and also to spank her, which Juliet's flippancy on life's most serious subject always aroused in him. "Besides, get this—the factory's going to close us up."

Juliet's heart skipped a beat. No job—just when the radio was half paid for!

"Not a sale in a week," Ben went on. "Seven thousand bucks left in the kitty, and another big note due next week! Old Stuffed Shirt says that if we don't move a Medusa before then, and some more right after that, we're sunk."

"Well, selling the Medusa Mighty Eights was what he *thought* he hired you for, Benjamin!" interjected his heart's desire.

Ben winced.

"Of course," she added cruelly, "that was before he found out you considered yourself just a part of the interior decorations around here."

"There you go," cried Ben. "Kidding me because I aint had the breaks! And, speaking of breaks, if something good don't break around here pretty quick, it looks like a hard bench at the old employment agency again for you, Jule—unless, now, you could sort of see your way clear to swapping a phone-book for a cook-book—"

"Yeah, and where'll *you* be right after the wreck?" she cut him short. "On a park bench again, with your nose in 'Help Wanted—Male!' Why, down where I live, the jewelry stores throw in a boy like you free with every wedding-ring! The catch is that you have to support 'em ever after! How do I know that you wont turn out to be one of those three-rooms-and-a-delicatessen boys that clutter up the ball-park bleachers all their lives and think they never had a chance? When I pick one I want a better guarantee than you've shown me yet, that he'll have his name on a ground-glass door before long, and—"

THE buzz of an incoming call saved him from her further fire. Ben ruefully went through the motions of dusting himself off after a tumble.

"Medusa Auto Agency!" answered Juliet. "Yes—yes . . . . Just a moment, I'll connect you."

"Biltoria Hotel," she volunteered to Ben over one slim shoulder. "Nobody but the esteemed Stuffed Shirt—Mr. Herbert Henry Brookes himself—in person—will do! Prince of Wales, or something, wants a demonstration. He'll be up in a taxi in a few minutes. *You* get ready to open the door, Benjamin—and bow!"

"My luck!" groaned Ben. "Probably some guy with nothing but gold sovereigns to pay with. My turn on the floor, too; sticking around all day for the drop-in trade,

as us druggists call it. And when a juicy one does come he phones first for old Stuffed Shirt to wait on him!"

"But, *Ben!*" she reminded him. "If we make this sale, maybe Mr. Brookes wont lose the agency—will he?"

"N-n-no— I'm all hot and bothered until I guess I forgot that. And, gosh, that makes it three balls, two strikes, and the bases full for us! If the Shirt fans out with *this* one, it's good night, Medusa! But if he does make the sale," Ben grumbled, "Stuffed Shirt'll be no name for him. He reminds me, with all his darned pompousness, of the town banker's son where I went to school. We used to call him 'Frogfront'—"

"Frogfront?"

"Yeah; all puffed out like a frog, same as old Brookes, with admiring himself, that kid was. He'd swell up and tap the floor with his foot to beat the band when the rest of us kids fussed him. They had him doing time downstate for a little fancy work with a fountain-pen, last I heard from the old home town. —But nothing like that, of course, for our esteemed and inflated boss! *He'll* remain respectable and over-inflated till long after you and me have raised the second crop of—of dahlias at the new Sanderson ancestral apartment—"

"Were we to?" murmured Juliet coolly. "I hadn't noticed any flower-seeds in my soup lately. And haven't you been getting a lot of wrong numbers these last few days, anyhow?"

She paused as the big street door opened, and into the palm- and car-dotted expanse of the salesroom to the front there came a Presence. Hats like his couldn't be bought in side streets, Juliet knew; nor topcoats. They required avenues—while generations of utter certainty of well-filled larders and clothes-closets alone could produce his next move.

As she beheld it, little pin-points of light snapped on in Juliet's blue eyes. And storm-signals were hoisted for Ben; for the newcomer had calmly held out his stick to the advancing Ben—*and Ben had taken it!*

"The big dumb bum!" breathed Miss Drummond chastely into her transmitter concerning her lover. "What does he think Ben is? The butler around here?"

"Mr. Brookes, please!" snapped the Presence to Ben, who was holding the stick and looking at it as puzzled as a pup with his first porcupine. "I telephoned; I am Mr. Townes—Mr. J. *Clifford* Townes—and I am pressed for time."

But no need to call twice for Mr. Brookes! Not with a prospect arriving who had telephoned in advance for a demonstration and inquired the cash price on the costliest Mighty Medusa Eight. No trade-in, either!

WITH Mr. Brookes in immediate and purring command of the situation, Ben dropped quietly back toward the switchboard. Far to the rear of his brain a baffled feeling began to arise, partly at being so swiftly eliminated, and partly the sort of bafflement which had gripped him once as a little boy when he couldn't make the parts of his Chinese puzzle match up.

"Pair of 'em," Juliet commented acidly to him. "Both stuffed! And you've sidestepped another chance to stick up above the forty-a-weekers, old thing. When do you think you'll get up the nerve to give him back his stick?"

Ben looked down, to discover that he still held the badge of social inferiority thrust upon him by Mr. Townes.

"No, no! Not till he's signed up, now!" she thus read—and scotched—his instant and murderous thought. "Break it then—if you want to!"

For out on the sales-floor negotiations had plainly reached their swift climax. Mr. Brookes was softly and deferentially piloting the Presence to one of the wicker desks cunningly placed there for the painless writing of checks. And one read in the lift of Mr. Brookes' shoulders, the lilt of his purr, and the expansiveness of his smile that the Medusa Agency was again on the eve of a new, however short, lease on its business life.

"A sale! A sale!" Under his breath Ben imitated the cry of shipwrecked mariners as rescue nears. "If he signs, we eat again!"

But there was no further time for celebration—not with the bustle to get the car that was now Mr. Townes' fueled and moved to the curb for him.

"Give Mr. Townes back his stick!" whispered the palpitant Mr. Brookes to Ben as he pattered past. "And entertain him while I phone the Chicago bank about this check. Just as well to be safe. —Get Clingman Trust, Chicago, on my office line, please, Miss Drummond!"

BEN returned the stick as though it were hot. But Mr. Townes was cold—icily so. And something annoyed him. He tapped his foot impatiently and indicated plainly that he was unaccustomed to being kept waiting. Indeed, Ben began to feel, as he maintained an uninteresting meteorological monologue with the impressive buyer, that the latter's impatience was a shade too great. Moreover, something was missing from this sale—offer and counter-offer, the succession of suspenses as the trading veered to and fro, that kept a fellow's mouth dry and his palms moist. Instead, here was a man with ice-water in his circulatory system, who bought a six-thousand-dollar car as offhandedly as though it were a postage-stamp. And paid for it in one check. Somehow—

And again two things began to puzzle Ben; one weaving into the other.

But his misgivings were interrupted by the opening of Mr. Brookes' door, up on the mezzanine. A rotund and radiant Mr. Brookes emerged.

"—The bank in Chicago said he's got twenty-five thousand in cool cash there now—always carries a good balance," Juliet elaborated to Ben as Mr. Brookes bowed his newest cash customer away from the curb. "I listened in. Now, Ben, if you had a little more go-get—and twenty-five thou—"

But Ben's rapturous reaching for her hand was spoiled by the reappearance of Mr. Brookes, who was beaming in a way that hadn't been seen around the Medusa Agency in weeks.

"Just hold everything," he greeted his two youngest employees, "until I step over to the bank and deposit this check. After all, a dollar here's worth two in another town, every time."

Two days passed, in which Medusa sold another car; Mr. Brookes figured furiously on a pad in his mezzanine office, whistling softly as he figured, as though daylight might be beginning to shine at last on some far financial horizon.

Then the blow fell. Loafing wistfully by the telephone-board, Ben saw Juliet's trim young back suddenly stiffen, as though she had just formed an important part of an electrical short-circuit. She was listening in on a line at the moment, and unconsciously that one of her slender fingers which controlled Ben's major movements when he was within sight of it wiggled—a wiggle in which were distinct elements of the universal distress-signal among brethren of the lodge.

"What's up now, Jule?" he demanded anxiously.

"It's the Hamilton Car Exchange down the street!" she turned to explain a little breathlessly. "Something's wrong, I think. They've just phoned Mr. Brookes. Somebody who looks just like that Mr. Townes we sold to, is down there now with a brand new six-thousand-dollar Medusa

job, they say. He says he's been hit in the market—and is offering them the Medusa for three thousand cash if they're quick! Say, I wonder— I thought all the time there was something funny about him! Maybe it's his—"

But Juliet didn't think or say it any quicker than Ben, or Mr. Brookes.

Above-stairs that plump and most precariously financed agency-head dropped his telephone receiver, facing suddenly and in a terrifying lump a six-thousand-dollar check being charged back to his feeble bank-account. This indeed would close him up! Mr. Brookes grew green about the gills as he hurriedly reviewed the Townes transaction in his mind. He saw its weak spot now: his haste to close it, born of his desperate need for cash to save his agency. And Mr. Townes' own cold haste, born of his knowledge that his check wasn't going to be paid anyway! No wonder, thought Mr. Brookes feverishly, he would buy for six thousand—in a check; and sell for three thousand —in cash!

"Call a cop!" he rasped to Juliet as he fled down the grand stairway. "Have him meet me at the Hamilton Exchange! And make it snappy! I knew that fellow was a crook! Tell Hamilton's that they're to hold him some way till I get there, Miss Drummond! And call a cop, I tell you! Let's go, Sanderson!"

"When he's just reaching for the check I sings out, 'Frogfront!'"

Action there was at Hamilton's used-car exchange a few moments later—action that centered about Mr. Townes, magnificent in his cold astonished wrath as a semi-apoplectic Brookes fatly and flatly confronted him there with accusations. The State's laws on the subject of passing bad checks was Mr. Brookes' central theme.

"You're slick—but I'm slicker!" he cast dignity aside in his peroration. "Some people with all your front might have got away with it, but I'm just a little too smart! Arrest him, Officer; and I'll go along and swear out the warrant at the station!"

"On what charge?" interjected Mr. Townes icily.

"Do I have to tell you that all over again?" exploded the frenzied Mr. Brookes. "For passing a bad check on me, that's what! Does an honest man give a good check for six thousand and two days later try to sell what he bought for three? That market gag's too thin! Not when he's got the schedule of check-clearings timed as well as *you* have!"

Then, to Ben Sanderson, "Get that Chicago bank on the phone and have 'em hustle that bum check back here as fast as the red tape'll let 'em! We'll need it as evidence to put this bird away!"

Back at the Medusa Agency, Ben, lifted out of himself by the stirring events that were proving his earlier suspicions, first boasted to his beloved, then craved telephone service of her.

Juliet gathered from him that he had played and was playing no small part in the detection and arrest of a master crook.

"Get me the Clingman Trust in Chi, beautiful—and step on it!" he directed with a new masterfulness that gave her a glow. If Ben only *would*— "They've got evidence we need," he continued importantly. "I've got to arrange for it."

Then, a little wearily, as further irrefutable facts presented themselves as possibilities: "But as far as the agency's concerned, I guess we danced too soon, and the jig's up. Putting him in jail wont pay his check. So Medusa'll be back where it was —and it'll be the park bench and the 'Help Wanted' ads for us, after all, I guess, honey. . . . Hello! Hello! Clingman Trust? Say, gimme—"

Despite the impending gloom, Juliet thrilled to the chase. Even with bankruptcy for the agency again looming around the corner, business still held its high moments. And a new Ben was undoubtedly emerging in this. Certainly he was the masterful male now as he bullied her, bullied long distance — almost bullied a big bank!

All this during a period of waiting on Ben's part, with the receiver to his ear—waiting that showed its first signs of becoming something else, as a slow and alarming red crept unexpectedly up his neck and spread hotly to his ears, only to fade swiftly into pallor.

"W-w-w-hat?" he stuttered into the transmitter. "S-say that again!"

Then, knocking over two inoffensive potted palms, and scorning hats, cabs, telephones and pedestrians, the frantic young Mr. Benjamin Sanderson set a new record for the six-block dash between the Medusa agency and the Homewood Market police station. Everything depended upon his arriving at the police station in far less time than a sinking heart told him he had left.

For the last few blocks Ben therefore abandoned the sidewalks and became a part of the vehicular traffic of Market Street. And so well did he perform therein that the steel door of a station-cell had scarcely clanged shut upon Mr. J. Clifford Townes before Ben staggered into the station.

All that he needed then was breath with which to de-

liver portentous news. But that was a matter which could not be arranged in a moment. And so during the period that necessarily elapsed while Ben could only make frantic signs further precious moments were lost, and further costly iron forced into the proud and sensitive soul of the outraged and incarcerated Mr. Townes. For in such cases no iron penetrates so deeply and expensively as that of which police cells are built.

"You've got to let—him out!" panted Ben when speech was again possible. "His—his check—was good! It's been —paid! Chicago bank says so! He hasn't *done* anything! It's—it's false arrest, if he wants to call it that now!"

THREE times Mr. Brookes required him to repeat it, so important it was—to Mr. Brookes. And during those repetitions Mr. Brookes' complexion passed swiftly from pink to purple, and from purple to pale—for numerous and definite were the threats Mr. Townes had made while *en route* to the police-station.

"You gotta get that guy out of here quick or he'll ruin you!" sapiently whispered the dull-eyed Ben.

Feebly the Stuffed Shirt of former expansive days agreed with him. Upon and within him, flesh, skin, and spirit sagged. With the gay aplomb of a thoroughly deceased oyster, Mr. Brookes arose to withdraw his charges.

Mr. J. Clifford Townes, clearly conscious of the integrity of his check, and the invulnerability of his case against the Medusa agency, came forth like a starchy lion indeed.

"You have made the mistake of your career, my man!" he brushed aside the abject apologies and contrition of Mr. Brookes. "I buy a car of you in good faith—with a good check. You start off wrong even then by annoying me with your delay and indecision—telephoning the bank about my check! I am not accustomed to having my checks questioned. It shows a small mind. You have a small mind, Mr.—ah—Books."

Something between a groan and a gurgle escaped from Mr. Brookes, a corroborative groan, as it were.

"But that is now neither here nor there," continued Mr. Townes relentlessly. "More serious developments have obscured it. Today you have behaved even worse. You grossly and unjustifiably humiliated me—before witnesses and after having been duly warned of the consequences. You have heard, my good man, that money talks. In fact, at this moment I can hear nothing else. And the very smallest amount I can consider from you without suit for false arrest—as some small reimbursement for the embarrassment you have so unwarrantedly caused me—is *twelve thousand dollars!*"

A profuse sweat upon the miserable Mr. Brookes seemed to indicate a painful attempt to encompass twelve thousand dollars for Mr. Townes and seven thousand for the Medusa factory within the bounds of a thirteen-thousand-dollar bank-balance—which situation called plainly for red ink in the Medusa bookkeeping department.

"—You take my six thousand dollars," continued Mr. Townes. "Then you have me arrested on a false charge —upon my offering my own property for sale! And your own man here admits that my check was not only good but had been paid. Under the circumstances, Mr. Boots, twelve thousand dollars is a most nominal sum. I should advise haste in paying it before the price of humiliation goes up—as it might."

"Check-book's at the office," groaned the one-time Stuffed Shirt dispiritedly.

"And I shall want it certified, of course," added the cold-steel Mr. Townes, tapping his foot in an irritating way. "I scarcely consider you trustworthy now, you know."

Thus a big Medusa, sadder than any funeral car, passed through the streets toward the Medusa Agency. Alone in the front seat, in cold aloofness and with the air of one avoiding moral contagion, rode Mr. Townes. And in the rear rode the suffering Mr. Brookes, the crushed and sympathetic Mr. Sanderson.

"Aint there any way out of this? Can't you stall him or something?" whispered Ben despairingly.

"You heard me. You heard him," returned Mr. Brookes comprehensively.

And so, before the wide and wondering eyes of Juliet Drummond, a wordless trio passed into the mezzanine sanctum of the Stuffed Shirt.

This wordlessness was not lost upon her. The agency was doomed now—that went without saying. It was in the sagging shoulders of Mr. Brookes, the blank misery of Ben, the implacable cold face of Mr. J. Clifford Townes.

By reason of all this, the silence abovestairs that followed the closing of the Brookes door became quickly unbearable for Juliet—an unbearableness resulting swiftly in a light step and a twinkle of slim silken legs up the stairway as she left her board and fled upward to the vacant office adjoining that of Mr. Brookes. That conversations in one partitioned-off compartment upon the mezzanine could be overheard by anyone in the next was an acoustical defect which Juliet could not object to in this instance.

"—Twelve thousand dollars, payable to J. Clifford Townes—and certified," she first heard in Mr. Townes' cold tones. Followed by such little scratching and groaning sounds as might accompany a man's writing himself into bankruptcy with a bad pen and worse grace.

And then a tearing sound, as the perforations parted to separate a written check from its stub—the sort of sound that heartstrings might make when thus ruthlessly torn.

"Mr. Sanderson will go with you to the bank and have it certified, you—you blackmailer!" burst forth Mr. Brookes' flattened voice, a trifle shakily.

AND at this there might have been heard a scurrying down the stairway as Medusa's telephone-operator returned headlong to duty, now that the worst had happened. For in the tearing of those perforations she had realized that she was hearing the last of her job, the last of the Medusa Agency, the last of the Stuffed Shirt as such, the last of Ben as lover—and go-getter.

Miss Drummond winked bravely at tears that tried to parallel her small and despairing nose, as she flung herself back into her seat. . . . .

But once there, she found the minutes passing; a feeling crept over her that she had miscounted the acts, had gone home before the last—a feeling that deepened as startling sounds suddenly began to reach her. A voice that she scarcely knew rang out; then another; then both raised in sudden heat. Events above were clearly taking a new and inexplicable turn!

The door of Mr. Brookes' office was next flung violently open. Through it emerged the same procession that had entered it so shortly before. But in different order and different humor. The difference, indeed, was startling.

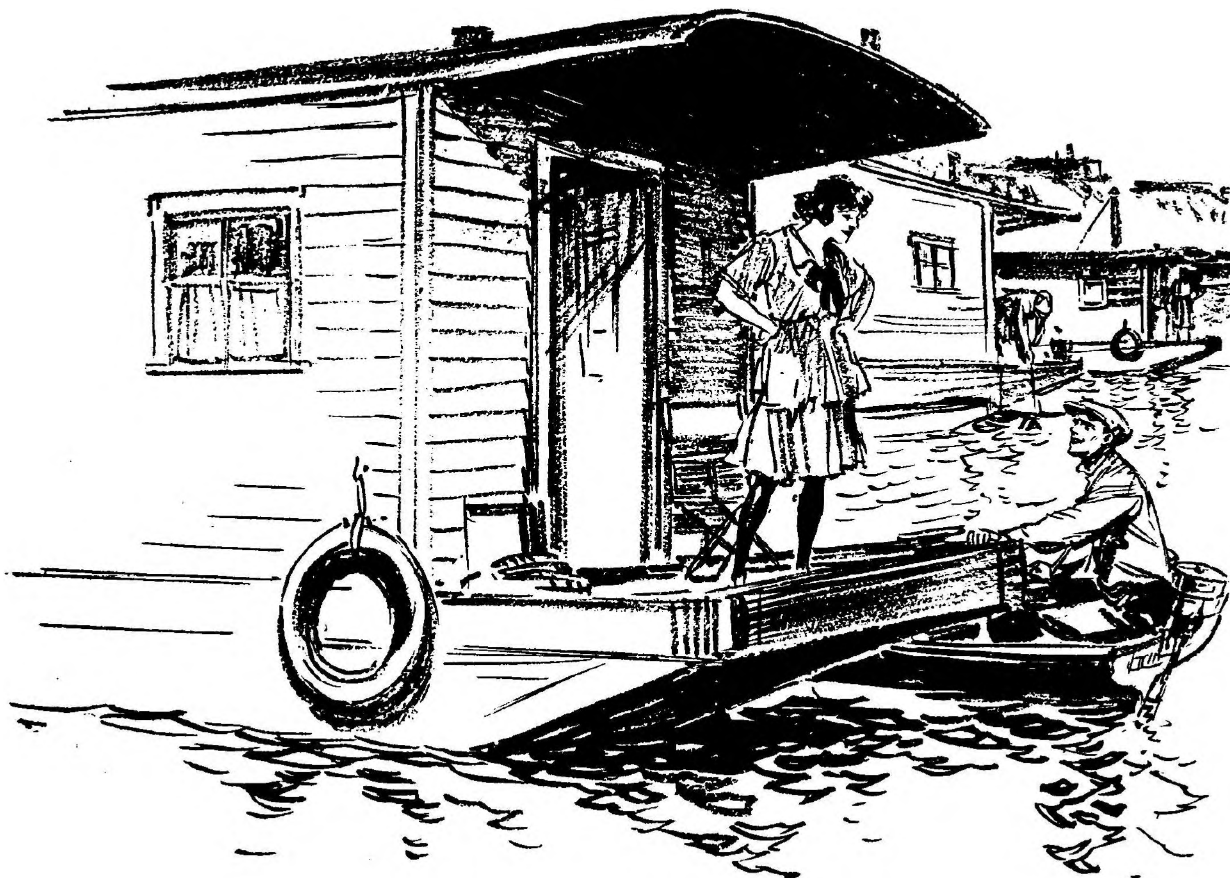
Foremost, devoid now of all his previous indignation and cold composure, there slunk—there is no other fitting word—Mr. J. Clifford Townes. Plainly, earthquake had come without warning upon Mr. Townes.

Following him came Ben—a masterful Ben; it made one's heart do queer happy things just to see him.

And in the rear a Stuffed Shirt—restuffed and reborn!

"Two minutes more, and if you're still around I'll call a cop!" bellowed the renascent Mr. Herbert Henry Brookes in magnificent disregard for the untimely events which had followed his last summoning of the watch.

As the little group neared *(Please turn to page 136)*



MISSISSIPPI MAGIC

By RAYMOND S. SPEARS

The Story So Far:

RED RUFUS was a "river-rat" young Travers Wilicum wanted to see. Wilicum was the pseudonym of an aspiring author, Joseph Howard Smith, who had selected the shanty-boat people of the Mississippi for study. These simple but suspicious folk accepted him because he acknowledged his alias and because of his naïveté. They all directed him to Red Rufus, the most notorious scoundrel they knew. Never known to work, Red managed a precarious existence by committing all sorts of petty crimes. He was a make-up artist, affable, adaptable to any society, and utterly without conscience.

Travers Wilicum found this famous river-rat, but didn't recognize him, for Red was using one of his multitudinous disguises. Fortune had sent him a victim in the person of Judson Miles, amateur detective, of Omaha. Miles was a correspondence-school sleuth on the trail of Adeline Laura Bonney who was wanted in Syracuse, though not subject to arrest. Red relieved the trustful detective of his motor-boat and city clothes, and when he met Wilicum he was posing as a well-to-do man of affairs. The young author realized his companion's true identity when he awakened the next morning to discover that Red had disappeared with his outboard motor, utensils, food-supplies and money. Adrift in the river's main current, Wilicum narrowly escaped death beneath a great tow of barges, and he swore that he would find and punish Red.

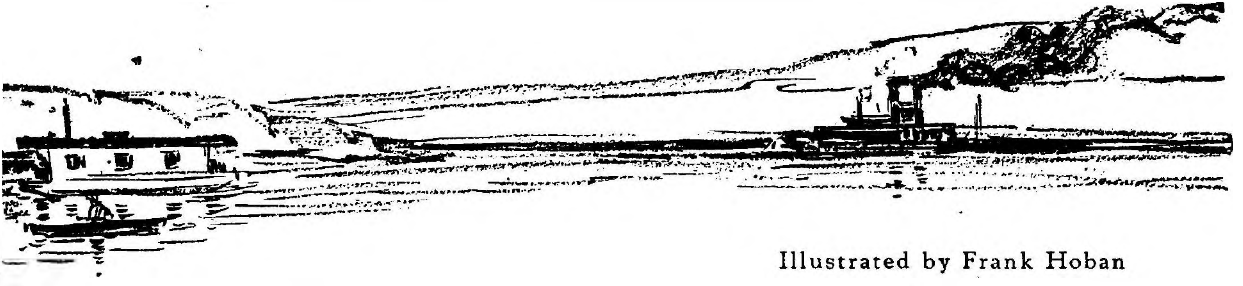
Red's recently acquired motor-boat was soon stolen from him and he pushed on to New Madrid in a skiff. Judson Miles had arrived ahead of him and with the sheriff was scouring the town. They came upon Red in a restaurant; Red escaped with the male population of the town at his heels. Miles recovered his launch, which the latest thieves had moored at the wharf, and thereupon continued on his search for Adeline Laura Bonney.

Shortly after, he met a young woman, Edna Lee, traveling in a shanty-boat. She told him she had innocently married a yeggman, who had been killed; she had received a lot of unpleasant publicity, from which she was fleeing. The amateur *Sherlock* was convinced he had his prey. Edna Lee was lonely, and Miles became her companion on the river-route, intending to give her to the authorities upon his arrival at the town. A sudden sleet-storm covered their boats with ice, and during his daily association with her in solving their common problems his conscience pricked him as he gradually became attached to her.

Meanwhile, Adeline Laura Bonney had met Travers Wilicum. At first out of pity because of the trick Red had played him, and later out of interest, she made him

Copyright, 1930, by The McCall Company (The Blue Book Magazine). All rights reserved.

This quaintly delightful cross-section of modern shanty-boat life comes to an unexpectedly peaceful conclusion.



Illustrated by Frank Hoban

her companion. To him only had she confided her real identity—to others she used the name Helen Grey, which Wilicum had whimsically given her. Young Wilicum saw her as a romantic figure; she was obviously a person of breeding and some importance, accustomed to dominating others; and her charm and self-assurance completely won over the young man.

Red Rufus had fallen upon evil times, and the sleet-storm sent him to town for food and shelter. But the City Marshal saw him, and again he scuttled away, with bullets clipping his heels. *(The story continues in detail:)*

THE sleet-storm kicked away in a puff of zero wind and a flight of snowflakes. The clouds vanished. At dawn the sun rose upon a forest and landscape covered with gems and crystals flaring in myriads of brilliant colors.

Every tree was overburdened with clinging disaster. Wind wafting through the canopy set the dangling icicles to swinging on their anguished supports, the hard metal of frost ringing like bells. Now and then some forest giant began to sway too far, prying out the roots first on one side, then on the other, till, overbalanced, the huge trunk swung over and cut slashing to the earth.

Judson Miles and Edna Lee had struggled for nights and days against the devastating attack of sleet. To save their launch and scow had demanded alert constancy. While one slept the other watched, scaling away the glass-clear sheeting of ice. When fatigue could no longer bear the strain, the toiler summoned the sleeper. In those days of common peril and adventure, the detective grew aware of new aspects of life. Shamed by his duplicity, his ideals struggling with his affection, Miles vacillated between duty and love.

They landed in the first town they saw, Miles going up the slippery bank only when he had chipped footholds in the crusted clay. He went over into Osceola beyond the levee where full bags and packages were put into a burlap which he carried agilely back to the river-bank over the levee. He had, however, stopped in the post office, thrilling uneasily to realization of his professional duplicity. For the nonce honor had won.

He had become the hope of Dilson, Keeps & Wickle, attorneys-at-law, who were endeavoring so urgently to discover this Adeline Laura Bonney. His account of his search, his descriptions of his quarry, and corroborative information from Omaha let them know that he was on the right trail. They praised him for his astuteness, and requested that he toll his quarry into Mendova, where their representative would be in waiting.

Miles grew strangely silent and distrait as he floated down, "protecting" the fair lady who admired him more and more frankly because he treated her with such rare courtesy and consideration. She never had dreamed a man could be so gentlemanly. With utter frankness she praised him to his own ears, so that he rolled his eyes, masked his expression, and in the privacy of his own glass-cabin cruiser held his head clutched in his hands—torn between professional duty and heartache. It now dawned on him that nothing could put a crimp into a man's satisfaction like complete success!

The attorney's representative would need a week of time to arrive in Mendova. Miles made sure of starting late and stopping early down those reaches and bends leading to Mendova. Following the sleet on that stinging brilliant day of frost came the warm melting of bright sunshine and balmy nights. The drip of the encased forest was like that of a shower, and cascades of water ran noisily down the tree-trunks. The scale slipped and the tree-branches, relieved of the deadweight, swung up springily as though the forest were tossing its arms aloft.

To the young woman Edna Lee nothing could have been more entrancingly beautiful. She sang merry lilts and played a ukulele with a maddening gayety. She knew her measures and her mood ran to quick steps with rare cadences followed by rising flights of rippling notes. She was happier than she ever had dreamed of being. Mockingbirds came fluttering to listen, cocking their heads to catch these pouring notes of pleasure. And when the young woman ceased playing for a time the birds chirruped and whistled, ringing the changes fantastically in their throats, endeavoring to record in their memories the tunes to which they had been listening. Edna Lee's tunes seasoned breakfast while Judson Miles yet groveled in his motor-cruiser bunk, and he dreamed that her voice would run into a shriek of agonized dismay when she learned the truth about him.

They rounded the great bend and floated down the line headed straight for Mendova which rose, street beyond street, up a massive, well-rounded ridge. On the right was the gray eminence of the Customhouse and on the left to the northward, a great dark structure, like a warehouse with few windows, loomed at the far side of Front Street. This was "Palura's," the famed river-bank amusement palace.

Starting his motor, Miles swung the cabin-boat over against the river-bank opposite the great building, landed bow-to the river bar, and made well fast by bowlines, with an anchor over the stern to insure holding the hulls all clear should the river be going down. A cleated gangplank bridged the water to the shore.

Another day would elapse before the attorney could arrive to take over the young woman, thus closing the case as far as it concerned Judson Miles the detective. All the lawyers asked of him was to produce the girl, whereupon they would attend to the rest—no testifying,

no bothersome affidavits, and no other dubious and distracting formalities need annoy the detective.

"I'm lucky," Miles told himself. "I'd sure hate to have to go on the stand, with Edna Lee looking at me!"

A certain recklessness seized him. He took his captive uptown and they dined elaborately in a popular restaurant. Thence they went to the vaudeville performance in Palura's, which proved to be lively and extraordinary entertainment—music, jokes, dancing, singing and feats, all with a Mississippi River flavor. From the shanty-boats, of which a hundred were moored along the city mud-bar, there had emerged perhaps half the audience.

About the third act a monologist appeared; he was a swagger, impudent-looking fellow with a gift of gab.

"I've been trippin' down Old Mississip',"—and he smiled genially. "Met a feller up to Putney's Bend who said he knowed that creek like a drink of water. He patted me on the shoulder, he poked me in the ribs, an' laughed like he enjoyed my listening. Huh! I started to buy a quart of oysters an' couldn't find my pocketbook. Reached for my hip, but my gun was gone. Took my pencils, copped my fountain-pen—didn't leave me a dog-gone thing I'd had in my pockets! You know me—I'm the Omaha detective. I had a badge pinned to my suspender oveh my heart. My badge was gone too! My land—I'd polished that piece of silver an' enamel mornin' an' night. My heart was broke, and I was insulted. Howsoever, when I sat down I discovered something—that Riveh rascal had a heart!"

HEREUPON the fellow turned his back, pulling aside the tail of his coat. And the air was split with a hundred delighted yells. The speaker looked astonished—how could they laugh at that?

"Don't none of you folks let on I'm drappin' down, looking for a spinster lady who's badly wanted on account of she knows too much. She's a right fair looker, not too slender, not too tall, blue-eyed and curly brown hair. When she started down the Missouri she was just a soft-paw, no Riveh experience a-tall. No one eveh knowed where she come from, no, indeedy! But she was sure 'tractive an' a generous eyeful. Huh! Coupla fellows, no friends of mine, 'lowed she sure must be lonesome. Course, they knowed she wa'n't going to extend no pressing invitations, account of that not being the way of ladies, up the bank or down the Riveh. So they run alongside that shanty-boat into the Towhead Reach on Big Muddy. One stepped aboard at the bow, the other at the stern—an' that lady shot first, 'thout asking no questions! Their intentions was perfectly honorable, but hit cost 'em $196.47 for repairs in St. Louis—one hundred forty dollars on the boat and $56.47 to the gemman she shot at. Law me! A soft-paw's sure unreliable!"

There was laughter, and a quick ripple of applause.

"Course, that was up the Missouri. Down Old Mississip'—I don't know what ails that old riveh! I started away up yonder, nice, honorable, ambitious. Presently I was suspicious, perfidious and unhappy. People up-the-bank don't look at things the way I do. They ask questions, while I mind my own business, keeping my eyes open an' my mouth shut. All I want's a good whack at that red-whiskered scoundrel who insulted my badge. I've one satisfaction, though—I run him off the bank at New Madrid an' he had to swim for hit, clear down Point Pleasant Reach. The paper says the City Marshal at Tiptonville and some friends of his'n missed Red forty times in the Big Sleet. All *I* ask is to hit him onct!"

"You couldn't hit nothin'!" a heavy voice ran into a shrill peak.

Everyone looked to see who had blurted that defiant reply, and saw a little man with a vividly red beard shrinking back, alarmed by his own involuntary exclamation. Then, scurrying and leaping, Red Rufus flashed for a moment in the scene, darting swiftly through one of the numerous red-lighted exits. There were yells, cheers, and thundering heels.

"There was a feller way off yonder, making an unsatisfactory living being respectable, writing for newspapers and minding other folkses' affairs," the monologist continued, as silence fell. "He read in the papers last spring that Old Mississip' had gone out of its banks. He 'lowed he'd better go follow the course of that High Tide. Desiring to make no mistakes, every time he heard anything, he wrote it down in his note-books. He had to buy loose-leaf sheets at every town, he found so much to record. He 'lowed he was literary, aloof an' an innocent spectator. They say his innocence lasted along down to Hickman, and then he met Mrs. Mahna—"

"Hey, you Double-tongue Dan!" a sharp voice hailed the speaker from the audience, and a short, stocky and energetic woman started down an aisle. "What's that yo' was insinuatin'?"

"Oh, my gawsh!" the speaker exclaimed. "I thought you was still up Plum Point Reach way!"

"Well, I aint! Yo' 'pologize right now, Mister Man!" the woman demanded.

"Really—I didn't mean any harm, Mrs. Mahna!"

"That aint no 'pology yit!"

"I'm sorry! Honest—I neveh insult anybody I know's present!"

"Yo' better be sorry!" Mrs. Mahna declared with satisfaction, returning to her chair at a small table, while the auditors cheered for her.

"Now this writing-feller, he lost—"

"Is that so?" a tangy voice interrupted. "What'd you say that writing-man had lost, Mister?"

An extraordinary figure, for that locality, started sauntering along the aisle next the one Mrs. Mahna had enlivened. He was dressed in pale gray knickerbockers, a white embroidered slip-over sweater and silk hose.

The interrupter was smiling and youthful in appearance; he walked with a certain litheness of gait, like a large cat looking for something to eat. The other interruption had seemed funny, but in this one there was a certain atmosphere, despite the smile, which contained a right serious ingredient.

Hard-faced Palura, his eyes like moonstones, moved swiftly from the restaurant entrance on the right. The disturber seemed not to notice, yet when Palura reached to seize the ornate young fellow's collar, something indistinct occurred; Palura was suddenly jerked by his extended arm so that he plunged headlong, scrambling for balance but hitting a table, upsetting five chairs of patrons, and sprawling at last in a tangle of furniture and humans.

OBSERVING the disaster to Palura's equilibrium, the monologist stepped back nervously. The knickerbockered interrupter leaped from the floor to the orchestra rail, alighting well beyond the stage lights. Double-tongue Dan turned to escape, only to be lifted by a plumb-center kick on the saucer-sized badge still pinned to his trousers. With a yell the entertainer pitched headlong into the wings, followed by his assailant. Lively, distinct and varied sounds ensued, followed by a yelp of pain and a cry for mercy.

Then the monologist appeared again on the stage, propelled by a hand at his collar. He had been biffed in one eye, which was puffing and colored, and a swat square on the nose had added a purple shade to his features.

"I hope to die I am sorry!" he wailed. "I'm minding my own business after this! I'm all through telling off the River what happens on it! This writer of hist'ries never lost his innocence! I don't want any more trouble."

"Tell 'em the Mississippi isn't comical, but serious!" his captor urged. "Tell them nothing is a joke on it."

"Yes, sir, I know it! Dog-gone! It sounds funny, but aint!"

"Great guzzard!" rose Mrs. Mahna's familiar voice. "Travers Wilicum! Yo' sure enough have some git-up-'n'-git, aint yo'?"

At the laughter Wilicum's anger vanished in a sheepish smile, and he acknowledged his identity to delighted yelps.

The orchestra, always ready in Palura's, struck up "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here!" and so it appeared. Following the big sleet, the River trippers above Mendova had made long runs to the way-stop city and they now flocked into Palura's, greeting and rejoicing in old and new acquaintances. The indiscreet monologist had been jumped for twitting on facts as regards the wrong one. Nothing had seemed safer than poking fun at a curious soft-paw sport, but the tripper had, as often happens, came through right able to take care of himself.

"My lan'!" Mrs. Mahna greeted Wilicum, cordially jubilant. "I bet now yo'll write forty-leven pages about this, eh? Served that plaguey limber-tongued Dan right. All he does is go up and down scandalizing Riveh news; interesting but dangerous. He's been talking about me eveh sinct the first time he showed up single-speechifying."

Palura pushed belligerently through the crowd around Travers Wilicum. But a friendly grin on Wilicum's face checked Palura's glitter of anger.

"I want to shake your hand again, myse'f," Palura said genially. "I'm braced for it now, you bet!"

Edna Lee sang merry lilts and played with gayety. She was happier than she had ever dreamed of being.

Then a River hail from over in the dance-hall caused the shanty-boat crowd to surge in that direction.

"Let's have a dance, an old-time shake-down quadrille!" some one was bellowing in stentorian tones.

"Hi-i!" a whoop responded, and as they ran partners were found. Nor would the shanty-boaters be content till they had put Travers Wilicum at the head of the first quadrille set with the pseudo Helen Grey by his side, while Judson Miles with Edna Lee stood embarrassed at the foot. Mrs. Mahna caught Palura and lugged him to the right, while Whisky Williams was led firmly to the left by Big Sue.

"Ho, law!" Mrs. Mahna shrieked. "Will yo' look who's here!"

"Yeh—me!" Whisky Williams acknowledged.

"Where's that last wife of yourn?" Mrs. Mahna demanded.

"That's me!" Big Sue declared. "Just this ev'nin' we was lashed together by Justice of Peace What's-his-name."

"Jedge Cloverdanc?"

"Yeh!"

"Well, all I got to say's the on'y way to manage that old scoundrel Whisky Williams is to belt him on the head with stove-wood! My lan'—I've had husbands and husbands, but I neveh'd forget *that* feller—"

"Honors to yer pahdners!" the floor-manager cried in interruption. "Now the co'nehs! Circle all t' the right!"

And with that the River orchestra—string, horn, drum and piano—let go with enthusiasm.

"Who-e-e-e-e!" dancers yelled or squealed, according to their sex, and the sixteen sets of eight pairs of heels each bounded as one and they shook the huge beams of the old converted warehouse from cornices to the stone cellar walls.

Tonight was the night—let the morrow bring its ills!

Old Mississip' had emptied the shanty-boaters and the River trippers into Mendova at the end of the first lap down the Lower River. Held in check by storms, the minute fair weather came everybody took a big jump. Half of them did not know the day of the week, and so by what seemed to be merely chance they trod their way up from the mud-bar, wharf and along the bayou to cross Front Street, taking advantage of the welcome always to be found in Palura's. Sometimes Up-the-Bankers claimed the place as their own—now the River People cut loose, stepping light. Supplied with music, the crowd was its own amusement.

Old-timers skipped blithely to the same tunes as soft-paws with their palms still blistered from over-much pulling of sweep handles.

Palura soon discovered a furtive and familiar figure keeping out of his way. A little later Red Rufus was suddenly seized by arms, neck, and slack of trousers, and quietly hustled to the office of the establishment.

When Palura arrived there the captors had stripped the river-rat and stacked a score of wallets, as well as numerous watches, many pocket-knives, fountain-pens, spectacle-cases and other useful articles rightfully belonging to Palura's patrons.

"Aw!" began Red cajolingly, feeling the baneful gaze of the proprietor upon him. "I was jes' joking, Palura—I was jes' teaching them soft-paws an' Up-the-Bankers to look out—"

"To look out for their Palura associates, eh?" Palura inquired.

Red Rufus blinked. The prospect was distinctly unpleasant. Palura had on previous occasions given him to understand he'd better not ply any of his River craft there in Mendova's amusement palace. Never had Palura done the same thing to the rascal—but the memory of each time was distinct. Red had been spanked, manhandled by a former pugilist's fist, delivered to the police, kicked from the Green Room clear into the Mendova eddy, thrown out, stripped, into sorry weather. Palura was resourceful and merciless.

"A joke, eh?" And Palura grinned sardonically. "That's a good one, sure enough, Red. We'll have to keep that idee moving!"

Red Rufus swallowed hard. His fancy could not have foreseen Palura's instant decision.

"We'll make this warning fair." Palura turned to Dud Wisler and Hank Dayton, who had caught the pick-pocket. "Get this loot onto a table behind the curtain. We'll exhibit Red as a regular river-rat, a special pirate, a tripper for his health, a feather-hunter—all those things he's always being."

The two bouncers turned, grinning at Red Rufus, who blinked and gulped.

"Aw, Palura!" Red gasped. "Aw—yo' wouldn't do that!"

"It's a joke," Palura replied coldly; "your own joke come back on you!"

Red Rufus was dragged like a scared cat down behind the stage scenes, where several disguises were prepared, and on the spur of the occasion, a little play was contrived, all the entertainers contributing suggestions and assistance.

Double-tongue Dan turned to escape, only to be lifted by a plumb-center kick. With a yell he pitched headlong.

Happily for Palura, Red had grown an inch of beard since his last shave; even a quarter of an inch would have made him shine like a lighthouse, in the proper light. Palura brought down the boys from the motion-picture projection room, and these studied Red and the preparations, so as to give proper effects with their numerous colored disks. They found that one hue made the red beard invisible; another made all his skin invisible, with his whiskers standing out in bold relief, his bright blue eyes bulging indignantly and apparently without support. Two girls who were adepts at make-up, laid off for Red such a series of changes, rapid and complete, as in a professional way he could but admire, though cursing steadily and vehemently.

In the meanwhile the square dances had been thunderous in the hall, and the River folks were ready to return for a breathing-spell into the theater to hear a genuine River number, as announced from the orchestral stand.

"A man you all know," Palura declared, "is going to appear in person, in all the variety of his turn-coats and different kinds of pants, from old blue overalls to the immaculate broadcloth of the fanciest dude in town. You'll no more than find your places than the man we all know will be exhibited, first *au naturel*—or whatever they call his real self."

"Hey!" somebody gave an exasperated involuntary yelp. "Where the Hades is my wallet?"

"Dad-blast it—I lost my watch too—"

"Just a moment, please!" Palura interrupted. "We have foreseen this contingency. The return of what you've lost is part of our program, a joke arranged by and put over by one of the most notorious of the river-tripping old-timers."

"Things missing?" Mrs. Mahna's penetrating voice struck through the bustle. "I bet I know who that means!"

The stage curtain arose and two burly stalwarts were revealed holding a curiously mottled figure between them, wriggling and contorting.

"*Hi-i!* Red Rufus!" a dozen voices exulted loudly.

The hair on his head was thin, his cheeks were red, changing from deep bronze to a freckled pallor, his whiskers fox-red, his neck crinkled and red, then a pearly lustrous white out to the points of over-sized heavily freckled shoulders, and long wiry sunbrowned arms.

"My land!" Mrs. Mahna cried. "I wish I had a complexion like his, between tans! Hit's jes' like a baby's!"

Amidships, Red Rufus was wearing an odd borrowed garment and his legs were well tanned from his knees down. Inarticulate, full of impotent wrath, the captive river rascal twitched and made choking sounds.

"These things,"—Palura motioned to a long table with a large assortment on it,—"were found on the person of this exhibit, here. He's No. 1, and the others are numbered *seriatim;* we figure there are more than a hundred articles, besides pocketbooks and watches, which Red here absorbed. When he was caught and faced us, he said he was playing a joke. We have caught him frequently here among our reputable patrons. On each occasion we gave him entertainment. Now we're going to have him for our guest while we put him through his paces, according to his usual river practices, as most of us have heard and seen him."

The river-trippers yelled with delight. "He stole my skift!" one said. "He run off with my launch!" another added. "I seen 'im stealin' hogs at White Riveh mouth!" —from another. Private Detective Judson Miles and a deputy marshal went behind the scenes with happy, professional smiles on their faces. Palura soon announced that Red had broken into a commissary, bumped against the postal laws, navigation and piracy acts and was largely rewarded.

Red Rufus fought all the way. Feelings nor honor would let him do less than make every break, and bite the hands that dressed him. But he was dragged onto the stage in a fisherman's skiff with a hog-pen canvas shack, wet from the river eddy itself.

"Why, that's our boat, George!" a woman exclaimed.

"Well, that's the same boat Red had 'bout a month ago—ceptin' the rag-house!" Mrs. Mahna commented.

"He was tore up in a jon-boat in the cyclone below Putney Bend!" another added.

In a ragged shirt, with one leather shoe and one rubber boot, ragged jeans and equipped with a smoke-stained pail and an iron skillet, Red Rufus was revealed as a complete river-rat.

Then he was set up in a fifteen-foot packing-case-board shack-boat, four feet wide. He had on a large gray hat, and a pair of army breeches, a dirty shirt and a preacher's frock coat. When he kicked and struggled a pack of cards scattered around him, and one of the assistants drew

a hymnal, a Bible, and a Government river report from the cabin—which had been brought up from the river landing. The real owner in the audience gave a yell of astonishment when he recognized his property.

Then Red was shown in a beautiful twenty-foot skiff, with a wonderful double hood and a fine aluminum outboard motor; he was equipped with a typewriter, notebook and an excellent camera. Travers Wilicum jumped up in astonishment. Palura gravely brought the typewriter and box of paper down to him, and remarked:

"Better get busy!" Then, leaning over to whisper, "Come up on the stage!"

Magic was in that invitation. Wilicum hesitated, then desire and propulsion from around him sent him to the stage where he could do no less than enter into the spirit of the affair. With the machine on his lap he began to write, recording all that he saw, heard, or could remember. And thereafter as he smiled in describing what happened to Red, during the dropping of the curtain and during the revelations of the show, the river rascal turned and snarled at him, while the spectators cheered.

"One time Red here picked a fellow's pocket down to Memphis," Palura told the crowd. "The victim was an author and for ten or twelve years he killed Red in every story he wrote. Red used to bring me the stories and laugh about them, and he'd write the story-man a postcard or a letter just to show there was no hard feelings. We have with us tonight another victim of Red's—and we'll sure watch with pleasure and anticipation how he uses Red's rascalities in his histories and fictions."

Red Rufus sweated and struggled, but all in vain. When he had done his unshaven parts, he was trimmed for the semi-respectable unshaven parts. Then he was given a close shave, and dressed spick-and-span in the parts of reputable sportsman, show-boat actor, Up-the-Bank swell, water-front dude and all the rest. And at each metamorphosis, the shanty-boaters yelled afresh. Presently they were reminding Palura of tricks and disguises Red had used with effect.

"He's played a lady's part down to Lake Providence Reach!" some one declared. "That was when Sheriff Michielin come along looking for a feller with red whiskers, an' found a lady in yellow glasses and a bustle—"

"Fine!" Palura laughed, and a few minutes later Red Rufus was thrust from the wings into the middle of the stage, for the first time unaccompanied.

He was dressed like a woman in silk, chiffon, high-heeled shoes and a lot of special fixings from mascara to wide, yellow garters, a jaunty hat and the rest appropriate. He made a rush for the footlights, thinking to dash for liberty through the crowd; then he stopped short. What they would do to him in passing— He backed away and turned to the wings again. His voice rose beseechingly.

"Aw, Palura!" he wailed. "All I ask's a pair of pants! Don't make me go out thisaway! I'll 'neveh hear the las' of hit! Aw, Palura!"

He was wailing loudly, in the distance, still begging, the sound muffled by the fall of the curtain. Then a roaring voice shouted:

"Let's have a dance now! Choose yer partners—let's have another dance, now!"

THE victims of Red's "pick-pocketing" went backstage to identify their property. Among those to apply were Wilicum, Detective Judson Miles, and Mrs. Mahna, who came sputtering with vociferous indignation, demanding to have a chance at that scoundrel who had cut her money from her stocking—which she declared couldn't be done, till she investigated. Then she would believe anything!

Palura, still protecting his patrons, sought out Wilicum.

"Y'understand it's none of my personal business," the proprietor said, "but there's a lawyer come to town on the ten-thirty train tonight. He's going to meet a detective here and catch a girl that's been rewarded."

The river-tripping writer stared at Palura. "Why, of course—" Wilicum stammered.

"Something funny about it," Palura went on. "The detective's tracked down the wrong girl. I know her. But if the right one happens to be around, you know, it might complicate things—"

"Palura, I'm certainly obliged!"

"Aw, get busy!" Palura said disgustedly.

WILICUM circled through the throng now taking places on the dance-hall floor. He found alias Helen Grey waiting for him near the wide entrance. He took her with him to a quiet table where he told her exactly what the proprietor had told him.

"Why, then he must know—" she hesitated.

"Anything you want to do—I'll help!" Wilicum said stoutly.

"I'll have to think about it," she replied. "Oh, thank you a thousand times! You've known I'm a fugitive, Travers, and yet you trusted me!"

"Yes," he admitted simply.

"Who is the other girl?"

"That dark fellow, kind of burly—see him? The girl with him. He's the sleuth."

"*That* fellow?" Helen laughed. "Why, how did he fool himself about her? He used to keep a lunchroom at Omaha—I ate there."

Wilicum shook his head; he didn't know.

"I think I'll talk to Palura," she presently decided. "Come on!"

"I don't have to know—"

"But you do!" she retorted, and Palura met them in his office on the second floor.

"They've followed me here—you're sure?" she asked directly.

"Reward notices, of two hundred fifty dollars, have been posted all over, and down the river towns," Palura said. "The Carcajou Jim Biggar brought in one of these just last week. It's for Adeline Laura Bonney, twenty-four years, and posted out of Syracuse by a law-firm—Dillon, Keeps and Wickle."

"Did it say what she's wanted for?"

"No—'taint official. Lawyer-reward notices don't mean anything. I asked Biggar, and he said they couldn't arrest you. Some kind of a civil case, probably. He wasn't sure. That Judson Miles came down from Omaha looking for her. He's let the lawyers know he's got the girl; he's been telephoning, and telegraphing, an' it'll be a show-down tomorrow. Same time—"

"Palura!"—she rested her hand on his forearm. "You knew he was mistaken—and you warn me?"

"Sure! None of my business—but if you wa'n't around—"

"I've heard perfectly dreadful things about Palura's," —she smiled,—"and all of them fade away into the friendliness of a good fellow!"

"Aw," Palura grunted, "I don't know who you are—but the pitcher on that dodger— Here 'tis! The girl he's chased—looks like her, but 'taint."

She glanced down the reward notice, then handed it to Wilicum, who studied it minutely. When he would have returned it to Palura the proprietor waved it back.

"Put it into that note-book of yourn!" he said. "Now, you two'd better pull up the eddy. I'll send somebody up to the head of the mud-bar, soon's I know about that lawyer. He went to the White Plume Hotel, where he

telephoned and asked us about Judson Miles. That's how I got onto him. He'll come down here tomorrow. I told Miles and he telephoned; he's going to produce the girl. She thinks a lot of him—told me so. I tipped her off too, but she's going to see it through. She's always been on the level—married a fellow I used to know who got killed. She's playing into Miles' hands, clear to the bottom of the deck. Huh!"

Palura chuckled in anticipation.

"You don't believe in double-crossing, do you?" Helen Grey suggested.

"That's the on'y thing I eveh do!" he retorted.

Two stalwarts were revealed holding a figure between them, wriggling and contorting. "Hi-i! Red Rufus!" a dozen voices exulted.

"And so prevent all the rest of us double-crossing one another?" she inquired slyly, whereupon he turned to her, scowling.

"Looks like you know a lot!" he declared tartly.

"Don't ever let on!" she laughed gayly, and to Wilicum: "Come on with me, will you, please?"

"I'd please do anything you wanted me to," he assured her.

"Seems like he means it!" And Palura grinned.

The two went down a side stairs into Ferry Street, where instead of turning toward the river she headed uptown. At the telephone exchange she entered and told the night desk-operator what she wanted.

When her call was put through she entered a booth, from which she emerged in half an hour, smiling.

"The other end paid," the desk-operator remarked. . . . .

Down on the river-front they cast off the shanty-boat and skiff moorings—the skiff had been replaced by Palura's stage-property foragers—and floated away up the reverse current to the head of the eddy.

"I'm too excited to sleep!" Helen told Wilicum.

"Then what—" he began.

"A walk on the sand-bar, if you'd just as soon," she replied. "It's likely to be our last."

"*What?*"

"I'm afraid so," she insisted. "I think we've gone far enough—without going too far. Don't you?"

"Quite the contrary!" he asserted. "We've only just started! This has been your trip so far. It's my turn, now!"

"Is that so?"

"Well, hasn't it?" he inquired pointedly.

"Yes," she breathed presently. "I owe you a great deal—I'll pay you in any coin, in any way you say."

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed. "I didn't mean that. What I'd ask would be only adding to my obligations to you—with no adequate balance in your favor."

She brought him around facing her on the pale sand-bar, holding her hands on his shoulders, looking up into his eyes in the star-lit gloom.

"You really mean that?" she asked. "Has my companionship been worth so much in your estimation that the obligation is all yours?"

"Why, wasn't it? Of course the privilege has been all mine!"

"You believe it!" she laughed, choking. "I shouldn't have dreamed you'd feel that way—when you've had so little!"

"A mere trifle!" he jeered. "And all I'd ask, now, is the full trip to N'Orleans—on and on for always! Will you?"

"I'll tell you—tomorrow," she chuckled softly, "if you don't change your mind."

"It's women that do the changing!" he said.

"Is that so?" she laughed. "You haven't made one note since you left the stage tonight—"

"You're mistaken," he assured her. "While you were in the telephone-booth I short-scripted enough to make three pages in my loose-leaf folder!"

"Indeed!" she sniffed. "There's somebody over by our boats. Probably it's Palura's messenger."

"Not much!" Wilicum exclaimed. "I know that silhouetted— That's Red Rufus, the dad-blasted—"

And with that he leaped to make a race.

CHAPTER XIV

DETECTIVE JUDSON MILES more and more felt the urge of professional spirit. Duty was calling and he listened attentively, determined to sink himself in his chosen profession.

Hard work had had its reward. On the slender clue of a casual glimpse he had traced his quarry down to the river and down the Missouri into the Lower Mississippi, and now he had inveigled himself into her good graces,

established his leads and found his contacts. Duty had overcome his personal feelings and subdued his minor scruples.

He had never known before that a man could have a conscience on both sides of the fence, able to abuse him no matter which way he swerved. The very success of his secret-service efforts had not only led to feelings of complete professional satisfaction but to private doubts and smites. Yet in the end Stern Public Necessity at last definitely swung the balance against the weight of mere personal affections and sympathies.

Judson Miles admired the cleverness with which Edna Lee stuck to her story about tripping down the Ohio and being the widow of a yeggman who had been killed, disgracing her. He was surprised when Palura recognized and greeted her heartily, and he wondered what significance that might have.

"My land!" he thought to himself. "Prob'ly I'm right in the middle of a far bigger case'n ever I dreamed of! It'd be just my luck!"

HE would have gone to Lawyer Wickle that night at the White Plume hotel, but the lawyer—as long as it was perfectly safe to do so—preferred to have a night's sleep and be fresh for the interview in the morning.

"Miss Bonney's one of the cleverest women in the world," the attorney admitted frankly. "A man'll need all his faculties dealing with her! It's a wonder you've been able to manage her the way you have. I congratulate you, sir!"

Accordingly, Miles was amazed at his own success. Dancing, eating, romping with Edna Lee in Palura's, he found himself not a little awed by his own extraordinary attainment, the way Fortune had thrown the breaks of the case his way. He was astonished by his partner's gay brightness of manner and her sparkling recklessness of merriment.

She told him that she and her husband had spent weeks there in Mendova sometime before, making much gayety at Palura's. Now she readily assumed the place of belle of the evening.

Toward dawn of the morning the shanty-boats began to head away for their respective cabins, shacks and tent-outfits. Miles accompanied Edna Lee to the moorings of her shanty-boat. On arrival, he gazed in exasperated anguish at the vacancy of the berth which had been occupied by his own glass-cabin launch. His boat had been cut loose from the little brown cabin-boat's stern. Some blamed river-rat, unquestionably. Miles stood speechless.

"Oh!" Edna Lee exclaimed in sympathy. "River pirates again!"

"Yes, and they filed the chain too," he answered angrily. "I had a chain cable looped and locked through that steamboat wharf-ring!"

"Well, you can't do anything about it now," she suggested. "You might's well come aboard. You take my bed and I'll sleep on the kitchen floor—I've lots of spare blankets, and two mattresses on my cot!"

Miles hesitated. Every inclination bade him accept that hospitality, yet a vague uneasiness snarled at him, giving fair warning that people would talk. All those shanty-boating trippers along the water-front would observe or hear about this brazen thing. At the same time he recalled the "Find Your Man" Course admonishment for just precisely this occasion.

"On nearing the critical hour of a case, when the moment of closure is at hand, redouble your vigilance. Go without food, without sleep, without everything, rather than give your quarry one moment out of surveillance. One instant of relaxed attention—and the work of days, months, even years, may be undone! Keep at it!"

Detective Judson Miles slept on the kitchen floor, spreading down a tarpaulin and covering it with the extra mattress. He slept long and soundly. When he awakened, he saw that it was approaching ten o'clock. He invited Edna Lee to breakfast uptown in a restaurant. She accepted without hesitation, and so they strolled over the wharf to Hungry Man's Row, where in one stretch of Center Street were all kinds of eating-places.

They breakfasted at their leisure on country sausage and cakes. Over the coffee they tarried with little talk and stretches of silence. Miles tried to maintain precisely the same air as for weeks past. She regarded him with frank amusement and sympathy. Without a word, when the hour of eleven-thirty o'clock approached, she accepted her cloak over her shoulders from his hands and strolled with him down the street toward the ornate White Plume hotel. They entered the lobby and ascended to the ladies' lounge.

Here Miles juggled his hat three times around, upside-down on his left thumb. Thereupon a tall, slim, black-frocked man of thin features, pale gray eyes and rather baldish head emerged from a window, his face showing signs of disappointment and scorn as he stared at the key-action for identification.

"Are you Judson Miles?" the man inquired with asperity.

"Oh, yes!" Miles nodded, heartily. "And here—" he winked from behind the young woman's back—"and here's Miss Edna Lee!"

"Well, she isn't the person I desired to see!" the man snapped. "I'm Wickle, and you've brought me prob'ly a thousand miles on a fool's errand."

"Wha-*what!*" Miles gasped. "She aint Adeline Laura Bonney?"

"Of course not!" Wickle declared. "You're just a congenital idiot!"

"But—but she was in a brown cabin-boat—she has blue eyes—"

Wickle glared and stalked away. Miles dropped his hat which he had unconsciously kept whirling in twirls of three. He wiped his brow with his handkerchief.

"NEVER mind, dear!" the young woman's gentle voice interrupted his despair, and she ran after the indignant attorney, stopping him short by her voice, holding him with her smile.

"Well?" Wickle demanded.

"The young woman you're looking for is in Mendova—or was last night," she said. "If you'd like to see her, I'm sure it could be arranged."

"Want to see her!" the lawyer snapped angrily. "What'd I come prob'ly a thousand miles for, if I didn't want to?"

"How *much* do you want to see her?" the young woman asked tersely.

Wickle squinted, drawing his thick gray eyebrows down, staring at her.

"Why—a hundred dollars' worth—"

"Oh—is that so?" She laughed. "The reward-notices said two hundred fifty dollars; little enough—too little, in fact."

"Well—I told that dumb-head when he held out on you that we'd make it five hundred."

"That's better!" she smiled. "Suppose we strike a bargain at seven-fifty?"

"No!"

"Fare ye well!" Turning away, she shrugged her shoulders.

"If it's really her—" Wickle capitulated.

"If it isn't—not a cent," she agreed. "You'll have to put up the coin, though—with Palura. Lawyers are as slippery as some women, you know."

He started to argue, but she wouldn't listen. He agreed at last and she summoned the dejected Miles, who had slumped in a great chair. The three went to Palura's, and Palura consented to hold the seven hundred fifty dollar stake. He grinned at Edna Lee as she explained gravely what had happened, and the bargain which had been struck.

"They're in my restaurant," Palura remarked, and Edna Lee took Wickle to the big dining-room.

As the two walked in, from one of the booths emerged Helen Grey.

"Why, Mr. Wickle!" she called across to the attorney.

He stopped short. "Miss Bonney!" he cried out jubilantly.

"There you are!" And Edna Lee turned to Palura, who promptly handed over the seven hundred fifty dollars.

Detective Judson Miles fanned himself weakly, staring at Edna Lee. She rolled her eyes up at him.

"Please put this money in an inside pocket — don't let any one pick it!" she requested. Miles pressed the money to his heart in the inner container of his waistcoat.

"Edna—Edna!" he whispered, like beating measures to music.

"You really mean that?" she asked. "Has my companionship been worth so much?"

She took him by the arm, smiling forgivingly at him.

"We—we need each other!" he said in low tones.

"Really?" she drawled. "Oh—but *I* do need *you!*"

"Honest—honest—you'd take me? And I was—"

"Just faithful, according to your lights—just faithful!" she assured him. "Oh, I love men who let nothing stand in the way of their sense of duty!"

"Shu-u!" Palura muttered. "What a wife she'd make for the man who needs her!"

"Wouldn't she!" Judson Miles cried. "Say, you know, a man needs a wife, to kinda give him pointers. Course, I don't know'f I'm keen enough to be a detective or not. I got my doubts! But those fellows who bought my place in Omaha are kicking that they don't keep the patrons I did. Edna Lee, I'm not fitting—I reckon if I stuck to my lessons and practiced I'd make a fair detective. But I'm a darn' good lunch and restaurant man! That seems to be my line. This old Mississip' has sure twisted me forty-which ways. Probably I'll never be anything but a care and an exasperation for you, keeping me headed right —but such as I am, I wish you'd marry me!"

"You'd deliver me to the police, first crime I commit!" she chuckled.

"No!" He shook his head. "First place, you aren't going to commit any crime. Second place, I'm going to marry you for better and for worse. Get me?"

"Dearie!" She laughed. "I sure do, with all the happiness in the world beside!"

Whereupon Judson Miles saw the clues and indications in her bearing and the light of her eyes, and enfolded her in his arms.

CHAPTER XV

ADELINE LAURA BONNEY smiled with dignity as Attorney Wickle nervously wiped a pair of glasses to reaffirm his identification of her. Travers Wilicum, with whom she was breakfasting in the booth, was not wholly pleased when she brought Wickle in to sit beside him.

At the same time, the heartiness with which Wickle accepted an introduction to the "author" and his effort to make a favorable impression on the writer was exceedingly significant.

Presently as he waited for his order, Wickle said:

"You know, of course, why we wished to see you so urgently."

"And you are certainly aware of my reasons for desiring not to give one word of testimony," she replied.

"We certainly know, Miss Bonney!" he exclaimed. "For that reason we hold you in even greater respect than ever—but we are much beyond the civil-suit phase, now. It is no longer a question of evidence. What we want now is influence."

"Influence?"

"Yes. Mr. Murrell and our clients have been in consultation. We have been trying to find you, lately, because your guardian and patron refused to join in the rehabilitation of the Products Development Corporation—"

"Rehabilitation, Mr. Wickle?"

"Exactly. When Mr. Murrell was—uh—"

"Kicked out!"

"Well, you might call it that," the attorney owned grudgingly. "Business went so slack that they—we realized how necessary his genius was. He refused all our offers. Finally, he said if you advised it, he would return."

"Mr. Murrell took me as a little girl, orphaned and penniless, and saw that I had a home. He educated me," —the young woman's voice broke,—"and at the same time trained me through contact with the Products Development office so that I came to understand business. Then the despicable ingrates whose fortunes he had made endeavored to deprive him of his share in the common concern. Naturally I have no interest whatever in you or your clients."

"Now—Miss Bonney," the attorney besought, "that is all settled. If you say so, Mr. Murrell will return with full authority and fifty-one per cent control. He says everything hinges on your attitude, however."

"You thought I was working for the company!" she jeered. "For the business I cared less than this snap of

my finger. But for Mr. Murrell—surely, a daughter would be under less obligation than a penniless, homeless orphan! So when I discovered what you and the Stolling crowd were up to, I made sure not one of you could obtain any vital fact or secret belonging to Mr. Murrell. You expected to bribe me. Then you tried to force me to tell them to you through court pressure. You yourself said I'd be in contempt of court—probably go to jail a year or two—if I didn't betray the man to whom I owe all the opportunities I ever had. That's so, isn't it?"

"Unhappily, yes! Personally, I'm sorry—we all are! We've paid many prices, including those of conscience and finance." Wickle sighed.

"I wouldn't even see you without his assent," said Helen Grey. "When my faithful river friends told me you were here last night, I telephoned Mr. Murrell. He asked me to see you, telling me I could do so without fear of injuring him. Of course, I knew you were messing around with detectives. Everybody down the Mississippi knew about your reward-notices and secret-service folk.

"You knew Mr. Murrell loved that corporation; you knew it was everything in the world to him. Yet you contrived to drive him from his life's work. I despise you —I think you and your associates are unspeakable! At the same time, your clumsy ignorance would surely destroy Mr. Murrell's industrial pride. And that would be worse than any satisfaction I might have in giving you your just deserts."

"Miss Bonney, we understand—we realize perfectly—"

HE told me about this matter last night," she went on. "I was flattered beyond happiness by his reliance on my judgment! I knew what he really wanted in his heart to do—go back and work again with you men who were so long his associates, until you grew hungry for a power and a wealth you never deserved or earned. I told him I wished he would return as president and executive manager, providing he had fifty-one per cent ownership, and absolute, unquestionable control."

"You told him—to go back!" Wickle cried in relief.

"Yes!"

"We were prepared to pay you fifty thousand dollars for that—"

"Will you never learn to play square and aboveboard?" she asked disgustedly. "Imagine me taking one cent—"

"Mr. Murrell consented to our offering you compensation for your business judgment," Wickle said. "He wrote this."

She took a sheet of paper he handed her, and read:

"My dear Miss Bonney:
I have consented to the Stolling group making you a payment of fifty thousand dollars in return for your business judgment on their proposal that I return in charge of the Products Development Corporation. Owing to your own importance in the work, I feel this no more than meets their obligation to you. I shall not reassume charge without your approval. If they can obtain that I feel that you should be paid at least this sum, which is not out of the corporation treasury, but some measure of the Stolling group's personal sacrifice in making amends for the damage done by their attitude and efforts. The matter lies wholly in your hands. Your knowledge and judgment is better than anyone else's could possibly be at this juncture.

"Sincerely,
"JAMES A. MURRELL."

"The check, Miss Bonney!" Wickle handed her a slip, the back of which contained the bank's certification stamp. "My suggestion that we would buy your judgment in favor of our desires was inept. We all know no influence could swerve you a hair's-breadth in an honest opinion. Even when we most ardently were trying to find you, we admitted our vital error in refusing to listen to your advice, and finally in denying your ultimatum."

"I knew you couldn't improve anything by ingratitude or selfish personal profits, Mr. Wickle. Every dollar you cost Mr. Murrell cost you five."

"We know that now," he said. "I'm glad, immeasurably, that you advised reconciliation. You came down the Mississippi?"

"Yes, in a cabin-boat."

"Is that so! But wasn't it perilous?"

"Until Mr. Wilicum, here, came along. He took care of me wonderfully."

"He—uh—*what?*"

"He floated along down with me, and navigated the river. I'd probably have drowned when the sleet nearly sank my boat, but for him."

"He came down the river with you? You're married, Adeline?"

"Oh, no! Nowhere near that!"

"You're *sure?*" Wilicum interrupted.

"Miss Bonney, you don't mean to say—" Wickle began. "You haven't neglected the essential conventions—appearances?"

"I've minded my own business, Mr. Wickle," she remarked pointedly.

"I dare say! I dare say!" he admitted breathlessly. "You'll return to Syracuse now and—"

"No. I've a much more important matter on hand."

"More important?"

"Certainly. Mr. Wilicum is gathering materials for a story about a heroine, Helen Grey. He was so kind as to permit me to use that name, when I didn't have any. I'm alias Helen Grey, you know. His data are far from complete. He'll have to go clear to N'Orleans before he rounds out his raw goods for his story-to-be. I'm going with him—"

"You're not married!"

"Oh, no! It really isn't necessary, down old Mississip'!"

"N-not necessary! *Miss Bonney!*"

"But very desirable!" Wilicum interpolated.

"I should *hope* so!" Wickle declared with feeling.

"Really?" Alias Helen Grey looked with blank expression at the writer of hist'ries.

"Nothing quite so much to be desired!" he assured her.

"Stolling and the others'll be very anxious!" Wickle rubbed his hands. "I'll go telephone!"

"Out in the lobby," she directed him, and as the curtains fell in front of the booth, the young woman gazed reflectively at Wilicum.

"I don't amount to shucks!" he began. "Generally I'm a silly ass—and all my future if any, lies before me. I'd be a coward, though, not to ask you to marry me, Helen Grey!"

"I want to go down the reaches and bends with you," she said. "It's been wonderful—"

"Inspiring!" he said. "And we'd *have* to marry now—"

"Now that everybody knows, I suppose so," she smiled.

JUST then Palura spoke from outside the curtained booth. "I don't want to interrupt," he began, "but this Judson Miles and Edna Lee want a bridesmaid and a witness. They're marrying."

"Is that so?" The two within sprang forth.

"Up to the Justice's." Palura grinned. "That blamed Red Rufus dodged the deputy marshal last night, and stole Miles' glass-cabin launch—"

"That so! That must have been after I caught him trying to steal my skiff!" Wilicum exclaimed. "I booted him down the sand-bar—"

"Course with only one boat to trip in, Miles and Edna Lee have to be married," Palura explained gravely.

"Do you reckon somebody could be got to steal my

skiff?" Travers Wilicum asked, with equal gravity.

"Sure!" Palura exclaimed heartily, grinning.

"You needn't bother, Palura," said the girl. "Telephone the Justice to put on weddings for another couple, will you please?"

"Sure's you're borned!" Palura chuckled. "I'll pass the word around if you don't mind, and we'll have a wedding-supper to-night, and another party. Last night everybody was kinda nervous an' nobody really livened up much as they'd ought to. Now the sky's cleared—"

"Wha-wha-what!" Miles gasped. "She aint Adeline Laura Bonney?" "Of course not," Wickle declared. "You're just a congenital idiot!"

"And Red Rufus has gone on down—" Wilicum added, grinning.

"That's so too." Palura grimaced wryly. "You know what that blame' scoundrel done went an' did to me? He rolled me for two hundred bucks when I was giving him a pair of pants last night, account of him hating to wear women's clothes. In place of the wad he left the pair of ladies' silk stockings tied up in the garters we'd made him wear! What you going to do with a danged riveh-rat like that? Anyhow, though, I can charge it up to him as vaudeville performancing. Everybody's talking about the show, an' it was good as twenty-five thousand dodgers circulated out!"

"My, but he'd make a mighty good story!" Wilicum exclaimed.

"We'll write it about him," laughed Adeline Bonney, alias Helen Grey.

"Yeh! An' hit'll make another good story when I git my hands on him the next time!" Palura declared. "Writin' stories about him aint nothin' but adding to his satisfaction!"

"You know, Palura, you'd really hate to have anything dreadful bad happen to him," the young woman suggested. "Now wouldn't you?"

"Uh-h—well—" Palura grunted. "Prob'ly."

"I saw you begin to talk to the deputy marshal, distracting the officer's attention," she went on. "Red gave one look, and ducked for cover."

"Do you mean to say that I—" Palura demanded indignantly.

"Oh, no—not for worlds!" she interrupted reassuringly. "I mind my own business!"

"Huh!" Palura grunted. "Aw right! Weddings for two couples!"

With that he turned away to have things done right.

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN Red Rufus made his escape from Mendova in the glass-cabin motor-boat which had belonged to Detective Judson Miles, he headed away down the Mississippi, bound for "Chafelli" and the Cajun swamps of the Louisiana bottoms. He declared to himself that nothing should interrupt him in his intentions. With such a motor-boat and all those fixings on board, all he had to do was keep going without any foolishness.

For nearly two days Red held firmly to his purpose of going down the Mississippi into the bayou deltas. He stopped then in Arkansaw Old Mouth. No place in the world seemed so far back and secluded. Surely there he could be happy, thanking his good luck. He heard there about the weddings in Mendova.

"My land!" he sighed. "I'm lucky; it might just as well's not been me—one or both o' them grooms!"

Arkansaw Old Mouth is a region, a condition and a place. There old time river-people gather in their shanty-boats, tents, power-craft of various kinds, enjoying and suspecting one another.

The arrival here of Red Rufus was a social event. The moment he was recognized people carried their axes down from the firewood piles on the bank, and attached chains to their skiffs or launches, instead of merely mooring with ropes.

"Why howdy, Tom Marshal!" Red cheerfully greeted a confrére of many trips down. "How's yo' hook today?"

"With a double-bar'l' shotgun, same's ever!" Tom replied with unsmiling watchfulness.

Red went on his way, along the sterns of sundry craft moored in the stillwaters with their bows to Big Island. He saw many small shanty-boats, twenty-four-footers or less and regarded with keen eyes the numerous outboard motors hanging from stern bumpers.

As Red came in sight, people who recognized him reached for the corners of their cabins and came out on the stern-decks where they began cleaning single, double and repeating shotguns and various caliber rifles—and a few betrayed by the hitches of their belts that they were not unprepared. Cheerily Red waved a debonair hand as he passed these, grinning.

"My land!" he called to Hud Barkey. "I'm lucky! They aint nobody shot me on sight yet!"

Hud glared. Ever since meeting Red Rufus at Paducah he had been promising to shoot that scoundrel on sight. But shooting even a river-rat on sight in the middle of a bright sunny day, when one has cooled down after dis-

covering all one's money gone, just isn't done. There were too many witnesses liable to be around. The question of State or Federal jurisdiction was annoying.

Red heard afterwards that Hud restrained himself because he didn't know whether the Government or the State of Arkansaw would prevail.

"I wouldn't mind hanging so much," Hud declared. "But I got a horror of sitting in the River of Fire chair!"

"I sure 'preciate the law," Red entirely approved Hud's feelings in the matter. "The law has saved me bein' messed up lots an' lots of times. My land! I don't know what I'd do if some folks weren't law honest."

RED went to the whisky-boat *White Dove,* where Whisky Williams welcomed him with indifference. Williams was quite a patron of his own business; he could go around in front of the bar and order a drink. He would put down two bits and then go around behind the bar, serve a tall glass and then go around outside to imbibe it. This was due to his solemn oath that he would never drink behind the bar!

One time Red had tied a shanty-boat alongside Whisky Williams' boat the *Joy Chute.* Williams had just stocked up with six barrels of forty-two and one-half gallons each, and Red stayed with Williams all the way from Obion River to Plum Point helping navigate the sixty-foot scow, carrying on board firewood and making himself useful with cooking worthy of a N'Orleans chef. Williams tried to persuade Red to go in partnership with him, but Red after considering the proposition for a week sighed with regret.

"I betteh not, Williams," he said. "I've been my own boss so long I hate to have anybody else be responsible f'r my actions, the way a man'd be if he was my partner an' I was his agent. The law'd make you see't I behaved myse'f—"

That seemed real honorable to Williams. A man as thoughtful as all that just ought to be a pal and a partner to tie to. But when Williams arrived down in Centennial Cut-off where business was just beginning to go good, he rolled out the first barrel of his cargo. He was astonished at the ease with which he handled that three hundred and fifty pounds or thereabouts. There wasn't even a splash inside.

In the head, though, there was a gimlet-hole. Also there were gimlet-holes in all the other barrel-heads; some two hundred and forty gallons net of prime corn-spout and sour wild-honey moonshine had been siphoned out. . . . . That was the first and last time Whisky Williams ever trusted Red Rufus. He didn't even have the satisfaction of being sure Red had performed the operation.

"I'm morally sure, though!" Williams declared angrily, accusing Red to his face.

"Morally—huh!" Red sniffed. And it was a week after the prohibition argument which left Williams exhausted and indignant that he realized the question of the vanished liquor had not been settled. At the same time, he knew Red Rufus had worked all of Whisky Williams' favorite landings from Island Thirty-five clear to the mouth of White River, selling pale yellow liquor.

"That's all the satisfaction anybody eveh gits, argufyin' with that dad-banged Red Rufus!" Williams stated, with lack of finality. "Course, anybody's liable to be robbed. That aint the p'int so much as it is bein' made a derned fool of! That makes me mad."

THERE was a party on the sacred concert boat *Cleopatra* the second night after Red's arrival. He attempted to join the rush down the cleated and railed gang-plank, but Don Pierce pointedly invited him not to attend. Red had never had any personal experience with Don, but just the way that stranger from somewhere in Texas kept a .38-40 revolver leveled at the river-rat's amidships made Red nervous. The party looked exceedingly inviting, for there were sports, sportsmen, store-boaters, grafters (electric-belt, patent-medicine, and other confidential lines), bank-rubbers and drifters of various kinds. And river people were prosperous; a man never knew what he would find in a pocketbook or under the flaps of a money-belt until he had inspected it. Red borrowed somebody's dugout canoe and slipped around to the stern-deck, slipped along the dark side running-board and looked in through the windows. It sure did look good!

He returned on board his launch, shaved, dressed himself with care in a suit of knickerbockers, and stiffened one leg into a moderate limp. He passed the man from Texas without the least difficulty. Don even accompanied the poor cripple along the gang-plank, because of an accidental but lucky stumble. On board Red wandered around with a pair of large amber eyeglasses protecting himself from the fierce glares of recognition. Just as he had expected, it was rich pickings. He found a nice friendly girl who was from Pittsburgh and sang songs. Red told her he was suffering from aphasia of the left leg and he was hoping his nerve would recover its memory down Old Mississip' which was like medicine good for almost every ailment.

A rotund sportsman who came down the Mississippi every winter to shoot robins on the Arkansaw River sandbars was the first to squawk. He was dancing the Virginia Reel with Mamie-Lou of Kentucky, when a baroque pearl brooch on her bosom hooked into a loop-end of a chain-stitched thread of a seam in his negligée silk shirt, and it began to unravel calamitously. He sought his gold pen-knife with which to sever the thread. He remembered exactly which pocket it was in too—lots of people aren't methodical enough for that.

"Dog-goned luck!" Red Rufus muttered anxiously.

"Oh-h!" his partner exclaimed ecstatically, "you've forgot to limp! You've forgot to limp, like you hoped to!"

Her cry of delighted revelation drew attention and Red stood looking for the exits. The music played on, but the dancers here and there stopped while they felt tentatively through their own pockets. Red could have told them there was a lot of use in that! Of course, Red's disguise wouldn't stand up under sharp scrutiny, and a hoarse growl of recognition gave him fair warning. He started for the narrow stage door, but the angry face of Mrs. Mahna and that dad-blasted detective Judson Miles appeared out of nowhere. On the instant Red swerved and made a jump for the open window.

HE made it, but in the process his fragile garments were mostly skinned from him. His shirt came away in pieces. Even his loose knickerbockers pulled apart in strips. Somebody seized him by his right shoe—it too came away with the instant straightening out of Red's foot.

From outside there came a sound as though an enormous frog had splashed into the stillwaters of Arkansaw Old Mouth. . . . Red swam far and deep. When he came to the surface in a partly submerged tree-top along the bank, he listened.

"My gosh!" he heard some one say on board the *Cleopatra.* "He shed about a bushel of things! Stand back, ev'rybody! Look out where yo' step—don't step on them watches. I bet they're busted, though."

"I hope their blamed works is scrambled!" Red sighed, and he headed down the Old Mouth to where he had left the glass-cabin motor-boat safely moored. What was his disgust to find it gone! The significance of Detective Miles' presence suddenly occurred to Red Rufus.

"Oh, gawsh!" he groaned. "I got to swim out of this!"

The crash of running feet on the Big Island bottoms warned him. The long blue beams of hand flashlights darted menacingly over the river surface, poking obtrusively into the brush and drift lodged along the banks and sweeping across the level stillwaters. Now and then somebody took a shot at suspicious appearances and the thud of the bullets all the way down from .45's to futile little .22's was the most exasperating of warnings to Red. He treaded water with his head in a soapbox covered with a large tuft of mountain laurel.

"My land!" he whispered to himself as with the least possible disturbance of the waters he worked toward the midstream and the current of the Mississippi. "I'm lucky they can't see me none!"

The current of Old Mississipp' was ten or fifteen degrees colder than the eddied waters of Arkansaw Old Mouth, which itself was plenty chill enough.

"I can't stand this!" Red Rufus shivered. "I'll freeze to death—I'm frosted like an icicle! *Woosh!*"

He noticed that he was carried along down close to the bank, from which he knew the Mississippi was on the rise. Keenly he scrutinized the caving bank-line, and so presently discovered a shanty-boat moored in an eddy, bow to the bank and a string of small boats dangling upstream in the reverse current.

"Tha's Mrs. Forbes' boats." He hesitated, treading over into the landing-waters. "If she's on'y up to Cumbyville or some'er's I got a chanct! Good thing she's gittin' old—hope she's deaf an' half blind! *Shu-u!* This'n's a good fish skiff. Where'd she git this Medart clinker built, now?"

He worked quietly around among the string of small boats, sizing them all up carefully. The tail-boat of the fleet was a scow. When he looked into it over the stern he saw that it could be made into a fine one-way tripping craft. The trouble was it lacked shelter, and in the night wind he would be cold. He might as well be shot, as freeze and cramp and drown. With hopeful eyes he studied the stern of the shanty-boat.

"Dog-gone!" he muttered. "If she aint left her washin' out in the dew! If them aint a pair of jean pants an' a hickory shirt— *Shu!*"

Softly he unhooked the little scow and pulling with slow even hauls, worked to the stern-deck of the shanty-boat. With a hand on the bumper he slowly increased his weight till he was under the closely hung washing. Almost wholly stripped of those fragile garments which insured his get-away if strong men should get a cloth-hold, he had to have something to wear. Here was a large assortment.

"I wonder who she married this time?" Red Rufus thought to himself, as he deftly stripped the trotlines of their varied raiment. "It must be some little feller 'bout my size. Them pants'll fit good, sure's I'm borned! If I thought she wa'n't to home, or him, I'd take the whole business. But I'd hate to be within a mile if she woke up and found she'd been stoled! *Shu-u!* He's well fixed—he's got two pairs of pants in the wash at once! That's funny—prob'ly got a pair inside to boot, less'n he's sick-abed. My land! Three pairs of pants to once! All wool, too. He must be an awful dude. Mrs. Forbes always was particular who she married. I better be goin'— *Shu-u!* Hyar's a tarp—water-proofed!"

Red made a clean sweep, excusing himself for stealing a lady's things on the ground of convenience; besides, he might meet a lady in distress to whom he could be liberal as well as friendly. Such things do happen, if a man is lucky. Easing himself into the scow, he gently pushed clear. The eddy current carried him into the main Mississippi, where he paddled forth with a piece of plank. Down the bend he put on three shirts and two pairs of jeans. Wrapped in the twelve-ounce tarp—a Government wagon canvas, sure as he was born—he now was happy again.

"Wait'll tomorrow night!" he told himself. "I'll have a rag-shack on this jon-boat that'll be plumb scrumptious and comfy—yes, indeed!"

AT dawn he opened his eyes, where he huddled on the stern thwart. Surveying his capture by daylight, he noted that he had about two bushels of assorted raiment, mostly in first-class condition and clean. The wagon-cover was a prize beyond estimate, for it was heavy and water-proofed brown—tight and fine for a rag-shack on his boat. Only when he came to look over the scow minutely, making sure it was sound, did he make a discovery as startling as it was cheering.

"Why, dog-gone!" he gasped. "This'n's that same blasted scow I started tripping in! Theh's where the canvas was tacked that the cyclone tore off above Mendova! This flat-boat pulls nice—handles easy! A man can paddle or row it. I aint no worse off; an' I got two pairs of pants, plenty of shirts and all I need's something to eat. Let's see, where am I? Looks like Ozark bend—that means Arkansaw City's round the next turn. No betteh town from Cairo Jump-off to N'Orleans! Good ol' Mississipp'—for heah I am, hongry, an' theh's Arkansaw City! My land! Somethin' always happens down old Mississipp'—good big creek! Of all the places I mout of been, hyar I be. Aint that lucky?"

THE END

"My land! Something always happens down ol' Mississip'—good big creek! Of all the places I mout o' been, hyar I be. Aint I lucky?"

The Croaker

Illustrated by Vladimir Chenkoff

By PAUL DERESCO AUGSBURG

The Croaker wanted to show the world he was hard, and to prove it he defied the Big One with his four gangsters.

THE Croaker walked with a swagger. His bearing, the way he carried his shoulders, the twist of his mouth, the arrogant look in his eyes all cried out, loud as if he'd shouted: "One side, youse birds! I'm tough as they make 'em, and no wise guy will tangle wit' *me!*" He went in a straight line down the walk and swerved from his course for no one.

The Croaker was proud of his name. He liked the lethal sound of it. Death is something that all respect, and one who deals it must be considered a man of real importance. Though his sobriquet was conferred in a moment of levity, he had encouraged all and sundry not to forget what to call him.

"I'm the Croaker," he'd proclaim out of the corner of his mouth. "K-r-o-k-e-r, Croaker. And I'm ready to prove I'm it, any time you want to argue."

It was not an empty boast. Already the Croaker had killed his man, as those who moved in his circle were well aware. Later he bumped off Mossy Trigo, which greatly enhanced his reputation, for Mossy was a bad one. It seemed only reasonable, after this second demonstration of his prowess, that Jug Mazzolas should call on the Croaker when he wanted Loftus put on the spot. The Croaker performed the job well, with a neatness, a precision, a deft dispatch which did credit to one of his name.

And now he was out to kill again, at the order of Jug Mazzolas.

He approached the assignment with inward disdain. After one has stalked such game as Mossy Trigo and Berny Loftus, a humble delicatessen-keeper, even such a defiant one as this Dutchman, was something of a let-down.

Not that the fellow didn't need killing. Anyone as stubborn as Herman Schlueter, as guilty, you might say, of *lèse majesté,* deserved nothing less than sudden death. The point is that it was a task for some ordinary gunman not capable of the Croaker's fine virtuosity. The Croaker felt rather piqued. He had half a mind to walk in the shop, blaze away at the Dutchman's head, and beat it—just like that. Casting one's pearls in the path of swine was not the Croaker's notion of a fit and proper proceeding.

But Jug Mazzolas stood able to give him plenty of future business. A big man, Mazzolas—his power extended far and wide over the city's underworld. He had done some killing himself in his day. Now he preferred to let others do it—a display of softness the Croaker despised. The newspapers called him Jug the Immune. He owned police captains and commanded enough votes to make him a power at the polls. His annual bribe-bill ran to six figures; his income ran to seven. He controlled at least a dozen rackets, and the least of these, a mere by-product of the organization, was the Delicatessen-keepers' Mutual Development Association.

The association had been gobbled by Jug Mazzolas much as smaller enterprises, in the world of legitimate operations, are gobbled by big business. When the racketeer who had organized it incurred the Big One's displeasure, he "foreclosed" on the association. Then, being an executive who likes to see things grow, he took steps to increase the scope of his new possession.

As already constituted, the Delicatessen-keepers' Mutual Development Association was a sort of liability insurance company. If you accepted the invitation to join, paying the far-from-nominal monthly dues, you boosted your prices to meet this extortion, and went on much as before. If you declined, you were liable to get most anything, including bombs and arson.

Herman Schlueter's reward was bombs. Scarcely had the splintered glass, the minced sausages and splattered sardines been removed from the sidewalk and near-by walls, when an agent of Jug Mazzolas appeared and again

asked Herman to join. Angry tears filled the Dutchman's eyes as he drove Mazzolas off with a cleaver.

The second time that the bombers came, Herman Schlueter was waiting for them. He and his family lived above the shop, and the parlor window was open. A machine slid past—the bomb was hurled; but before it exploded the Dutchman had fired. Just once his shotgun spat at the car, but two of Mazzolas' men were hurt.

For this insolence, this unheard-of effrontery, Herman Schlueter must die. It was part of the unwritten by-laws of the Delicatessen-keepers' Mutual Development Association. The dignity and prestige of Mazzolas would suffer by Schlueter's staying alive.

Reaching Sangamon Street, the Croaker paused to indulge himself in sentiment. Beyond the corner, plainly visible, stood the house where he was born. There was the dingy entrance, worn by the feet of countless families of laborers coming in from work, of kids whose playground was the street, of women born to ceaseless toil. Up on the roof, emblems of their servitude, were washings hanging out to dry, row after row of flapping flannels.

The second time the bombers came, the Dutchman was waiting for them.

A figure appeared in the Croaker's mind—an ample figure bending over a washtub. Hair straggled down on steam-damp cheeks; the woman's eyes were grim, and her mouth was drawn with pain.

Then the picture changed. A gang of kids was fighting in that alley over yonder. At the bottom of the heap, a struggling mite, lay the boy who was to be the Croaker. A fist kept pounding on his face and another jabbed at his midriff. Hate and rage consumed his heart, but he could do nothing to ease them.

Then she came, a charging fury, scattering the youthful hoodlums. One hand closed down on Lew Lane's neck, and her voice was an angry rasp as she cried:

"We'll just settle this now. He aint your size, but you'll fight him alone—or I'll brain you!"

A grin broke over the Croaker's face. The old lady was *there,* no mistake about it! She had died when he was ten years old, but she left with the Croaker a memory which came as near to tenderness as he would ever know.

The swagger was even more pronounced as he left the street of his boyhood. He had never been large—like Lew Lane, for instance—but how they respected him now! There was not a man who had been a kid here that would not stand aside today, addressing him with deference, or prudently sneak away. Such was the Croaker's reputation in the precinct which gave him birth.

He gloated in the thought of it, proud of the dread his name inspired. The Croaker bowed to no one, not even to Jug Mazzolas, with his bodyguard and his steel-lined car. The Croaker sniffed. Jug Mazzolas was not so much, if you only stopped to consider. A big business-man, afraid to die, like all the rest of them. Jug Mazzolas, if the truth were known, was somewhat over-rated.

A glazier's truck, with buffered racks for carrying glass, was parked in front of Schlueter's delicatessen. Two men had just finished installing panes for those the bomb had shattered. The Croaker watched, a grin on his face, as they gathered their tools from the sidewalk.

"You guys ought to split wit' the mob that planted the pineapples," he told them.

He laughed at the look on the older man's face. For the Croaker knew that Jug Mazzolas was an uninvited silent partner in this business which thrived on bombings. He had the Midas touch, that bird; just show him a chance for easy coin and he muscled in like a ferret!

A figure appeared at the door of the shop. The grin left the Croaker's mouth and his eyes were opened in sudden interest. This girl had looks, and the grace of her pose as she idled there, with a hand on one hip, was distinctly fascinating.

Now her eyes were upon him—insolent eyes which regarded him lightly and, turning away, as casually seemed to reject him. The Croaker's breath came a little faster. He thrust his cap back over an ear and sauntered towards the entrance.

"Swell-looking new window you got here, sister."

"Yes," she agreed indifferently—and ignored his further notice.

"You and the window, both swell-looking!"

She dismissed his existence with a little shrug and turned into the shop. The Croaker felt nettled; such complete indifference was hard for him to take.

Nor did he have to take it—not so formidable a guy as the Croaker! Adjusting his cap at another angle, he shouldered his way through the door and glowered about him.

"Not so fast, sister! I want to see you."

It was just as if she hadn't heard him. Behind the counter and into a back room, walking neither fast nor slowly, her very gait a sort of insult, she passed from his sight without a word, and left the Croaker raging.

"Who in hell do you think you are?"

"What's that?" a deep voice promptly answered, and in from the back room stalked a man whose mustaches bristled upward.

The Croaker faced him with narrowed eyes. An easy mark to hit, this Dutchman, with his heavy chest and generous paunch bulged out against his apron. But that must come later, after dark, when the street was empty of passers-by and his chance for the get-away better. He was here now just to look around, to meet his victim face to face and arrange, as it were, to kill him.

"You would talk to my niece like that?" boomed Schlueter.

"I'll talk to her any way I like."

The Dutchman's face grew purple and he seemed to swell, as though he would burst like another bomb.

"*Ja?* You are one of those toughs from that swindler association, maybe? Then you get out of here—I won't have anybody here like you. Get out of here! *Heraus!*"

From the corner of his eye the Croaker saw the glazier's truck departing. Now Herman Schlueter had seized his shoulder and spun him around towards the door. That was a bit too much for the Croaker. Discretion left him. He pulled his gun and, whirling, pressed it against the Dutchman's paunch.

"That's the last little thing you'll ever do!"

His fingers twitched upon the trigger, and yet he hesi-

tated. He was looking for something that was not there: the flinch of fear in the other's eyes, the terror of death which had shown so wildly when Mossy Trigo faced this gun on the ultimate edge of destruction.

But Schlueter was made of sterner stuff. His father had lost an arm at Sedan. A hero, his father, very proud of his empty sleeve, very strict with his little son, very stern and martial. As a toddling infant Herman was taught to salute the picture of General Von Moltke in its place above the mantel. He had drilled with a stick; he knew the sharpness of discipline; he had learned that fear is worse than death, that honor surpasses even life.

"Shoot!" he cried, squaring his shoulders, his head thrown back, his mustaches bristling upward. Contempt of death was in his voice. Disdain of the Croaker filled it.

"Shoot!" he cried a second time; then his niece was screaming: "Coward!"

The Croaker shot her a glance of annoyance.

"Shut up, can't you?"

"Coward!"

"Shut up, I tell you!" the Croaker exclaimed. He felt strangely disturbed by this turn of affairs. The fearless Dutchman, that scornful girl. . . . . She was certainly one to look at. His finger touched the pistol trigger, but still he could not pull it. And what was that she'd called him then? Now her meaning burst upon him.

"Say, you! Where do you get that *'coward'?"*

She moved toward the Croaker with blazing eyes, and just in the way she advanced on him there was something fascinating. Head up, lips curling, her cheeks aflame. . . . It was hard for the Croaker, with his gun against Schlueter, to keep his eyes on his business.

"Frieda, go back!" the Dutchman ordered, just like his father, the militant sergeant who had lost an arm at Sedan.

She paid no attention, but gazed at the Croaker as if her glance were poison.

"Coward!" she repeated. "Coward! Coward! Look at you—coward! He hasn't a gun. Oh, if he did you'd never dare!"

"Say, listen." The Croaker's pride was hurt. "I've stood up to guys that packed rods wit' notches. Yeah, and knocked 'em over."

Her sniff seemed to say that she didn't believe him. It exasperated the Croaker.

"Say, you've heard of Berny Loftus. You know what he's doing—pushing daisies! And I'm the baby that gave him the job."

Without more ado she shoved him back and stood in front of her uncle. He protested sternly and bade her leave this scene of so much danger. The Croaker felt foolish. That fool girl had not only made a mess of his job, but caused him to look ridiculous.

There are circumstances when even a killer can't ply his task with honor. This little affair would have to wait. Resignedly he returned the gun to its armpit holster.

"If you knew who I was, you'd be careful."

Still standing between her uncle and him, she looked the Croaker up and down.

"One man against all you gangsters! We mind our own business, but you don't like that. You and your gang of dirty cowards! No, you don't like us to mind our business. As if we haven't a right to live. Go ahead and shoot me, why don't you? I haven't a gun. Oh, you're perfectly safe!"

In his heart the Croaker knew she was right. To bump off a hoodlum, another gunman, had elements of danger and glory. But to shoot this Dutchman, unarmed and helpless, was not worthy of one like the Croaker.

And wasn't that just what he'd told himself as he walked to the delicatessen? He thought with anger of Jug Mazzolas, who had wished this job upon him. Not a gunman in town was so grand as the Croaker—yet here stood this dame, a fool for looks, who thought of him, and not without cause, as just a cheap yellow gangster!

A customer came in to purchase butter and Frieda waited upon him. The Croaker watched her with sullen eyes, she moved with such a provocative grace and glanced his way with such contempt. Herman Schlueter stood glaring at him, but the Croaker did not care in the least. All he cared about was that here was a girl who thought him craven —thought *him*, the Croaker, who was not afraid of any man, the yellowest kind of coward!

He put an arm about her, but she threw it off and turned away.

The customer spoke about the window. Wasn't she afraid it would go like the others?

"Yes," said Frieda, "I suppose they'll come back." Her hostile eyes encountered the Croaker's, and her voice was shrill. "The whole gang of them this time. We'll all be murdered. That's the kind of people they are; they'd just as soon shoot you down as not." Again she scathed him with, "Cowards!"

Then the Croaker spoke, addressing Frieda, as she had him, through the customer:

"You bet they'll come back. Didn't the Dutchman wing two of their men? They'll come back strong, but they'll wish they didn't. *I'm* here to see to that!"

He thumped his chest and swaggered up till he was face-to-face with the customer.

"When I get through here, there aint going to be a safer place to buy your butter. *I'm* lining up wit' the Dutchman—get me? Just pass the word around that the Croaker is giving this joint his personal protection. K-r-o-k-e-r, Croaker. You've heard of me, all right. It's the Croaker against the whole damn' gang, and that makes it practically even!"

Later in the day a notice was pasted on the brand-new windowpane:

STRICTLY INDEPENDENT

This store is under the personal protection of ***The Kroker***. It don't belong to any fake delicatessen association and it won't get bombed any more. *The Kroker* will see to that. Any racket bums who don't believe this just come around and try. We got a nice stock of fresh sausages. Better take some home today.

Herman Schlueter, Owner.
The Kroker, General Manager.

"Sure, that's the way to spell my name. I guess I ought to know."

The Croaker stood back to gaze at their work. He took

the brush from Frieda's hand and added a pistol after his name. "Some of them bums don't know how to read. You got to say it wit' pitchers."

He gazed again and bethought himself of a death's-head. The Dutchman eagerly nodded.

"My father, Sergeant Eberhardt Schlueter, had that sign upon his haversack." He took the brush. "With the bones crossed—so! Those are for your name. Now, after mine, a shotgun just to remind them. Frieda, you are good with art. Could you draw me a little shotgun?"

The Croaker viewed their proclamation with chuckling satisfaction. He stood out in front, with an apron on, and watched the passers-by pause to read. They would look at him with awe and wonder, go on their way, then turn their heads for another glance at the Croaker.

A policeman, strolling up the street, stood and scratched his hairy neck as though the sign perplexed him.

"Stay wit' it, Flatfoot," said the Croaker, who had hated cops since boyhood. "The words aint big. You'll get the drift!"

"What's the idea?" the officer growled.

"Figure it out yourself. Get bright. If any you coppers was worth a damn, *I* wouldn't have to protect this joint!"

That made a perfect exit-line, and the Croaker, whose theatrical sense was keen, turned an insolent back on the cop. He grinned at Frieda, who was mixing salad.

"Did you spot the look on the face of that bull? They're afraid of me too, them babies."

"Oh, they are!"

"Yeah, sister, you bet they are. I got a reputation."

The Croaker watched the bits of potato tumbling about as she plied the spoon. The arm which stirred them was soft and round. He wanted just to reach and touch it, but instinct told him not to venture. There was something different about this Frieda. She didn't seem impressed by him, and sometimes—as when she said "Oh, they are!"—her voice had a hint of derision.

"That's the last little thing you'll ever do!"

It was just as if she did not believe him the formidable fellow he claimed to be. The Croaker fumed. He'd show her! In the hour of battle she'd see for herself if the Croaker were over-rated.

It was, he knew, just a question of time before things would start to happen. News of this proclamation would spread. Soon it would reach the proper ears and be relayed to Mazzolas. The Croaker swelled as he pictured the Big One's dismay. That would jar him off of his royal perch! With the Croaker against him, he'd have reason to fret. Well, it served him right, the fat-head!

At eight o'clock a machine dashed up and two young men alighted. One had a grip which he promptly opened. The other went in to get the Croaker.

"Want to shoot your picture standing out in front, right beside the sign," he told him. He was very respectful.

"Where'd you say you're from?" yawned the Croaker—as though not especially keen to have his picture taken!

"The *Gazette*. You know Jack Dalzell; he said you'd do it as a favor to him."

The Croaker gave an impression of bored condescension as he took his stand in front of the store. To lend an air of proper color he even consented to pose with his gun, which he used as a pointer to show his name upon the proclamation. A crowd had gathered. The flashlight boomed. A grin appeared on the Croaker's face.

"That's only the *first* shot!" he calmly remarked, and the electric thrill which this gave his listeners tickled the Croaker's ego.

"Only the first one, eh?" The reporter laughed encouragingly.

"I'll say it is—if they aint scared out! There aint many guys in this man's town who want to tangle wit' *me*."

Carelessly he replaced his gun, and a second time the flashlight flared. The Croaker was gladly aware of Frieda standing there beside her aunt, who reminded him some of his mother. Now maybe she'd start to change her mind.

"Get this, *Gazette:* I aint never yet got to fighting women, and believe me, I never will. When I seen that Jug Mazzolas was picking on these two innocent dames, I said to myself: 'Here's where me and you split. I'm taking sides wit' the weak and helpless.' And leave it to me, they'll get a break or my name aint the Croaker."

"That's the line!" the reporter applauded. "Chivalry still lives, eh, Croaker?"

In the morning he viewed his picture with pride. And there on Page One was the story: *"Gallant Gunman Defies His Gang to Defend Embattled Women."* His greedy eyes devoured the phrases: "—of Eddie Nolan, better known as the Croaker, or, as he himself likes to spell it, Kroker. . . . . Though they could find no evidence on which to convict him, police declare that he was the gangster who took Berny Loftus 'for a ride' . . . . . known as one of the toughest gunmen."

"*The* toughest," he said, with a grin for Frieda. He put an arm about her, but she threw

it off and turned away. He watched her filling the bowl of pickles. Her aloofness merely stirred his interest. Some girls had feared him, but never yet had one dared to be disdainful.

The Croaker fondly assured himself that he was crazy about her. Her very indifference enhanced her worth. Well, that would change in time, and then— The Croaker grinned as he clipped the papers. Just the woman for him, this Frieda.

One set of clippings he carefully folded and put away in his pocketbook. The other he pasted upon the window. Already his presence was drawing business. Customers came out of curiosity—a bit timidly, some, but braving their fears for the thrill of seeing the Croaker. They'd be boasting at home that he waited upon them! The Croaker was busy wrapping food, but he kept a wary eye on the door and his gun was snug in its holster.

"How do you sell these here pretzels, Herman?" "Say, this guy wants salami. Got it?" "Listen, big boy, we don't handle French bread. Take a loaf of rye. It's good for the gizzard." The customer meekly accepted his purchase and the Croaker rang up his dime.

THEN he froze where he stood, and his eyes narrowed. A dark young fellow, swarthy of skin, was watching him through the window. The Croaker nodded, to show he was wise, and the other leisurely entered the shop, his hands conspicuously hanging free, just to prove his intentions were peaceful.

"Well?" challenged the Croaker. "What's yours, Pico?"

The corners of Pico the Greek's tight mouth were raised with his brows and his shoulders. A shrug of amusement, as though to say: "You're a great little actor, Croaker." His eyes traveled down for a glance at the apron.

"Five cents worth of bologny!" he said in a way that the Croaker resented.

Then a certain glint came to Pico's eyes as they fixed themselves boldly on Frieda. The Croaker bristled. A sheik, this Greek, a good-looking guy who liked the women and knew his way among them.

"How'd you like a slug of lead? I'll let you have it for nothing."

The Greek's dark face went darker, but he prudently kept his temper.

"Don't get sore. I was only kidding."

"Never mind kidding *me*. What's on your mind?"

"Jug wants to see you."

"Yeah? He knows where to find me, don't he?"

"He wants to see you right away."

"He does, eh? Well, he aint a cripple."

Pico the Greek stared in amazement at the Croaker. No one dared talk of the Big One like that. It was a most unheard-of treason.

"You tell Mazzolas I'll be right here any time he feels like calling."

Several reporters were loafing in front of the shop, waiting for something to happen. Already a news-reel man had taken shots of the Croaker carving sausage, counting eggs into a bag, and even drawing his pistol. His hoodlum accent had been recorded to sound again in countless movie houses. He was giddy from so much sudden fame. The store could scarcely contain him.

"Who was that dark guy?" a reporter wondered. "I've seen him somewhere before."

"Pico the Greek."

"One of Jug's mob! Whew! What did he want with you, Croaker?"

The Croaker told him. The reporter was eager. He phoned his paper from the delicatessen, and the Croaker glowed as he listened.

The reporter's words were like the sweetest music: "Tommy, here's a hot one. I'm out at the well-known delicatessen, where they been specializing in pineapples. Eddie Nolan—you know, the Croaker—just sent a defi to Jug Mazzolas. Absolutely straight, Tommy! . . . . No, I don't know how they get that way. He's God's little gift to the undertakers. Well, here's the dope:

"One of Jug's mob, fellow known as Pico the Greek —*P* for Peter, *I* for Ida, *C* for cocoa, *O* for omelette— he came breezing in to tell the Croaker Mazzolas wanted to see him. The Croaker says, quote: Who does that big bum think he is—Napoleon Bonaparte? If he wants to see me, tell him to come around here. I'm not taking orders from no one."

"That's right. Them's just my words," the Croaker interjected.

He saw Frieda's eyes, very large, upon him.

"Tell your editor that when Jug Mazzolas started picking on innocent dames, he made an enemy he'll wish't he didn't. The Croaker's out to get him!"

Here he stood, just like the President or somebody, making statements to the press and having them rushed into vital print! The Croaker was drunk with his own importance. He seized a piece of wrapping paper and prepared a fresh sign for the window:

> THE KROKER SAYS THAT JUG MAZZOLAS DONT DARE SHOW HIS FACE HERE. IF HE AINT YELLOW LET HIM COME AROUND AND PROVE IT.
>
> THE KROKER

"Aren't you taking an awful chance?" said Frieda.

"Sure I am."

"But why take it?"

"Why not? You think I'm yellow?"

Her response surprised him. Instead of being confused or ashamed, she looked at him as if he were an amazing and rather repulsive freak. Then, wholly indifferent, she walked away.

The girl wasn't human, thought the Croaker. He saw the last reporter, having copied his challenge, turn and sprint towards the corner drug-store, where the public phone-booths were.

Another edition appeared on the streets. There he was in the glaring headlines. The whole city knew that a guy called the Croaker had openly challenged its foremost racketeer.

Now the question was, what would Mazzolas do? If he ignored this defiance against his rule, his prestige in gangland would suffer. Hoodlum psychology was never subtle. Such prominent publicity had practically forced him to face the Croaker in person. Failure to make this fearless gesture would mean that his days were numbered.

More reporters came. A crowd had gathered. The police discreetly stayed away, for this was a private affair of the Big One's—no business whatever of theirs.

Inside the store the Croaker clipped the papers or swaggered about. Herman Schlueter stood with folded arms, looking fierce, with his Prussian mustaches. His wife and Frieda had gone upstairs. No customers ventured to enter the shop. None was expected to enter.

NOW those outside were drawing back. A long gray car slid up to the curb—a heavy car, for beneath its polish were sides of tempered steel. Five men stepped out. They moved with a purpose. A sixth man stayed at the wheel.

"Herman, you get in the back room. The Croaker don't need any help in this."

"I'll stay here," said Schlueter.

"Get in the back room, I tell you!"

There was a note of authority in the Croaker's voice

which the son of Sergeant Eberhardt Schlueter could scarcely fail to heed. He left and the Croaker stood alone.

In that interval of waiting, his pistol ready, he thought of the huge metropolitan presses which soon would pour out a paper torrent to tell the world of his glory. He thought of his mother, a weary woman whose toil had been never-ending. He thought of Frieda, so strangely elusive, who had called him a coward, but now would know that no man was so brave as the Croaker.

Mazzolas himself tore the challenge down. Then the door bumped open and two of his guard went into the store before him. Now all five were spread in a bristling line. In the center stood Jug Mazzolas.

"All right, Eddie, say it," he growled.

"My name's the Croaker."

"Sure it is, Eddie! You got anything to say for yourself?"

"I've said it already. You've read the papers."

"Got anything more?"

"Aint that enough?"

"Yes," said Mazzolas darkly.

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want you to come out and get in my car."

"Want to take me for a ride, eh, Mazzolas?"

"I got some things I want to tell you."

"Tell them here."

"In the car, I told you!" the Big One snarled.

It was the Croaker's moment of moments. He saw the menacing jut of the guns, each right hand tense in its pocket. He saw the perspiration on Mazzolas' brow. Prosperity had made the Big One soft. The man who decreed the death of others, like a feudal lord whose word was law, himself was actually afraid to die. He wanted to live and enjoy his wealth. The rule of the gun had made him great, and now the gun was the only thing that Jug Mazzolas feared.

The Croaker knew an exultant thrill. An instant he stood there, tasting it, his moment of greatest glory. An instant, and then:

"Go to hell!" he jeered.

He knew what that meant, and his hand was ready. Five guns cracked out as though at command—his own and those of the hoodlum guard. But the Croaker's flashed just a fraction before, and Mazzolas' gun never spoke at all.

Smoke filled the store like a magic fog. There was a rush of feet, the roar of a motor. Four men dived into the long gray car and it shot away, an engine of flight, with an angry flare from its cutout.

A moment of silence held the throng, which stood in the street as though under a spell. Then bolder spirits advanced on the store. Already Herman Schlueter was there, moving about amid the smoke which was massing now near the ceiling.

Jug the Immune, most dreaded, most puissant of gangland's lords, was sprawled on the floor with a hole in his head. His immunity shattered, his subjects chiefless, his invisible empire already dissolving, he lay with his feet by a box of bread, his head by a cask of herring.

The Croaker had slumped across the counter. His gun was still clutched in his outstretched hand and the blood of his wounds stained the woodwork. He seemed to be grinning, as though he would say: "D'ye see what I did to that guy over there who tried to get hard wit' the Croaker?"

Frieda stared at him as if at a freak. In the grace of her pose, as she stood there looking, was something fascinating. No tears filled her eyes, for she was not sad, but only a curious wonder. Even in death the Croaker seemed insufferably egotistic.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Trevor gets dangerously involved with international scoundrels in his strategic moves in this "Game of a Royal Pawn."

Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould

THE police cannot tell at a glance which are the Trevor cars, when they see them, because there are too many and they are too varied in type. But if either of the three chauffeurs happens to be in a car, whether in uniform or not, half the bobbies in London will spot him anywhere. These chauffeurs are Afghans with short pointed black beards—relatives of Prince Abdool of Afridistan—with the almost unmistakable Afghan features.

One of them sat waiting in a Strand traffic-jam one morning, in a handsome landaulet. On one of the island refuges for pedestrians just ahead, several persons stood waiting to complete their crossing when the P. C. on point-duty beckoned them. One man in the front row was an extremely well-dressed gentleman who at a second glance would have been set down as an Oriental.

In the jam of vehicles on the lane passing nearest to the island refuge, stood a high-powered touring-car of recent model. In the glistening landaulet sat the Marquess of Lyonesse—alone, and by no means unobservant of what was going on around him.

The Oriental on the island refuge he recognized at first glance. The man alongside in the powerful touring-car Trevor also recognized—was observing him closely as the man muttered something rapidly through the telephone to his chauffeur, who in turn, leaned forward a little and studied the position of the Oriental on the island. The employer's face and the chauffeur's reaction struck the Marquess as possible preliminaries toward "accidental" murder, if it could be accomplished.

One of several qualities which have raised George Trevor, Marquess of Lyonesse, to his high position and wealth is his habit of instantaneous decision in emergencies. In one motion, he flung open the door of his car, slipped out upon the pavement, threaded his way among the other vehicles and reached the side of the Oriental gentleman just as the police whistle blew.

To attempt forcing him back among the other persons on the island would have been practically impossible in the few seconds he had. So he picked up the smaller man bodily and ran across to the opposite curb with him in front of the starting traffic. Trevor set him gently upon his feet, facing the island they had just left, so that both saw what happened in the split-second before the slower cars on their side blocked the view. The steering-wheel

"When he gets up—knock him flat!" The man did this—like an automaton, but quite effectively.

of the powerful touring-car had been tightly held to run the balloon tires up on the edge of the island-curb in such a way that any person's body projecting within three inches of it would be struck by the fender and inevitably hurled under the wheels.

Two men and a woman who had stood just behind the Oriental were grazed sufficiently to throw them out on the pavement beyond the island. The fleshy part of the thigh of one and the arm of another were mashed by the tires, though they miraculously escaped fatal injury.

As the P. C. on point had his back to the island at the moment, he knew nothing of the incident until the screams of the little crowd made him whirl about. By that time, the "hit-and-run" car was disappearing in the distance—too far away to obtain its number.

On the opposite curb, the inscrutable Oriental had lost no feature of the occurrence—studying the position where he had been standing, and thoroughly realizing that he would have been hurled squarely under the tires of that three-ton car had it not been for the amazingly quick action of his rescuer, whom he now recognized as a friend of some years' standing. He said:

"Will you accept thanks from one who was to have been with his ancestors at this moment, my Lord Marquess? My poor life is of no great value—the individual is negligible among the world's two billions—but I have use for it a few years longer."

"Er—happen to recognize the party in that car, Count?" Trevor asked.

"Oah, yes—I notice' him a moment before in the traffic-jam. The persistent Roupokoff, with whom we have gone into several matters at one time or another—but rarely in complete accord. He has not the sluggish brain, that one! I did not apprehend his using knife or pistol in so public place—witnesses all about. His use of car did not occur to me because it was too certain to kill or injure other person' as well. Will you honor me by lunching at St. James's Club where we both are members?"

"Wouldn't it be a bit more restful after this little experience if you come around to Park Lane and lunch with us? The Marchioness would have sent a note requesting a visit for as long as you cared to stay, had we known you were in town. Your Embassy appears to be very well served in keeping such matters from the press when it seems advisable. Come along!"

Count Otoyama gracefully accepted the invitation and found himself thoroughly at home in the well-known Park Lane mansion of the Trevors—with two other old friends in addition to the Marchioness. His narrow escape wasn't taken too seriously, for it was no more than what every one of them at the table had been through dozens of times and were quite likely to experience again. Otoyama smilingly admitted that the sort of attempt which had been made upon him would have been rather difficult to guard against.

"For, look you!" he said. "Had I recognized what was coming and tried to wriggle back through that closely packed crowd on the island, those behind me would have resisted in the fear of being pushed off upon the pavement. I must have been almost certainly struck by that mud-guard. An attack from three or four men at once I do not fear—I'm fairly competent to handle them—"

"Even if they commence shooting or knife-throwing from a distance of several paces, Count?"

"Oah, yes—even then, if there is sufficient light for to see my eyes. Three or four men, you know, almost never attack a single man in that way—they're too confident in number'. At close quarters, I should be a match for even five or six."

"Jiu-jitsu—presumably?"

"The higher jiu-jitsu—which is pure science, worked out mathematically on basis of thorough understandings in anatomy. You find in our Nipponese cities hundreds of physical-culture men who teach you for moderate sum principles and tricks of common jiu-jitsu such as soldier, actor, police-officer, know. In fact I recall that all four of you—the Marchioness included—has fairly good working knowledge of this. But the higher branch of the science would enable you to handle Nipponese police-officer as if he were a child—and it never is taught for money or any equivalent of money."

"How, then, does one acquire it, Count?"

"As a gift—perhaps most valuable one in hees possession—from man who is under heavy obligation to you and has no other way of discharging it—or is most close and particular friend."

"Would he include a couple of one's friends as well?"

"No—that is not done—there is oath against it. Knowledge is imparted, preferably, to wife, son, or daughter. Or to very close friend who will not transmit such knowledge for general use. But there is other way of answering your question, my Lord of St. Ives. Suppose that I—unquestionably owing my life to Lord Marquess, here—impart to him all that I know of the science. Doubtless each one of you four has been many times under equally heavy obligation to other three. It would be quite permissible under an oath for him to impart all he knows of science to one of you three; for that one to impart it to a third; and for the third to impart it to the fourth, who might then impart it under same condition' to your son—and son to daughter. You will all agree, I think, that more you widen the circle of those who have this knowledge, the less valuable it become'?"

"Hmph! That fact doesn't admit of argum'nt! Is there a limit to the science—a point at which you would say nobody can go further?"

"Practically—yes. Theoretic'—no. To illustrate—take my own case. Hatsu Tamuri of Osaka is consider' greatest master of scientific jiu-jitsu in world today. He weighs about twelve stone—hundred and sixty-eight of your English pounds. Yet he has handled our greatest wrestlers—men weighing over three hundred—and laid them out as if they were children. He taught me, with painstaking, everything he knew—until we were evenly matched. Then—I study surgical anatomy eighteen months—work out mathematical application of force until I discover something which make Tamuri absolutely helpless when I bend him over until he has to lie flat on floor or let snap his spine—"

"So that now you yourself are the greatest living master of the art, Count?"

"Who can say? Who knows what other somebody with genius for anatomy and mathematics may have study until he has some attack against which I have no defense?"

"And you really aren't joking when you say you're a match for three or four able-bodied men?"

"That is simple matter of demonstration, my friends." They were now smoking in the big Jacobean library. "I notice folded steamer-rug on divan over there. Very common method of attack by three or four men is to throw blanket over head of victim—twist him up in it so he cannot defend. Well—I stand over here with my back to you, fifteen paces away. You three come silently up behind me and throw steamer-rug over my head—trying to wind-up so I cannot move. —Ready? Very good!"

THE three crept up soundlessly, each holding a part of the rug's upper edge—and suddenly threw it over Otoyama's head. As it touched his hair, he instantly bent over double so that while the rug went entirely over his head and shoulders it wasn't below his hips at the back. As he bent over, his arms rigidly went out behind him and grasped the knees of two of them. There was a grunt of astonishment and pain as they twisted about to keep from falling—their legs being momentarily paralyzed. Trevor had gone right on with the business of muffling the Count in the rug, but in another second one of his legs was out of business. Then a slim brown hand felt along the rug for one after another of the hands still grasping it. The hands became helpless too—after which the Count shook off the enveloping rug and calmly smiled at them.

"Youah see, my friends," Otoyama explained, "when men attemp' to throw blanket over person's head they pay no attention to anything below his hips—idea being to stifle—to pinion arm and elbow. Rug or cloth usually does not fall below hips at the back—because if larger, too cumbersome to handle easily. So that, bending double, taking step backward right into then, there is nothing to interfere with his grasp of their knees. If, however, blanket is too far down for hands to grasp, there are still the heels. I will not strike, even with rubber heel, the one little nerve-spot on inner side of tibia, because you might be lame for a week or more. I even could break tibia with strong kick from certain direction upon weakest spot."

"Suppose the attacking group had been through this before—were watching out for your hands and heels?"

"In that case—to keep out of my reach—you would be holding blanket well in front of you, bending far forward, could not get it down very far over my arms and elbows. So I throw hands flat upon ground as if going to stand on them—old gymnasium trick—throw up my legs behind and plant frightful kicks in groin and belly. Possibly cause rupture."

"Suppose we attack with knives instead of blanket—close in on you from three sides?"

"If I try to illustrate effectively, you may be seriously hurt. There are several combination' depending upon relative position of attacking persons—even six inches enables me to put one out of business before next can strike. I can turn handspring—strike face with heels—or motion like French *savate,* striking head or armpit with toe. One grasp of my hand upon any attacking wrist and it is powerless, because I go straight for paralyzing nerve."

HERE Lammerford interposed an objection. "Suppose some one who shoots as Trevor does is fifteen or twenty feet away from you—and starts to pull a gun?"

"My Lord Marquess does not always pull the gun—sometimes the shot comes through lining of coat, from the hip. I have seen him shoot. Also—he ees fairly good hypnotist. It might be even thing between us. But we see what may be done. You have automatic, Marquess?"

"Well—we four are seldom without such things."

"Now it is understood that there is no *sure* defense, save a steel-mesh shirt, against an unexpected shot in the back from a sufficient distance. But if one is always on his guard he may usually avoid getting into a position where that sort of attack is possible. So we come to the victim who is aware that an approaching person means to shoot him, either after verbal abuse, as usually happens, or without a word. We'll say you approach from other end of room with intent to shoot. I have seen you—stand watching approach with horrible fascination. Ready?"

Trevor acted upon the assumption that nine out of every ten would approach a victim to within eight or ten feet so as to be sure of not missing—probably closer than that. But he scarcely had taken one step from the farther end of the room when something rather amazing happened. Otoyama's eyes seemed to expand until all of the white eyeball showed, making his face something like that of a strangled and grinning corpse.

Trevor, a fairly good hypnotist himself, could have held the Count's eyes in a fixed position if he'd thought of getting in the first concentrated glance and opened his own eyes as far as the lids would go. But Otoyama had beaten him to it—and held his eyes fixed until he began to see sparks and pinwheels. Starting with his mind fixed upon his shooting, he'd been caught off-guard.

After two seconds, he knew he might not hit the man if he fired. At four seconds, he couldn't even pull the trigger. Then, what seemed to be an octopus came rolling toward him along the floor and his elbow was kicked back until it pulled the pistol from his pocket and dropped it. The Count had simply turned rapid cartwheels over the floor to him as soon as he saw a safe moment had arrived. Even without the hypnotism, a good shot might have missed everything but a whirling arm or leg; the

action was almost incredibly rapid. It took the Marquess ten minutes to get his head clear. Then he said:

"As a hypnotist, Count, you lay over anything I've met up with! After this, I'll be damned careful whose eyes I'm lookin' into."

Otoyama smiled with appreciation. "It will be pleasure to instruct you in everything I know. Of course, as I think you will admit, not one person in a hundred thousand is a competent hypnotist or can defend himself against one who is. So that to all intents, the combination of hypnotism and jiu-jitsu is effective against a murderer with a gun. And one may always dodge a knife-thrower if keeping the eye open."

As the conversation drifted into politics, the Count innocently threw a bomb into Trevor's peace of mind. After general discussion, he said:

"There was rumor, yesterday, which should be of interest to you in a minor way—a rumor picked up by one of our diplomatic agents in the Balkans. The matchmaking desires of the Carmanian Dowager, Queen Claire, have been more or less approve' by many of the European Chancelleries. Prince Jon's marriage to a Germano-Greek wife was the most ill-considered move of several the queen has contemplated—but one daughter's marriage to the King of an Adriatic State more than offsets it. The *coup d' etat* when Jon unexpectedly returned from Paris and took over the throne from his minor son secretly pleased Queen Claire, until she saw him becoming a puppet of the Lariu group. At present, she is biding her time and concentrating upon a suitable match for her only remaining daughter, the Princess Mariana—"

"One corking nice girl. We're all of us pals of hers."

"Oah, yes? That I did not know—my gossip will be doubly interesting, then. It seems the girl permitted herself to drift into the beginnings of an affair with one of the younger German princes and he tried to clinch matter by publishing report of betrothal. Her Majesty flatly contradicted—took girl off for Egyptian tour where the German was taboo. Various Royal Princes have been mentioned as likely suitors, and now the puppet King Jon—doubtless at Lariu's suggestion—is recognizing his sister's value to him as a pawn. He has taken her out of Queen Claire's hands and is negotiating a match with Prince Karl of Ober-Schwartzberg—a widower of forty with reputation which is vacuum in everything reputation should be. Such match would strengthen Jon's position very much, diplomatically.

"The immediate result has been departure of Mariana from Carmanstadt between two days, accompanied only by her personal maid, for an indefinite visit somewhere in the country. King Jon's army officers are now touring country in cars to locate her.

"It was consider' by politicians great mistake when Queen Claire took Mariana with her on American tour a few years ago—they feared she might assimilate too-American ideas. It would appear that she did—under the tutelage of a certain handsome Leftenant in American Navy who was detail' as aide to Queen during trip—a Leftenant whose father is reported worth some fifty million American dollars. Putting fact more concisely, it is now rumor' that the Princess Mariana has vanish' into thin air—abduct' and held for ransom—or in any country on the globe."

"My word, Count! You got that from one of your own men in the Balkans? Presumably accurate information? D'ye know, I fancy we'd best check up on this! We'd all feel dev'lish badly if anything serious happened to Mariana. She's a game little sport—altogether too good a one to be thrown away upon some lecherous Royal Prince! —Wait a bit! I'll just get what is known down there under the surface!"

Picking up one of the telephones on the refectory table, he called his chief operator in the communications cellar, sixty feet below the gardens at the side of the mansion.

"Are you there, Frank? Good! Switch in our beam-station at Trevor Hall. Tell Bob Merton I want John Wakeman in the editorial office of *Resboiul* on the Elizabeta in Carmanstadt. Say I'll be annoyed if I don't get him in fifteen minutes at the outside. It's their private broadcastin' station, you know—not handlin' any commercial business."

In just nine minutes a buzzer sounded under the table.

"Er—are you there, John? Lyonesse speakin'. Aye!"

"Wakeman here, my Lord Marquess. What can I do for you?"

"Less of the high-hat, confound you, John! I say! Am I comin' in clear an' strong through your receivin'-set so that you could get Hindustani? Bit safer than Oxford, you know."

Wakeman spoke a few words of fairly fluent Hindustani into his microphone, and they were flashed through the air from the aërials on the top of his building fourteen hundred miles on twenty-seven hundred meters with fifty kilowatts of power coming through the Marquess' earphone loudly enough to be heard across the room. The talk continued in that language, which was unlikely to be understood if anyone picked it up or tuned to that wave. The channel was one of three assigned to the great press syndicate in which the Trevors were majority shareholders.

"What's this I hear about Mariana? You'll have the low-down on it, if anybody. Any idea where she is?"

"Paris or London, I'd say at a guess—with some preference for London, because she'll be safer there from anyone save the Russian or Berlin lot who'd have an object in kidnapin' her if she's spotted. With her as hostage, the Soviets could force a lifting of the restriction against Ukrainian immigration—or—kill her. One of our chaps stuck along behind in another car until she was safely across the Danube and headin' over toward Belgrade—which was a bluff, of course, as we well know.

"She'll not go near her sister an' brother-

A man and woman who had been standing just behind the Oriental, were thrown upon the pavement.

in-law—too much pressure in the way of sendin' her home again, tellin' her to be a good little girl an' accept whatever Brother Jon picks for her. But of course every European Chancellery will be combin' the cities for her —King Jon will see to that!"

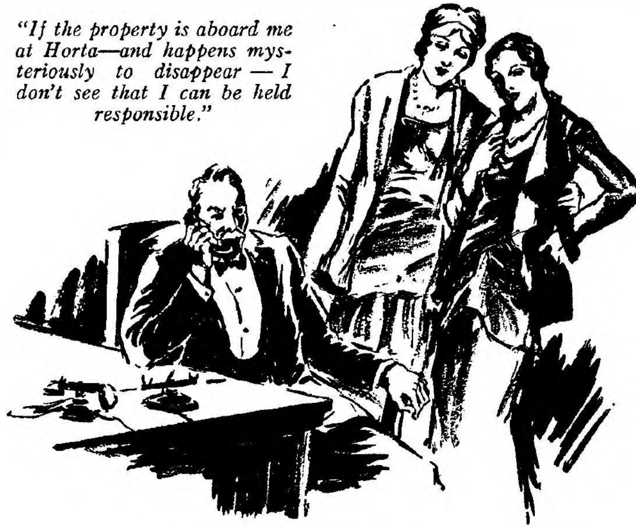
"You really fancy she may be here, do you, old chap?"

"Well, it's this way: Countess Jane of Rondymount begged to let her come along—get the kid safely into England—into her own good Norman castle in Wessex. But the girl pointed out that, even as her guest, she wouldn't be safe from any demand her brother made on the British Governm'nt for her. She'd be definitely located. Said if she reached England an' Jane came home pretty soon, she'd manage to keep in touch with her. So as the Countess knew her maid was absolutely faithful an' dependable she let 'em go, promising to be home within a month. It was much better that she should stay behind."

"Had the girl any money?"

"Aye. They come of age at eighteen out here, an' she's a bit over the line. Nobody can touch the money left her in bank by her father, unless King Jon gets high-handed an' commandeers it. But she gave Sir Henry drafts of three months on it for two thousand pounds, at the Legation—an' the British Legation can collect that money even from Jon. Sir Henry gave her bills in exchange on London for the notes. I let her have two hundred pounds for current expenses, myself."

"If she communicates with you, John, tell her she can draw on me up to fifty thousand pounds an' no questions asked. . . . Very good, old chap, many thanks for the information. I'll keep you posted if I learn anything."



"If the property is aboard me at Horta—and happens mysteriously to disappear — I don't see that I can be held responsible."

Now, as a sidelight upon Oriental character of the better sort it should be mentioned that Count Otoyama had intended to remain in London not over a week, and actually concluded the business which brought him there in five days. But his sense of obligation to the Marquess was such that he remained over six weeks, until he was satisfied that his friend had learned all he could teach him.

"I have observe', my friend, that you and the Marchioness already have skill and force in hypnotism. Yet before you can get your subject under control, you must get him staring in a concentrated way at some objec' higher than the head. Sometime' you accomplish this very soon—sometimes it take' longer—and that is not reliable for emergency.

"There is one appearance of human face which attrac' and hold instant attention. When the eyelid have become trained to expand back into socket until entire 'white' of the eyeball apparently protrude', it produce' most startling, horrifying effect. The eye of beholder cannot leave the face with such apparently protruding eyes—it must remain looking in compelling fascination. This of course gives hypnotist best possible opportunity for paralyzing optic nerve of other party and getting him under control.

"Also I give you other point which make' control absolute—you do not need to speak instructions out loud—movement of lips is quite sufficient for first few minutes. Afterward—control is merely thought-transference. In a week, you will be most surprised at what practice will accomplish."

Upon the morning after Trevor's radio talk with John Wakeman, they were discussing at the breakfast-table the Princess Mariana's disappearance, and various ways of tracing her. Earl Lammerford, who formerly had been Dean of the King's Messengers, outlined a method which time after time had proved successful while he was in the diplomatic service.

"The person who rushes about in a bull-headed way looking for a missing individual, in this place or that, almost invariably misses out altogether. On the other hand, if one sits down quietly—tries to project himself into the missing person's brain and figure what his decisions might be under given conditions, he will sooner or later come amazingly close to the mark. We know that the girl and her maid got safely out of Carmania with money enough for at least a year of comfortable living, anywhere —and the ability to get more when needed. So there is no reason for their tryin' to secure employm'nt. They'd not chance a trip across the Western Ocean on one of the regular boats for some months at least.

"So we may say that the course still left open to Mariana is something like this: She an' her maid would first go to a small but respectable family hotel somewhere in the suburbs for a few days, until they located just what they wanted. I fancy they'd take a small service-flat in one of the desirable newer blocks out toward Shepards Bush. With the number of persons comin' an' goin' in such blocks of flats, there's far less chance of their bein' spotted than if they took a small house with no other occupants.

"Active girls like Mariana an' that confidential maid of hers—whom I fancy I recall as comin' from Dijon—won't be satisfied to stay in the flat all day. They'll hire a car an' take long drives through the shires—possibly run up to Scotland; they'd prob'ly go to some of the West End theaters—sit inconspicuously in the pit. Or some of the cinemas near their flat. They'll keep away from the big popular hotel-restaurants—but they'll try smaller first-class places in other parts of the town."

"Then, our most likely hunting-ground would appear to be such restaurants, theaters, cinemas. —Wait a bit! I'm just recalling something! The girl has a most unusual taste for physics an' mechanics—electricity, chemistry, wireless. She has even built a couple of entirely practical wireless-sets for herself.

"So wherever she settles down, we may gamble upon her havin' a good workable receivin'-set and doing a bit of listening at night.

"Another point: she likes to call me 'Uncle George' an' have me call her 'Peggy.' We might catch her with a broadcast from our Trevor Hall station—wherever she is, she'll not be outside the night-range of *that*. We'll start three or four of our Afghans, under Abdool's direction, lookin' through some of the likeliest neighborhoods—begin tonight sendin' out midnight broadcasts—look about the theaters an' restaurants whenever we've the time. I'll

drop a hint to Major Broadhurst an' Leftenant Snaith at the Foreign Office askin' 'em to let us know confidentially if they pick up anything. Sir James Baldwin will give us a tip if the Yard receives any search-order from the Governm'nt. We can hide her somewhere before either Departm'nt acts officially, if they tip us off—which I'll wager they do in plenty of time."

The search ran along without turning up a sign of the missing Princess for two months from the day she disappeared. Her reigning brother was by this time getting a bit vindictive over the complete upsetting of his political plans concerning her—plans in which she was to have been a royal pawn.

Another feature was now introduced of more serious menace to the girl herself. Roupokoff and his communist organization were taking enough interest in the matter to conduct an underground search of their own—having facilities in that line more likely to produce results than those of the various Governments. A pawn of that quality offered advantages in more ways than the money side. Finally—during the ninth week—a typewritten letter was delivered at the Park Lane mansion addressed to the Right Honorable, the Marquess of Lyonesse, which he read over a leisurely breakfast.

"Dear Uncle George:-

It's mighty sweet of you to take all this trouble for me. I wish I could have written you sooner, but one thing and another has prevented—mostly the 'other'. I know that any or all of my affairs are perfectly safe in your hands—it wasn't in the least necessary to assure me of that fact. As my immediate plans are a bit unsettled, I'd like to talk them over if you've the time. Do you remember the little French café where you took us to dine one night three years ago—where everything down to the floor and scrubbed planking was so spotlessly clean? Suppose we say about eight? A table in one of the little alcoves, if you can get it. Love to you and all the rest. PEGGY."

The Marquess' memory is not in the same class with Earl Lammerford's—it would be difficult to find such another one—but he recalled at once the small French café with its reputation for exceptional food where he and Countess Nan had taken Mariana and one of her girl friends, as a birthday celebration. It was on a side street in the Kensington neighborhood.

She had made no mention of the night she expected to meet him but he assumed that had been purposely done to mislead anyone who might get hold of the note and read it. The envelope had been stamped at a branch of the general post office in Chelsea the night before—presumably mailed there by the girl herself. And once in the care of the postal service, His Majesty's mails are very rarely tampered with. In the morning, the note had gone into the Trevor mail-pouch in his own local post office—delivered in that leather pouch at the Park Lane mansion. There was no evidence of tampering with the envelope. So that evening—after the others had read the note—the Marquess walked back through his grounds to Prince Abdool's house in the rear, on Park Street, where, with his coat-collar turned up and hat-brim turned down, he got into a waiting taxi. Glancing back from time to time on the chance that another car might be following, the taxi presently dropped him on a side street a block and a half from Kensington Gardens. When the cab had disappeared, a few steps took him along to the café with its basement entrance.

In the larger dining-room above, he selected an alcove table in a secluded corner. Five minutes later, two girls in leather motoring-coats and goggles—their felt hats tied fast with silk veils—came up the stairs. They glanced about at the half-dozen guests at other tables and, sauntering over to his alcove, removed the goggles, the Princess seating herself opposite to him with her back to the room.

"My word, Uncle George! I'm certainly glad to see you!"

"Good thing you remembered this place, Peggy—there's a rear passage to the other street if one has occasion to use it, but I fancy we should be safe enough here. One imagines you've had some diffic'lty in avoiding notice."

"Well—I know how a fox or an escaping convict feels! The Government agents are bad enough, though I fancy there's no English law that would permit them to take me out of the country by force—but that slimy soviet crowd would have terrified us if we'd happened to lose our nerve for a minute. In fact, I'll frankly admit that they're terrifying us now!

"You know we passed an exclusion act against Ukrainian immigration a couple of years ago—they were getting to be too much of a menace. They are still, because there's a constant seepage going on. When enough of them get settled in Carmania, there'll be revolution—wholesale murder of every aristocrat and capitalist—another soviet. So that—supposing by some great misfortune, they do get me and smuggle me out to Kiev or some other city—hold me as a hostage until the Exclusion Act is repealed, with the alternative of killing me, as they consider the right thing to do in any circumstances—being what I am. Our Parliament won't repeal that Act.

"Then the brutes say they'll let me live if Mother joins me as another hostage—and bide their time. If they do get us both, Ekaterinburg will simply repeat itself—and Ekaterinburg was the most beastly, utterly inexcusable lot of cold-blooded murders ever committed in modern times!" The girl was on wires with nervous strain.

"My word, Peggy! We must get you to a cleaner, happier country where such things are quite impossible! You're coming home with me tonight."

"It won't do, Uncle George! We'd be seen going in and out of your house—spotted inside of forty-eight hours! I haven't a doubt that Park Lane has been watched for the last two months."

"Aye, that's all true enough, but I'll personally guarantee that nobody sees either of you coming or going. They may see two young women—just as they do every-day—lots of 'em visit us from time to time—but they'll not see *you*. Presently, we'll go down to Trevor Hall—where nobody gets inside a four-mile wall, eighteen feet high, guarded by high-tension current—unless we know all about 'em."

"But suppose it leaks out that I'm with you, and Jon demands that His Majesty sends me home?"

"The King won't do that—just because of the relationship, if for no other reason. Just what idea have you got in your head, Peggy? Outside of escaping from Prince Karl, what is it that you really want to do? Marry that other young Prince who said he was engaged to you?"

"My word—no! I never was engaged to him! I've seen something a whole lot better than that!"

TREVOR smiled. "Something with two gold stripes on a navy-blue-sleeve—anchor an' two bars on the collar, perhaps?"

"Well, *y-e-s*,"—shyly. "Something like that. It would be at least clean—and decent!"

"Hmph! Has it any brothers—or sisters?"

"Two sisters—lovely ones."

"Making three to divide whatever Dad leaves—eh?"

"Don't let *that* worry you! I fancy that particular 'dad' could buy our whole tuppenny State—and then have enough to buy a railway or two!"

"Hmph! You've swallowed a germ, Peggy. An' acquired a bit of the 'American touch' as well—judging by some of your quite remarkable language. Now see here,

young woman! What do you fancy this 'two-striper' is likely to be considerin' in your direction?"

"Well—of course men are deceptive creatures—I s'pose one really never can tell. You see his proposition was that the parental yacht should anchor off Saloniki while he came across the mountains in an amphibian to Carmanstadt, if there was any show at all for his getting into the air again with me after he landed. At that time, my own father was still living and I didn't see a beggar's chance of pulling it off. But I've managed to keep up a correspondence with the help of Julie's brother—navy *sous-officer*, himself—more or less in code. Really, you know—I fancy that particular 'two-striper' would fall for me yet if he got half a decent break!"

"Peggy! Peggy! Do you really want him, girl? Want him bad?"

"Sure do!"

"And your unassailable royal position doesn't mean anything to you—your chances of succeeding to some throne yourself—in time?"

"Not a thing, Uncle George! The institution of royalty as a governing force became obsolete with the War."

SLOWLY a grin spread over Trevor's face. "Then damned if I don't get the 'two-striper' for you, Peggy!"

"My word! You—you really mean it, Uncle George? Well—here's where your side gets credited with unlimited kisses. Oh! I say! This isn't so good, you know! Don't let 'em notice, but glance at those two men just coming in!"

"Might be a couple from Roupokoff's organization, I suppose? Quite out of place in this café of Gaspard's. Well enough dressed—in a crowd—but not the fingernails or facial drapery to match. Ever see 'em before?"

"Several times. They didn't see enough of my face to recognize it as they came in—really weren't looking this way—and can't have followed us. We came here in a very good hired car with a chauffeur—wore goggles all the way. But they must have been searching every neighborhood where they imagined we might be—a large number of eating-places like this, where we'd be apt to go."

"Then, with the goggles on, they'll not recognize you as we go out—or me, either. I can easily make a few slight changes. Achmet and Lammy are in a car we seldom use in town, on the other street at the end of that passage. We'll go out that way, letting Gaspard send your own car back to the garage with the chauffeur and the money for it. But just on a blind chance that these two might get suspicious an' follow us out, I'll give 'em something else to think about when we're all set to start. Ready?"

One of the men had been glancing occasionally across the room at what he could see of the man and two women in the corner alcove. The next time he did this, Trevor was looking around the edge of the partition at him, with glaring white eyeballs apparently protruding with no particle of an eyelid in sight. The effect was so uncanny that the man could neither speak nor even nudge his companion to look. He was fascinated as a bird is by the eyes of a snake. His own eyes became strained in a fixed position, until the optic nerves were numb. When the lips of that grotesque, staring face began to move in slow enunciation, the man understood each word as if he had heard.

"Stand up!" He slowly got upon his feet .

"Stumble against your companion! Knock him out of his chair upon the floor!" He did this—like an automaton, but quite effectively.

"When he gets up—knock him flat! If he fights—smash him! In ten minutes, wake up and ask what it was all about!"

By this time the whole room was in confusion, during which the Marquess and the girls slipped quietly down the stairs and back through the passage to the next street. They got into the waiting car and greeted Earl Lammerford—but Achmet made no move toward starting up.

"There's a big goods-van drawn squarely across the street at one end, and a large-sized car down the block—two or three men around each," Lammerford explained. "Fancied at first that they'd followed me. Slipped through the passage an' café basement for a look-see. No use! They're waiting for us on the other street as well. We can shoot an' fight our way past that van—but the girls will be hit. Roupokoff expects to get us all alive, of course—but in a general shooting-mess he'll return our fire—always supposing these are his lot."

Trevor deliberately took one of his long brown cigars from his case and lighted it.

"I fancy we may bank upon one primary fact. They've no intention of killing or even seriously injuring any one of us because, alive, we're worth a lot to 'em in money or its political equivalent—while as 'deaders' we'd simply put a rope around their necks with no offsetting advantage. They know we'll pay as much for Achmet as for any of us—so he isn't negligible as an employee only. No matter where they confine us, we can all get out of it with nothing but our wits and our bare hands. We'll get some pretty useful information concerning the gang an' at least one of their holing-up places. Looks to me as if we just sit tight an' let Nature take its course. Eh, girls?"

Both girls were trembling over what they considered a frightful position. But the Marquess' smiling calmness was contagious and they had unlimited confidence in his resourcefulness.

For an hour, nothing happened—while the five of them sat in the car smoking and chatting unconcernedly. The scoundrels who were watching them couldn't understand this at all—suspected some clever trick.

Finally six or eight dark figures closed in and opened the car door.

"Move over! Make room for one of us! Iskievitch, get on the front seat and hold a gun against the chauffeur! If you people keep quiet, you won't get hurt. Try to start anything and you pass out—that's all! There's another car packed full of men right behind this one! What's the idea, anyhow—sittin' here gabbin' as if you were in a night-club instead of startin' for home an hour ago?"

"Didn't seem worth the trouble, Mr. Jones—with you all set at both ends of the block the way you are! Case of wasted effort—what?" replied Trevor coolly.

A CURSING snarl came from the brute who had entered the car with them and was holding an automatic trained upon them.

"Damned aristocrat! Pig of a capitalist! If we had you in our country we'd slit your damned throats in a cellar, women an' all—leave you there to rot! But in this puddle of pigs and idiots you're worth more to us alive!"

"My word, Jones, how you do go on! Such language! Before ladies, too! Fortunately they can distinguish between filthy swine and human beings. Some can't, you know."

In the pitch darkness, as the suburbs opened out, it didn't occur to their captors that they could retain any clear impression of which way they were being taken—considering that Abdool was instructed to make three or four quite unnecessary detours. But he grinned in his black beard, as did his friend and employer behind him. When they finally turned down a narrow lane and came

to an unoccupied old mansion at the edge of beech-woods, the Marquess knew better what lay at the other side of them than their captors did. . . . .

The reputation of the two peers as fine swordsmen and trained athletes evidently suggested leaving no chance for activity upon their part. They were confined in separate, though adjoining, rooms on the upper floor, with Achmet in the next one—left with their ankles tied to the legs of their chairs and their wrists fastened behind the backs. The two girls were locked in a larger room with a double bed and a window with its blinds screwed fast. Tea and sandwiches were fetched up before they were locked in for the night—the men's hands being released while they were eating. They heard the other car starting back to town with most of the gang—a guard of four armed brutes being considered sufficient to defeat any attempt at escape.

In the morning, two of the guards fetched bacon, eggs and coffee into the Marquess' room and sat down to watch him while he ate. Although his bonds had been loose enough to permit some movement of his limbs, he was rather stiff from the cramped position all night—had to rub his arms a bit before he could eat, while his jailers grinningly watched him. They were powerfully built scoundrels of the *moujik* class—but had been in London long enough to speak English fairly well.

Their prisoner's ankles were tied fast to his chair—his hands had been tied all night—his automatic had been taken from him. Any suggestion as to his being more than a match for them would have been taken as a joke.

Trevor ate slowly in order to get all the stiffness out of his arms and body before he attempted to start anything. He figured out every possible combination of actions from the two men which was likely to occur when he did—the positions near him in which they would be standing and the portions of their bodies which he could reach within the first few seconds.

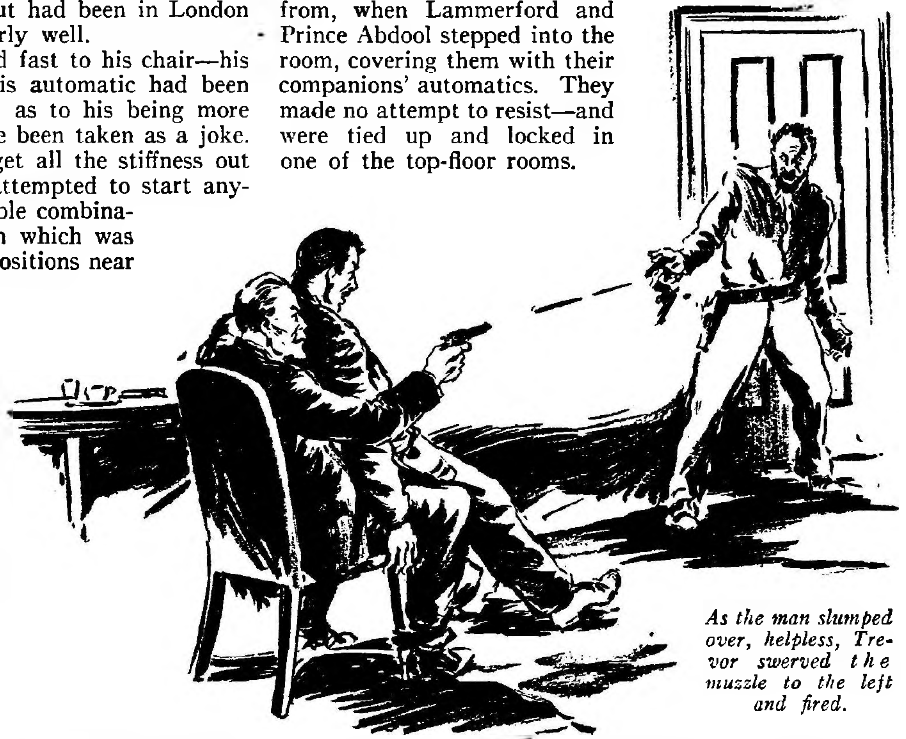
Finally, when he had finished, they came to him with the straps to fasten his wrists. His left hand reached forward with a motion so deliberate that they thought he was merely flexing his muscles and grasped the butt of the automatic in the holster of the man at his right. In silent amazement, the fellow's big paw dropped upon the Marquess' hand when he had actually drawn the pistol out. He gripped hard, an expression of ferocity coming into his piggish eyes. "So!" he cried. You vould, vould you!"

This exclamation caused his companion to look around —curse—and start to draw his own pistol. They had been instructed to kill promptly any of the prisoners who made the slightest resistance—and evidently relished the opportunity. Trevor perhaps hadn't more than one full second in which to do what he did—but he had calculated that second in advance. If he failed, he'd pass out—that he knew.

Before the second man's gun was fairly out of its holster the Marquess' right hand shot up around his jailer's bull neck, pressing upon two vital nerve-centers with his fingers so that the brute's entire body was paralyzed. Then he pulled him forcibly across his own body in the chair—making a living shield against the other fellow's fire, for he couldn't shoot the prisoner without going through his companion's body. As the first man slumped over as helpless as a bag of meal, his hand relaxed its grip upon the pistol. Trevor's hand instantly swerved the muzzle to the left and pulled the trigger, shooting the other gun completely out of the second fellow's smashed fingers. Another shot went through his left forearm, crumpling him down upon the floor, groaning with pain—completely helpless. Rolling the paralyzed man off his chest and knees upon the floor, the Marquess unstrapped his ankles from the chair and walked about the room until the stiffness was out of them; then, binding up the wounded man's arm and fingers with strips torn from his shirt, he temporarily paralyzed him.

He laid the two of them in opposite corners of the room —took their keys and guns—securely fastened the door with bolts which had been screwed upon the outside—and then released his friends, and they stole noiselessly down the stairs.

As the prisoners had supposed, the four guards had been standing "watch-and-watch"—two sleeping while the others were on duty—and the ones "off-watch" had been wakened by the sound of the shots. They were sitting on the edges of the camp-beds where they had slept, not yet certain where the shots had come from, when Lammerford and Prince Abdool stepped into the room, covering them with their companions' automatics. They made no attempt to resist—and were tied up and locked in one of the top-floor rooms.



As the man slumped over, helpless, Trevor swerved the muzzle to the left and fired.

Their former prisoners were walking out through the grounds in the rear of the house, when three more of the scoundrels appeared from a garage where they had been inspecting the Marquess' car and ran toward them with ugly-looking knives which seemed to be the only weapons they had.

Trevor, however, caught his fellow's descending arm as it struck—found a nerve-center in the wrist and paralyzed it—swung the arm up and over until the largest bone snapped. Lammerford narrowly escaped a dangerous stab but floored his man with a terrific blow upon the chin. Prince Abdool suddenly bent down with his palms flat upon the ground—swung his leg in a wide arc until the toe struck his man in the pit of the stomach. They could have used their pistols, but feared that others of the gang might be within hearing distance.

Then they got into their car and drove cheerfully home to Park Lane by a roundabout way. The Marquess presently remarked:

"Seems to me it might be a rawther pious idea to drink Otoyama's very good health after dinner—what? It wasn't such a bad score, y'know!"

Trevor spent the morning telephoning across the Atlantic certain inquiries concerning a railway and mining colossus—his present whereabouts—his probable engagements for that evening—finally making an appointment with his secretary for a telephone conversation at two in the morning, Greenwich time—nine o'clock in New York.

Without telling Mariana what he was up to, he had her come down to the big library at two o'clock with the Marchioness, after everyone else had gone to bed. Promptly on the minute of nine P. M. over there, his powerful Chincoteague station in Maryland called the information that he was through to the private study of James B. Landford's country-house on Long Island—with Landford at the phone.

"Marquess of Lyonesse at this end, Mr. Landford—'George Trevor,' without the trimmings. Name at all familiar to you?"

There was a rich bass chuckle at the other end.

"Come now, Trevor—we're not really quite so uneducated as you Britishers think! Read the papers enough to keep track of the more notorious characters in the daily news. I come in touch with your interests on this side quite frequently. What's up? Want to buy a railroad, or anything?"

"My word, no! Just an odd boy of yours—that's all."

"Meaning Dicky? Good Lord! What's he been doing now? I don't get it! What d'ye want to do with him? As it happens, he and I were playing a game of chess when you came through."

"Fine! Ask him to sit tight a few moments—may have something int'r'stin' for him. Now let's get down to cases. Seems he filled up one of the visitin' royalties a few years ago with a line of hot air which he couldn't possibly imagine might have been catchin'. Suppose you give me the low down on him—will you? Think he's really int'rested in that Carmanian property—or was it just a sort of practice-game?"

"Great cats, Trevor! You're talking pretty close to the wind, aint you? One of my confidential agents over there phoned me some inside dope that the property either has mysteriously disappeared or been stolen. Dick's almost crazy! He got a month's leave and we're fixing for him to start across tomorrow in my yacht. I'm afraid he may start international complications before he knows it!"

"What do *you* think of the property, Landford?"

"I'll pay any reasonable number of millions to have it in the family. The girl's a dead game little sport!"

"Hmph! Then I fancy all of the immediate int'rested parties are satisfied—what? I can make delivery at Horta in Fayal—say, a week from tomorrow. Wouldn't do here in British waters, you know—too many complications! I'm likely to lose some hair as it is. An' our side really shouldn't go all the way across—we think you're getting something rawther precious, d'ye see. But if the property is aboard me at Horta—an' mysteriously disappears—happens to be picked up by some strange yacht lyin' in the Roads— Well, I don't see how I can be held responsible. What?"

"You hard-boiled old sinner! It's a deal! Thursday the fifteenth, at Horta! My boat'll do a steady thirty—average seas. Yours is a bit faster, I understand. Here, Dicky! Come and talk to your girl!"

And the Marquess smilingly handed the phone to a flushed and starry-eyed Mariana.

REAL Unforeseen Rewards

By **W. A. Clouser**

Gold-seekers in the back-country of Australia encounter the strange men and still stranger women of the bush.

BILL DOLING, it was—a former war-buddy of mine—who caused me to join a party of gold-seekers in Australia's back-country—that gloomy interior which no white man had ever penetrated. A lithe Tasmanian named Hoskins was our leader. The rest of the party was composed of Fisher, a deaf-mute, with Smith and "Pop" Harris, two carefree adventurers who knew nothing of the country but were experienced fighters.

We shoved off from Kalgoorlie. Ten days later, civilization was centuries behind. Life in the red raw of the Stone Age was about us. Animal-like blacks searched the plains for ant-hills and snakes. Gold beckoned from the unknown beyond.

The December sun was maddening. Horse and rider became sore and sullen from contact. We swung past immense lakes of salt and entered a lifeless forest. Neither bark nor leaves hid the gaunt, bleached trunks and swaying branches. We stopped to rest our mounts and check up on the dwindling supply of water.

Across the rocky waste we sighted other seekers. Some walked, carrying their swag and billy-cans on their backs. A few pushed their belongings in wheelbarrows. Others rode horses, camels, bicycles. Granddad and grandson were rushing to the new Eldorados, chasing the will-o'-the-wisp in a determined manner.

We broke camp and turned south in the cool of morning darkness in search of water. That evening we hit a grassy valley where a small stream ran sluggishly.

"There's yer bushman, Yank!" Bill indicated as a foul-smelling black, followed by his dogs and *lubra,* appeared as from nowhere and crossed the creek, coming toward us in the gathering twilight. "'E's dead, though—'ow can 'e smell like that hif 'e's halive?"

The oily native squatted before us. He snapped his waddy at our supply of kangaroo meat, then touched his mouth and grinned.

"Help yourself," Hoskins invited.

The bushman apparently understood. He grunted to his *lubra,* who slipped from her skins and approached hurriedly.

The woman was half-caste, around twenty years of age, and possessed the free grace of a wild animal. She wore a breech-cloth of coarse grass, and a string of wooden beads, with a wallaby-claw pendant, around her neck. Her nut-brown face was free from marks of the tattoo needle. Her wavy hair stood out from a small head in that peculiar fan-like manner of the back-country tribes.

"Not a bad-lookin' heifer for a black," Smith said, as she squatted before the fire with her steaks.

We agreed with him, and I paid the dusky damsel a compliment that had always brought *"oui, oui!"* and a smile from French belles. As though she understood, the woman turned sparkling black eyes upon me and smiled swiftly.

Soon she carried the meal to her burly mate and stood near by, eying the food longingly.

"She won't eat anything till he's finished," Hoskins explained. "That's the bushman's code. If there's anything left, it's hers, providing he doesn't see his dogs first. She's treated worse than any slave."

I was soon to realize that. Harsh mutters came from the black's mouth. The woman replied whiningly as she stepped closer. Her approach reminded me of a dog that expects punishment for some unknown violation of its master's rules. She indicated the fire as she spoke, moving her hands swiftly.

The man tossed the meat to his dingos as he sprang erect. He seized his waddy and began to rain blows on the woman's head and shoulders. She ran past me, her lord and master in pursuit.

I don't know why I butted in, but I did. I rapped the pursuer across his shins with my gun-barrel. Instantly he flung himself on me and bore me backward ere I could raise my weapon and fire. In a twinkling his long fingers fastened about my neck. My tongue began to protrude as I struggled to bring my revolver into play.

" 'Ere, you bloody fool!" Doling swung the butt of his gun against the black's head. He released his hold on my throat, rolled over and sat up.

A moment later he yelled to his *lubra*. Soon she appeared from the darkness and resumed her culinary duties about the fire.

Some thirty minutes later they disappeared, the woman carrying her lord's spear, rifle, pipe, and a small amount of the uncooked meat.

"Boots and saddles!" Hoskins ordered, starting for his horse. "We've got to ride. We'll likely be attacked before morning. We haven't seen the last of that ebony, I'll gamble!"

Fisher, poor devil, whose vocal cords had been clipped by a piece of shrapnel, patted his rifle and glanced expectantly at Hoskins. He held up one finger. Hoskins thought for a moment, then shook his head.

"Better not," he said. "The tribe may be around close."

We filled our water-skins and turned northeast. Dawn streaked the sky when we made camp in the bed of a dry stream.

"Stand guard," Hoskins commanded after we'd hobbled our horses. "Two hours each. Doling relieves you; Smith relieves him. No nodding now!"

I awoke with the sun in my face. Crawling carefully, I aroused Doling. I didn't own a watch, I explained, so had to guess at the time. Bill grinned as he reached for his silver ticker.

His mouth twisted sidewise and he emitted queer sounds as he hurried through his pockets.

" 'Ell's fire, Yank, I've been robbed! Blarst me dumb hif me wallet's not missin' too!"

His wails awoke the camp. Soon the desert air was filled with oaths as one after another reported his loss. Watches, razors, wallets, pocket-books, ornaments and keepsakes, had disappeared. Smith gave me a peculiar look when I replied that I'd lost nothing.

I demanded a search of my person and luggage—nothing could have pleased me so much as the heartfelt curses my insistence brought forth. Pop scouted along the upper bank, then yelled loudly. Footprints, undeniably feminine by their size and shape, showed plainly in the firm silt.

"The half-caste woman!" Pop swore. "How she sneaked in is hard to say. Anyway, she's the thief."

Not one accused me of the crime of which I was guilty—sleeping on sentry duty. I resolved to make good their loss as soon as we hit the gold-fields. . . . .

Jasper was the new desert-town we worked in. It was one of those mushroom growths flourishing with tents, a saloon, and a store kept by an industrious Chinaman, who distilled the brackish lake-water and sold it to us at cutthroat prices.

The town vanished as suddenly as it sprang up. The gold gardens had given their all. But before it dissolved, there were two mysterious robberies: one at the saloon tent, and the other of a pillowcase full of nuggets belonging to the Chink. No one worried greatly over this last—regarding it as merely one thief relieving another.

At the first stop on our way back to the coast, we rigged up a crude balance and divided our gold. My offer to return to the others the value of the property lost to the half-caste woman was promptly rejected.

That night we rolled into our blankets early, determined to start for Kalgoorlie the following morning.

I was awakened by rapid revolver-shots above my head. Turning toward the rising sun I beheld Fisher doing a kind of hornpipe around a kangaroo hide spread near me, the hammers of his guns falling swiftly on empty cartridges.

Watches, razors, pocket-books, wallets, ornaments and keepsakes, lay together on the skin. A greasy pillowcase and three heavy moleskin bags of gold were piled together. A string of wooden beads, with a wallaby-claw pendant, encircled them.

"You're in luck, Yank," said Hoskins as we surveyed the wealth. "She robbed us, the Chink and the barkeeps, and gave it to you. Evidently you made a hit with Her Blackness!"

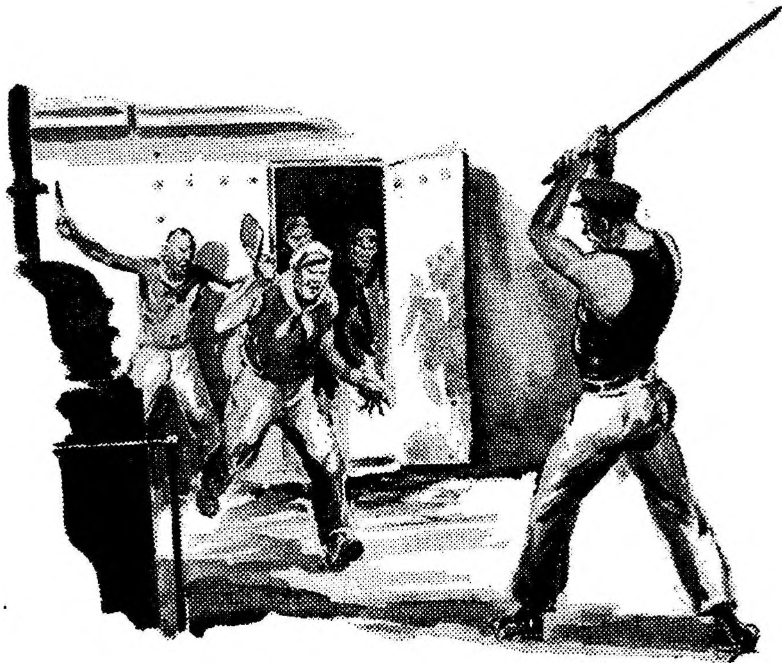
I protested my inability to accept stolen riches. We would take the gold to Kalgoorlie and leave it with the proper authorities, trusting them to find the rightful owners. A chorus of yells told me I was on the wrong trail.

I then suggested a vote on whether the money be turned into an Australian "conscience fund," or be divided equally among us. Needless to say, the vote was unanimously in favor of division—and from my share I got a nest-egg from a woman I had seen but once.

Mutiny

These enraged Chinese sailors, madly bent on destruction, turned the law of the sea into the law of self-preservation.

By **Capt. George H. Grant**



IN 1912 I was a cadet on the steamship *Norman Monarch.* She was a bluff-nosed old tub, owned in Glasgow, Scotland, and her days were passed in "tramping" over the byways of the seven seas, seeking cargoes wherever they were offered and carrying them to out-of-the-way ports.

This suited the crew much better than a regular trade. They were a motley gang who had been picked up one by one as their services were needed. On deck there was a Frenchman, two "squareheads," three wharf-rats from England who had been signed on as pier-head jumps, and over them a German bo'sun.

Down below, in the black gang, we also had fifteen "Chinks" who, because they were paid similar wages as the whites on board, strutted about the decks like half-paid officers. Their arrogance and impudence was tolerated for if they had been fired the Captain would have been compelled to ship them back to China. Thus does a benevolent government care for its colored subjects.

All went well for many months. In the ports of the byways of the world there were no restricting immigration regulations. Regardless of nationality, the members of the crew always were treated as the equals of the inhabitants. There was no color line. But one bright day, the entrance to the Mississippi loomed over the distant horizon; then New Orleans showed up, to which port the vessel was bound with a cargo of nitrate from Chile. Immediately the regulations of civilization fell upon certain members of the crew like an irksome halter. The Chinese were not allowed on shore. The Captain put up a bond of one thousand dollars a head for their safekeeping, and to safeguard this sum of money he employed two powerfully built watchmen to keep an eye on them. Another injustice, muttered the Chinks among themselves—but they respected the revolvers that protruded from holsters even if they did not respect the men who carried them.

New Orleans in those days was wide open; it had not attained the respectability which it now enjoys. Then it was flushed with new-found wealth; now it pulsates under the restraining leash of the dry laws.

In the evening it was the custom of the people living near the waterfront to saunter along the wharves before darkness shut down completely. The cobbled streets and muddy sidewalks were left to the colored folk.

This being summer, and the quarters on the vessel hot and stuffy, the Chinks moved their benches out on the forecastle head and, squatting on them, they would eat their supper from bowls, with chopsticks. It was an interesting picture for the passers-by.

ONE evening a crowd had gathered on the wharf and a girl commenced to giggle at one of the Chinamen whom we had nicknamed "Monkey-face." He construed her laughter wrongly and in pidgin English he began making offensive remarks. At once the crowd on the wharf began to disperse, the girl and her companions walking toward the poop.

The Chink dropped his chopsticks and hurried along the deck. I am inclined to believe he thought the girl was going to come on board by the gangway.

On the bridge deck he met the third engineer, who had come out of his cabin to investigate what all the noise was about. In a second he grasped the situation. Without hesitation the engineer clenched his fist, smacked the Chink square between the eyes, and sent him sprawling into the scuppers. Muttering revenge, the Chinese scrambled to his feet and ambled forward where he belonged.

Next morning the Chink invited the third engineer into the cross-bunker space, where they could fight it out. The officer reported the incident to the chief engineer, who in turn reported it to the Captain. The Chink was logged and warned that if he did not keep his tongue between his teeth and his monkey-face off the deck, he would be clapped in irons.

He obeyed, but there was an undercurrent of tension throughout the ship. Without doubt some of the deck crew brought liquor on board to the Chinks, and I noticed that the opium pipes were being used more frequently; the rank smell of the stuff was enough to turn my stomach when I was working up forward. But the Chinks were quiet—too quiet, I thought, like the lull before the storm. I mentioned this to the mate, but he laughed at my fears and said I was romancing. Since I was but a boy, that closed my mouth like a trap!

Sailing-day came and we were all glad to get away from the heat and the mosquitoes. The run through the Gulf, and from the Gulf through the Florida Straits, was uneventful. North of Jupiter Light a course was set from Europe and the land quickly left behind.

On the second day, the vessel was about four hundred miles from the coast. I was in the messroom with the other cadets eating our dinner when a terrifying and agonized yell came from below. Frightened, we gazed at each other; then, as the chief engineer, and the fourth, ran through the alleyway past the messroom door, and toward the engine-room, we sprang to our feet and raced after them.

From the top grating of the engine-room I saw the chief engineer jump from the lower grating onto a Chink who was brandishing a pinch-bar. They sprawled to the deck,

the chief uppermost, his powerful right arm working like a flail. Slowly he struggled to his feet, for they slipped on the greasy floor-plates; he was clutching the Chink by the throat. Once upright, he grabbed hold of the pinch-bar, wrenched it from the other's hand and, swinging it over his head, felled the Chink like an ox.

Twenty feet away, near the stokehold door, the fourth engineer, who stood over six feet and was strongly built, had grabbed a Chink by the ankles and was using the helpless man as a club to beat half a dozen more from the engine-room. The chief, cursing like an old shell-back, kicked his adversary into the bilges, shut the stop-valve of the main engines and ran to assist the fourth. In a few seconds the engine-room was cleared and the door which led into the stokehold was barricaded.

Then they picked up the third engineer from the deck between the crank-pits and struggled up the ladder with him to the deck. An ugly wound lay open on his head; another ran red with blood on his back below the shoulder. "Monkey-face" had sneaked up behind him, hit him with the bar, then tried to tip him over into the crank-pit. Only the intervention of the chief engineer, and the fourth, had saved his life.

As we waited in the alleyway, near the engine-room door, the third mate came hustling in from around the deck-house.

"There's mutiny afoot!" he cried. "The Chinks have gone crazy! The Old Man wants you, Grant, and Peters, on the bridge. Watch out for yourselves, but get a move on!"

We left the mess-boy with the third engineer—for the chief and the fourth had raced out on deck—then clambered up through the skylight on to the boat-deck. Once there we hurried along, bent almost double behind the water-tanks, jumped over the galley skylight, dodged behind the funnel, over the fidley, dropped onto the cross-bunker hatch and onto the lower bridge.

The second mate met us, startling me almost out of my senses as he stepped up from behind a harness cask.

"Take a fire-ax from the wheel-house," he yelled to me, "and guard this ladder!" It led down to the deck below. Similar instructions were given to the cadet who accompanied me.

I got the fire-ax, then lay flat on my stomach on the deck, ready to spring to my feet if the occasion demanded.

Looking aft along the bridge deck I saw the third mate crouched down behind a side-pocket hatch, shooting his revolver at a Chink capering about with a fiendish grin on his face, and flourishing a large meat-chopper in his hand. A bullet hit the bulkhead beneath me, too close for comfort, and was followed quickly by another. The third mate was shooting wildly; it was only then I noticed that his right arm hung limp by his side and he was using his left. Blood showed through his white uniform coat.

The Chink seemed to perceive his predicament, for he advanced toward the third mate, shrieking out guttural oaths. I rose to my feet and yelled a warning. The mate, on the other side of the deck, turned toward me and read the signs I was making with my arms. Racing through the fidley, he came out on the starboard side of the deck and felled the Chink with a belaying-pin.

I have to tell this story one incident at a time—but they all took place simultaneously

As the mate helped the third mate to the saloon, I noticed that there was not one of the deck crew to be seen around, except the bo'sun, who was having his hands full. He was a German, six feet three inches in height, and heavily built. In his hands he had a hatch-bar, which is a piece of iron three-eighths of an inch thick, two and a half inches broad and, in this case, seven feet long. Before him was a Chink, crouching like a tiger about to spring; weaving through the air in his hand he had a long-bladed meat-knife.

The bo'sun swung the hatch-bar above his head as the Chink rushed in at him, yelling fiendishly. The bar came down. The Chink jumped to one side, and the bar, which would have split the man in two, missed, struck the deck, iron to iron, and the jar shook it out of the bo'sun's hand. The Chink jumped in; the meat-knife flashed brightly in the sunlight, swept in a curve through the air and caught the bo'sun across the left wrist. Blood spurted to the deck as the wounded man turned and ran aft, with the Chink after him. The Captain's revolver spoke—also the Chief's. The Chink stumbled, recovered, and tore headlong after the bo'sun.

They disappeared under the shelter of the boat deck. Out on the timber piled on the after well they came. I jumped on top of a harness-cask. The bo'sun was clutching his wrist with his right hand; the Chink was charging along like a maddened bull, wounded unto death yet determined to wreak vengeance on his tormentors.

The Chief came next, but as he came into view, he halted and took careful aim, steadying his hand on the bridge-deck rails. His revolver cracked; the Chink dropped on his knees, then rose to his feet and, before he fell again to lie still, he threw the meat-knife through the air. It landed between the bo'sun's shoulder-blades, stuck there for a second, then clattered on the deck.

Meanwhile the Captain and other officers had driven the remainder of the Chinks along the forward well deck into their forecastle from where they were keeping up a steady fire at the bridge, or at anyone who showed himself. Five of their number who had been left amidships were shackled and left lying in the scuppers; their wounds were dressed after those of the white members of the crew had been attended to.

A consultation was called on the bridge. As the vessel lay dead in the sea-way and had more than three thousand miles to go to her destination, the Captain decided to put back to the United States, Hampton Roads being the nearest port. Along with the fourth engineer I was ordered below into the stokehold to raise steam—which, I may tell you, is no picnic on a coal-burner! The Chinks forward were a problem, for not only could we not get at them but the white sailors had locked themselves up in their own forecastle, across the alleyway from that of the Chinks. The chief engineer made a suggestion in regard to this, and the Captain agreed.

After dark a length of hose was taken forward to the forecastle head, where it was coupled onto the windlass line. The nozzle was inserted in the ventilator of the Chinks' forecastle and steam turned on. Within five minutes they were all on deck, willing to be shackled up rather than be boiled alive.

For five days they lay spread-eagled on the deck, while the vessel made her way slowly to Hampton Roads. To the signal station on Cape Henry word was flagged about the mutiny, for the vessel had no wireless. Before our anchor was dropped off the port a naval cutter met us.

"What's the trouble, Cap?" her commander sang out through a megaphone.

Our Captain told him the story.

"Chinks, eh?" returned the commander. "All right, Cap, string them along the rail and I'll pop 'em off! Got some men here who could do with a little rifle-practice!"

But the Chinks were landed and, under a heavy bond, shipped through the United States to England, where they later stood trial.

A Timely Arrival

By **L. C. Maynard**

An outfit of "Leathernecks" saw no hope of escaping alive from an ambush in Nicaragua, where capture is more fearful than death.

IT was on January 16, 1928, that a hundred rounds of ammunition were issued to the Marines aboard the U. S. S. *Nitro*, and just at dusk we landed at Corinto. Then we climbed into dinky little coaches and jolted over the narrow-gauge railroad until we reached Leon.

In that town of palms and huts we loaded bull-carts, eighty-three in all, each cart drawn by four oxen. With these supplies we set out for the fighting zone, chanting:

"Way down in Nicaragua where the coarse-haired natives dwell,
In the land where varmints flourish and it's just one step to hell;
And when you look above your head, where song-birds used to play,
A hungry buzzard floats around—and maybe you're the prey!"

Five hundred Marines marched in single file, five paces apart. I was in the rearguard. The trail was narrow and was hemmed in by jungles so dense they could be penetrated only by hacking a path. Sometimes the jungles would give way to coffee plantations; then we would pass a small sugar-cane patch with a native hut and, once in a while, a town.

Our caravan climbed hills so steep that the oxen had to be hitched eight to a cart. It took us twelve hours to climb the worst hill. The trail wound around, sometimes on the brink of a chasm where a misstep would have sent us sailing through several thousand feet of space. At times our progress was so slow that in the evening we could look back and see the spot which we had set out from that morning.

The things that impressed us most sharply were the ants in assorted colors of red and black, the ticks, sometimes the mosquitoes and, frequently, the fleas. We estimated the temperature, unofficially, at one hundred forty-seven degrees. At that, we might have been a bit conservative.

Did you ever stand outpost duty at night in a banana land? If not, you've missed one of life's richest experiences. The darkness is so intense that you couldn't see a handkerchief waved three inches from the tip of your nose. Out there in the wilds, things were crawling around. Once an invisible native threw a stone that barely missed my head. Another time two balls of fire suddenly gleamed in the path ahead of me and I realized I was gazing into the eyes of a panther. He screamed like a woman, then whimpered like a child. In those weird surroundings I raised my rifle—but I couldn't even see the end of the barrel. I didn't care to chance a shot that would probably only infuriate the beast. I began slowly backing, and as I stepped into the brush at one side, the panther ran by.

Our force marched into a village where Sandino, the rebel leader, had been not many days before. The few inhabitants who were still there told us that twelve villagers had been killed. The walls of houses were spattered with blood.

Thirty-seven men were picked to go through the jungle to a town thirty-five miles away, to get a hundred mules. I was one of the men who went. We made the trip on foot, with three horses carrying three days' rations. Natives guided us and we made the trip without incident.

The mules were loaded with supplies and we were ordered to go to various villages held by small forces of Marines and leave the provisions before going back to our main force. The Marines cheered as we arrived.

Then we headed back to our command. Now we could ride, for the mules' loads had been left in the villages. Riding had only one disadvantage—when the little animals were going down a very steep hill, we would slide off between their ears. But we rode happily along.

Early in the afternoon I was riding along half asleep when I heard the sharp rattle of machine-gun fire. Instantly I was wide awake and kicked the mule from between my legs. As I swung the rifle off my shoulders, a bullet knocked my hat off. Since we couldn't see Sandino's men, we jumped into the brush.

The head of the column was in an open valley in full view of the machine-gunners and riflemen who were concealed behind a long stone fence on the opposite hill. We advanced to the support of the men in front; we could hear the shouts of the "gooks" as they kept up heavy firing.

As we marched in skirmish-line, a native threw a dynamite bomb that exploded close to us with a roar. One boy exclaimed: "Oh, my God, they've got cannons!"

We jumped into the shelter of a creek-bed and continued our advance, machine-gun bullets kicking up dirt in our faces and cutting holes in the backs of our shirts, as we crawled along.

The natives had prepared the ambush with great care, cutting trails which they knew we would have to cross; these they had covered. Whenever a Marine darted across the open space, he was greeted with a burst of bullets.

The Marine ahead of me ran across safely. Just as I started, I was struck. The impact was on my right side near the stomach. The spot became warm; evidently blood was gushing forth. A queer feeling—not pain, but

peace—came over me. Was I dying? Nothing mattered now . . . . But the warmth increased and kept spreading. Then I saw that my ammunition-belt was on fire.

"Pull the belt off!" I yelled to the man behind me.

"Where did they get you?" he asked.

"In the stomach."

But when the belt was removed, I found that I was not wounded there, but that the "gook" bullet had caused ten cartridges in my belt to explode—hence that numb sensation in my abdomen. Just as I was congratulating myself, my comrade exclaimed:

"But they did hit you—in the arm!"

I looked and, to my great surprise, saw that my right elbow had been almost shot away. My buddy applied a tourniquet and the flow of blood stopped. Then I sprang across the trail and into the cover of the jungle.

Now my arm started swelling and the pain grew almost unbearable. I had to keep moving or I couldn't have endured the pain. Wild with agony, I didn't crouch but went along standing up. "You'll get killed," I was warned. But in my semi-delirium that was my hope—anything to end the torture! With my left hand, I grabbed briars and crushed them; and the pain, counterbalancing that from the wound, felt almost soothing.

After a while the agony grew less, and when a comrade asked where I was hit, "They got me in the arm, but I'm all right," I told him.

Just then he flattened out. "They've got me!" he gasped. Reaching in his pocket, he brought out a little diary. His last words were, "Give it to my mother."

The fighting had broken out at one o'clock and it lasted until dark. Even after that, a volley would ring out now and then.

That night most of us were on a hilltop—twenty-two of us, including the wounded. It was here that I learned that Corporal Perlstein, who had been near the head of the column when the firing began, had realized the gravity of the situation at once and had decided to try to make it back to our main force. He took a frightened native with him as a guide. That the corporal could make his way through the jungle with hundreds of "gooks" lurking all around, and reach the village seemed an impossibility.

The able-bodied Marines on the hilltop began piling rocks as protection when day should bring a renewal of the battle. Our situation would then be desperate, for the ammunition-supply was low.

Night wore on and light began to glimmer. Then there came several shots from a new direction. "They've started from the other side of the hill," some one said.

There came the ringing notes of a bugle.

Then hell broke loose. The firing was by far the heaviest of the battle. There came a lull and, some distance away, we heard a command:

"Move that automatic over, there!"

Two or three of our boys shouted in unison: "That's Captain McNulty's voice!"

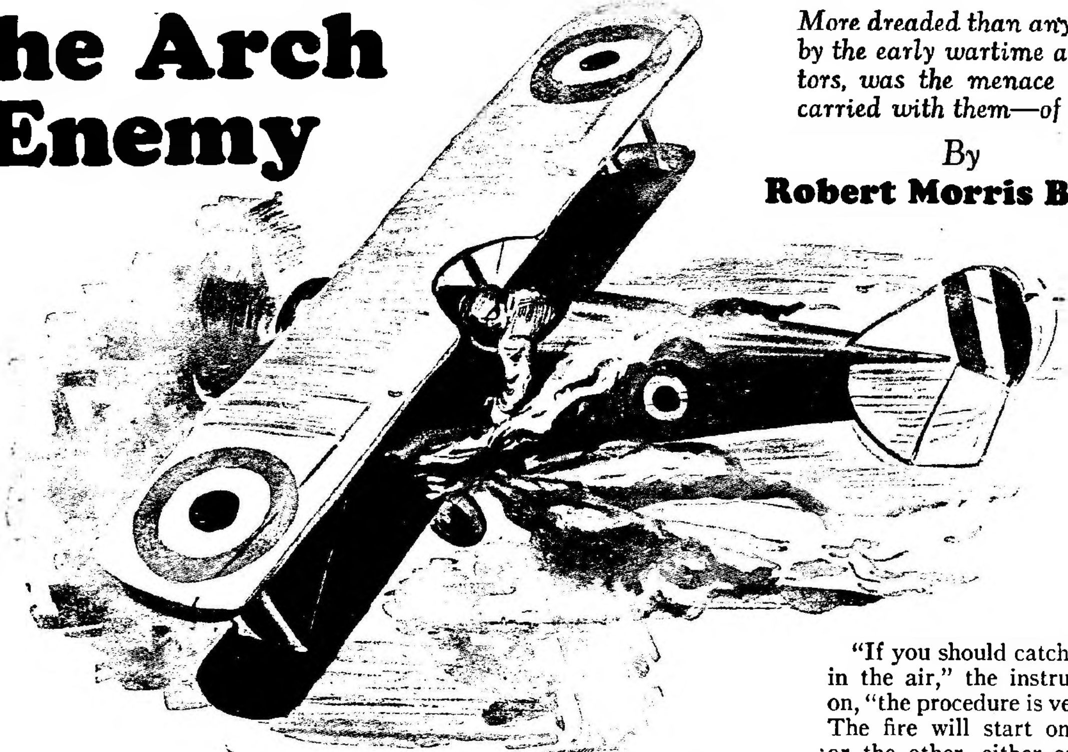
And so it was. The corporal had made his way through to headquarters; eighty-three Marines with machine-guns had hiked nearly all night and attacked at dawn. The natives, not caring for further action, ran to their horses and disappeared in the wilds they knew so well.

Three Marines had been killed; ten others wounded, two of them fatally. The survivors, with no implements except their bayonets, dug holes to the solid rock two or three feet below the surface. In each hole a body was reverently placed. . . . . And a little mound of soil and rocks, thousands of miles from our native land, marked the graves of men who had died for the Stars and Stripes.

The Arch Enemy

More dreaded than any foe, by the early wartime aviators, was the menace they carried with them—of fire.

By
Robert Morris Burtt



"AND as to the hazard of fire—" the instructor's voice droned on. The class of flying cadets, sleepy from excessive drill, sat up. *Fire*—there was something creepy, blood-curdling, about the very sound of that word.

"If you should catch fire when in the air," the instructor went on, "the procedure is very simple. The fire will start on one side or the other, either on wing or fuselage. You must side-slip steeply on the side opposite to that where the fire is. The force of the wind generated by the sideslip will keep the flames away from your body. When about on the ground, level off, land, and if the ship

is fully afire, jump when the momentum has slackened. It is better to have some bumps or even broken bones than to be in the plane when the gas-tank explodes." The class shivered. They were fully awake now.

In due course the class finished and, was sent to France to be trained in a French flying-school.

The next place we heard about fire was at the French School of Military Aviation at Chateauroux. A French officer was lecturing to us in his own language. Few of us understood much of what he was saying. But of a sudden we became alert. The usual nervous, excitable manner characteristic to the Frenchman had increased tenfold. We strained our ears to listen. Our uncertain French was taxed to the utmost to grasp the meaning. In substance it was the same that we had heard before. *Fire.* We were beginning to incorporate as part of ourselves the flyer's dread of this, his most feared enemy.

The next morning we had a graphic and never-to-be-forgotten illustration. Goodwin, loved by all of us, took off on his solo. Goodwin was happy; this was what he had been waiting for, and looking forward to, for a year.

But the mechanics had neglected to clean the under part of his *nacelle*—it was soaked with gasoline and castor-oil. As he took off, a piece of live carbon—shot out by the exhaust of the rotary motor—lodged on the inflammable fabric under his seat, driven by the propeller blast. We all saw it, transfixed, horror-stricken. It was like a twinkling planet, ever growing in magnitude as Goodwin flew blithely away. . . . . We buried him the next day—that is, what was left of him.

WE had finished at Chateauroux—minus seven, three of whom had fallen victim to the fire demon. We were waiting for orders to the American Advanced Flying School at Issoudun. I entered a cafe downtown and found Borders, drinking. He pushed over a wine-splattered paper and pointed. I looked. *"Major Raoul Lufberry Gone West!"* said a heading. I read it through. Lufberry had been in a Nieuport 28 with that firetrap of a motor, a Monosupape. He had caught fire too high to get down, and rather than be burned alive, had jumped. They found him in a plowed field, every bone broken, his body flattened, like a pancake. . . .

I was now at Issoudun, almost through with my pursuit training, the branch which I had wanted more than anything else. I loved to fly—I was fearless—except for the fear of fire. It wasn't so much the thought of going West; it was going *that* way! But whenever I thought of it I laughed determinedly and thrust it out of my mind. "I'll never catch on fire. It might happen to others, but never to me!"

At that time six men had caught on fire at Issoudun. Five of them rested in Field Thirteen—the cemetery. There wasn't enough left of the sixth to bury—he had had too much altitude when he caught on fire.

I was on my last hour of combat work. I was flying a Nieuport 28. The Monosupape motor had been taken out, however, and been replaced by a 120-horsepower LeRhone, usually a very dependable motor.

My motor had not been acting very well; it kind of spit and coughed once in awhile. However, at that time I didn't know anything about motors—or ships either, for that matter. All I knew was how to fly. In the war days they didn't greatly encourage knowledge by pilots concerning planes and motors. Your fearlessness decreased in proportion to your knowledge of the number of things that could happen.

I was up about eleven thousand feet—plenty high! Of a sudden my motor shuddered, spit; there was a loud explosion, a backfire. The big breather-plate directly in front of me back of the carburetor was blown back and hit me in the stomach, nearly knocking me out. Fire and smoke accompanied it. I was paralyzed; my heart shrank to nothing. It had happened—to me! I saw that fire had shot out the left breather-pipe and a little pool of fire was blazing in the oil-soaked fabric of the lower panel of the left wing. I knew absolutely what to do. I had been prepared time and again for this very emergency. But I lost my head—I did exactly the opposite of what I had been told. Instead of slipping to the right I cocked her up and slipped vertically to the left—on the side where the fire was. I slipped so fast and swiftly that the rush of wind blew out the fire on the left wing. That mistake saved my life! If I had slipped on the other side the fire would have eaten in to me long before I got to the ground, owing to my great altitude. I had now only to contend with the fire in the cockpit—I was hoping and praying that it would not get to the gas tank. There was no draft to fan the blaze in the bottom of the cockpit, but should it eat through the floor-boards and open a hole in the lower fabric, I was gone! I had cut the switch and the motor was dead. We were slipping at frightful speed. Would my wings stand the strain when I attempted to flatten out? I couldn't worry about that. Only to get down—down!

JUST then my heart stopped beating. I noticed a sudden breath of heat and saw that a little hole had been burned through the fabric on the side, almost at the bottom. If that hole was allowed to get bigger—as it surely would—I would be incinerated in a minute. I almost gave up hope. I raised myself slightly and struggled frantically with my seat cushion. It finally came out and I stuffed it down against that hole. Only to shut off that draft— It worked, thank God!

My altimeter showed five thousand feet, but I knew I was below that. No altimeter could keep up with that rapid descent!

Terror-stricken, straining with all my strength to keep the ship in that whistling sideslip, the wires screaming like incarnate fiends, I saw a possibility of salvation in the approaching ground, just as a lick of flame darted up the side toward the gas-tank. This was the finish, then! I beat at it madly, violently, with my gloved hand. The fumes and flames rose suffocatingly about me; I could feel the infernal heat eating into my flesh. The ground came up at a dizzy speed. I had to give up fighting the fire near the gas-tank. It took all the strength of both arms to flatten her out. I never would have believed wings could withstand the strain that those wings did. They groaned and creaked—but stayed on. We hit—then hit again. I snapped my safety-belt and jumped. The horizontal stabilizer just missed me and I landed on my shoulder. Simultaneously I was conscious of a loud crash and an explosion. I gathered myself up and looked around. The Nieuport was blazing merrily on her back about twenty yards away. I was in the far edge of my own field in a hollow.

I PLODDED down the hollow, cutting back toward the hangars. I heard the *Clang! Clang!* of the "meat-wagon"—the ambulance—going across the center of the field, as I trudged along in a sort of daze.

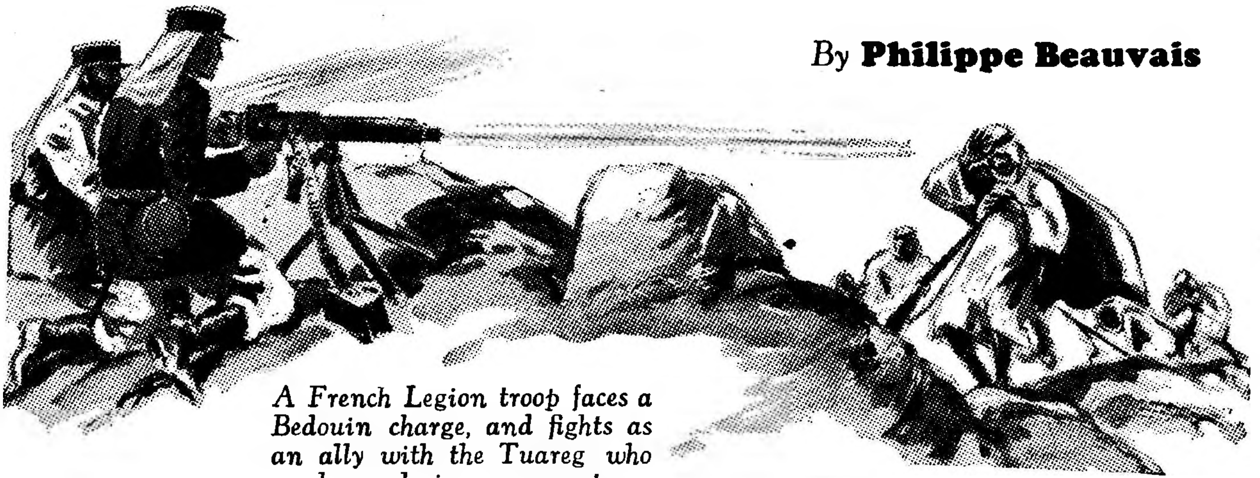
I made the hangars and walked around to the operations officer in the center of the row. There were a group of flying officers standing in front. They gazed at me open-mouthed.

"My God!" cried one. "Are you *alive?*"

I turned and looked out across the field. The Nieuport was nothing but a heap of ashes. Suddenly my knees gave way and I collapsed on the ground, shaking like a leaf.

A Saharan Battle

By **Philippe Beauvais**



A French Legion troop faces a Bedouin charge, and fights as an ally with the Tuareg who ask—and give—no quarter.

TOWARD the end of 1916 I was a lieutenant of the French Foreign Legion and in charge of a *goum* (troop) of meharists which patrolled the sandy wastes of a forlorn section of the Tanazerouft desert.

A powerful Senoussi confederation had declared a holy war and were planning to invade French territory. All the available troops, including my *goum,* were ordered directly in the path of the invaders. Luckily, the warlike Tuareg tribes took the field against the Senoussi at this time, and we were instructed to support the Tuareg at every opportunity.

One day we were alarmed by the sound of steady rifle-fire. Reconnoitering from behind a group of sand dunes, our scouts discovered, on the plain below, a band of Tuareg cornered in a mass of jagged rocks by a large force of Bedouins. I quietly deployed my *goum* and brought two machine-guns in position to fire down on the Bedouins. At this moment, however, they dismounted, and charged the Tuareg on foot. We were unable to use the machine-guns.

With their swords high, or brandishing their long-barreled guns, the Bedouins came yelling at the top of their lungs. They were in a frenzy and they outnumbered the Tuareg four to one. As soon as the Bedouins climbed within reach of the Tuareg, the long lances of the latter whirled and darted with lightning speed, giving the Arabs no chance to come closer with their swords. The combat was carried on so fast that I was unable to see clearly the sequence of the actual blows, but, in a shorter time than I need to say, the whole first Bedouin line fell in groups amidst a frantic gesturing of their brown arms.

I saw an Arab run on a flat boulder which was defended by three Tuareg, open his arms, clutch their lances to his breast and fall transfixed, still holding the iron shafts in a death-grip. But his sacrifice proved useless; a group of Bedouins ran through the gap that had been opened among the bristling fence of spears, but before a sufficient number of their fellow tribesmen could follow them, enlarging the breach and breaking through the Tuareg array, the nearest Tuareg jumped on them and stabbed them down amidst a bedlam of screams. A new unbroken line received the Bedouin rush and struck down several of them. The Bedouins turned and fled.

But when they were about two hundred yards away from the rocks, two leaders, whose green turbans pointed to the fact that they had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, succeeded in stopping them. After a moment of irresolution the Bedouins stretched themselves on the sand facing the Tuareg and began sniping at them.

Had we not been there, that would have marked the end of the Tuareg. To give back shot for shot was hopeless, for the Tuareg are notoriously bad shots and at that time were armed with rifles of antiquated models.

The rattle of our machine-guns must have sounded to the harassed Tuareg like a new lease on life. A hail of lead fell on the Bedouins, striking a large number of them.

The Bedouins had been so busy with the Tuareg that not only had they failed to notice us, but they had forgotten too that some other enemy could be attracted by the uproar of the battle.

For a moment they stopped their fire and gazed stupidly at us, unmindful of the fact that our machine-guns were wreaking terrible havoc among them. But, whatever may be their faults, Arabs are no cowards.

One of the two green-turbaned leaders had been killed by a bullet and lay stretched on the ground, but the other jumped on his feet and led the tribesmen against us in a magnificent charge. The Bedouins ran toward us in such loose formation that our fire, though killing many, seemed unable at first to stop them.

But, biting his long and drooping mustache, our veteran Adjutant Casenave wrenched a rifle from a Sudanese mehariste, took steady aim and pressed the trigger.

The Bedouin leader let go his sword and fell backward into the arms of his followers. Casenave took aim again; the tribesman who held the dying chieftain relaxed his hold and fell with him on the sand, where they both remained motionless. Seized by panic, the Bedouins turned about and ran in disorder toward the place where they had left their horses.

The bullets falling among them and the screams of the wounded animals rendered ungovernable the horses still unscathed. While the Bedouins tried desperately to mount, my *goum* and the Tuaregs closed in, cutting down those who resisted. Then I had to restrain the Tuareg from wholesale slaughter, for in wars between Tuareg and Arabs no quarter is given or expected.

When order was restored, I advanced to shake hands with the Tuareg leader, who, veiled as all Tuareg men are, sat his horse haughtily. On shaking hands, he removed the veil, and to my astonishment I looked into the face of a young woman. I had rescued a *razzour*—raiding party—led by Henare-ag-Amastane, of the Kel 'Rela Tuareg. She was, in fact, a leader—in the only North African race who allow women complete freedom and full rights with men—and her subsequent friendship gave me very powerful allies among her people.

The Smugglers of Mad River Cañon

By LEMUEL DE BRA

Illustrated by W. O. Kling

The bronc' stopped short; so did Bat Fisher.

ROBERT E. TRIPTON, chief immigration agent of the Calzona-Mexico division, and known through the Southwest as "Battered Bob," turned off the trail at Eighty-mile Spring and with a grunt of relief slid from the saddle. While his tired mount nosed eagerly at the cool water in the shallow spring the Government man dropped to his knees by the trail and put his ear to the ground.

"Reckon we've fooled 'em, bronc'," muttered Tripton, when he heard no sounds of being followed. "Or mebbe they went through Big Cactus gulch an' figger on layin' for us down the trail! This whole danged business might still turn out to be just a trap for us, bronc'—you know that? Hey, move over an' let *me* have some o' that water, old pardner! Forgettin' your manners, aint you?"

The broncho shook his head emphatically and stepped away from the spring. Tripton cleared a space, took a drink, and refilled his canteen. After a cigarette he was about to ride on, when on sudden thought he took a letter from his pocket and for a moment frowned thoughtfully at it.

There was nothing about Bob Tripton as he stood there on the trail beside his horse that would betray him to the casual observer as a Government agent. From his sombrero to his spurs he looked like any of the cow-punchers you see on the streets of Calzona. A glance at his saddle with its "string" and blanket bore out that impression.

Nevertheless interested persons who got one good look at "Battered Bob" never forgot him. Years of service under the blazing Southwest sun had marked his dark face with a perpetual scowl; one of his many hand-to-hand scraps had given him a badly crumpled nose; a smuggler's bullet had left a puckery dead-white scar across his left jaw. "Watch out for Battered Bob!" they'll tell you along the border. "He looks like hell—and shoots worse!"

Still frowning as if worried over something, Tripton inserted a calloused finger in the envelope and drew out the message. He had read the letter several times; but now he read it over again slowly.

"Say, you old battle-scarred lizard, if you want some hell-popping fun, hit the dust for Peace Valley. I got it straight, low-down, and confidential that your friend Snake Salino and his gang are now located in Mad River Cañon. You've been on the trail of that smuggler and cutthroat for a long time and now's your chance to get his scalp.

"You know where Mad River Cañon is, but here's something you don't know: Except for Salino and his gang I'm the only living human who can tell you how to get into the cañon and take Salino by surprise. There's only one way to get him and I'm the *hombre* to tell you that way.

"And you'd best come alone. Salino has something big on. Don't just know what it is, but he got drunk in Carejas a week ago and bragged that he was soon going to clean up and give the whole Southwest something to gab about for years. So he's got spies out watching the trails. You can slip over here alone but if you try to bring your border riders they'll flush our game. I can round up all the men we need before Salino can get wise.

"So come along, old-timer. This is Monday; I'll be watching for your homely mug about Wednesday."

The letter was signed, "Slim."

"Sounds queer, bronc'!" muttered Tripton. "If Slim Watkins didn't write this, it sure was done by some gazabo who knows that me an' Slim are buddies. Aint nothin' we wouldn't do for that kid, is there, bronc'? An' if anything happens to me, this letter might cause Slim a lot o' trouble—even if he didn't write it. So—"

Abruptly Tripton broke off. From the north, far down the trail that led to Peace Valley, came a shrill cry. Immediately, from the brush-covered hills some distance east, came an answering call. Tripton put a match to the

There was only one way into the God-forsaken border-lair of the bandits—down a sheer cliff. And at the bottom, where Mad River churned, the gunmen waited.

A figure, scarcely more than a dark spot, ran swiftly from the building where Tripton knew Slim Watkins had his office. Some distance from the office—Tripton believed it was at the hitching-rail—a larger figure, apparently a man on a horse, swung back toward the office and dashed by the open door, trailing white puffs of smoke.

"Bust yourself, bronc'!" Tripton cried out. "Salino's gang's beat us to Slim's place! An' mebbe—"

Tripton did not speak the thought that had flashed suddenly into his mind. His scowling eyes on the trail, he spurred his horse to a mad pace. The willing beast did his best, but Tripton soon realized that he was too late.

Just beyond the home ranch was the road that came up from the heart of the valley and led on up to the foothills of Mad River Range. This road, after it passed the Watkins ranch, was so hidden by cottonwoods and low foothills that Tripton could see only the dust-haze over the cottonwoods. From this he knew that the raiders were on their way to Mad River Cañon, but he could not tell how many riders there were. That fact, at the time, made no particular impression on Tripton; but he was reminded of it later.

Moreover, at the moment Tripton was more interested in what had happened at the office. After that rider had fired those shots through the open door, no one had showed up at the door. Not a man was in sight around the ranch.

A few minutes later Tripton slipped his forty-five from its holster and leaped from the saddle in a running dismount, leaving the panting broncho to slide up to the hitching-rail. At that same instant there came from within the office, a frightened scream, and into the doorway sprang a Mexican boy of ten or twelve.

"Madre di Dios!" he cried, running toward Tripton. "My father—they keel heem! An' Señor Watkins!"

Tripton dashed past the boy into the office. Just inside the door, lying on his face, was Manuel Berenzi, one of Slim's *vaqueros*. Across the room on the floor by his desk, lay Slim Watkins.

Manuel's boy spoke up excitedly.

"Me—I heard thees shootings! I hide queeck under the bed! I t'ink hees Salino's men! *Por Dios!* My father—"

Tripton turned Berenzi over and made a swift examination of his injuries.

letter, crushed the ashes beneath his heel, swung into the saddle and rode rapidly down the trail. "That might be just a couple o' coyotes," he said to his mount; "but it don't sound just right an' we been hearin' them cries too often. So bust along, old pard, or we'll both be makin' buzzard-bait."

A half hour passed without incident. Tripton heard no more coyote-calls, saw nothing suspicious. He was scowling over the matter when the trail opened suddenly onto a flat bench, giving an unobstructed view of Peace Valley lying flat and bare beneath the eddying heat-waves.

In this valley were a dozen or more "ranch-farmers," all of whom had suffered during the past year from the raids of Snake Salino's gang. While Salino's main business was known to be smuggling Orientals across the Mexican line, he did not hesitate to add to his profits by helping himself to fat cattle and saddle-horses.

As Tripton dropped down the trail over the edge of the bench he got a good view of the nearest ranch-house. This belonged to Slim Watkins, a young man with young ideas such as blooded stock, modern machinery, and similar notions. Some of the old-timers didn't like Slim; but between Bob Tripton and Slim there was a deep friendship.

On the alert for anything suspicious, watching the woods and the trail ahead, Tripton's gaze wandered frequently to the painted buildings of the Watkins ranch; and of a sudden he saw something that made him draw sharp rein.

"Your dad's all right," he assured the boy. "Hit three times. Lost a lot o' blood, but he'll pull through." Then he stepped quickly to where Slim Watkins lay. Slim was huddled on his left side in a ghastly pool of crimson. His six-gun was on the floor near his right hand. High on the middle of his forehead, just beneath the dark hair, a trickle of blood flowed crookedly down his brow, forming a tiny pool that was spreading slowly to a larger pool of crimson beneath Slim's chest.

Again Manuel's boy cried out.

"Señor Watkins—he was in his chair w'en Salino's men shoot from door. He jump up queeck wit' hees gun—then he fall. He no move again. *Por Dios!*"

His face grim, Bob Tripton laid a gnarled hand over Slim's heart. He shook his head and turned to the boy. "Where are Slim's riders?" he demanded.

"Early thees morning they ride over to Silver Springs. They—"

"Is there a horse here you can ride?"

"*Si!* My pony—"

"Throw the saddle on him an' fan the breeze for the Dutchman's! Tell him first to send a man to town for the doc. Then tell him that Salino's gang have killed Slim an' have headed back for the mountains. He's to round up a posse. Savvy?"

"*Si, señor!*" The boy headed for the door.

"Hold a minute!" Tripton went into the adjoining room and came back with several towels. "How many men did you see?" he asked as he wadded the towels over Berenzi's wounds.

"Not even one, Señor Tripton! Me—I was asleep when I hear shots. I hide queeck under the bed!"

"Wish you'd seen the particular one who did this," said Tripton grimly. "Now you just forget about your dad an' hustle along. He'll be all right until the doc gets here. Vamoose, Joe!"

The boy left. Tripton stepped back to where Slim lay.

"Damn 'em!" groaned Tripton. "Only one thing I can do for you now, old buddy; an' I'm goin' to do it! I'm goin' to do it, Slim—just like you would for me!"

He turned to Slim's desk, found a box of forty-five cartridges and slipped it in his pocket. Slowly he walked to the door, turned, and looked back.

And that was the picture that Bob Tripton carried with him—the huddled figure, the white, boyish face, the dark hair, and the trickle of red that slowly zigzagged down Slim's forehead.

CHAPTER II

DURING recent months, after Salino's gang had all but terrorized the Peace Valley country for almost a year, there had been ugly rumors afloat concerning the sheriff. Some of the ranchers were outspoken in their belief that the sheriff was either in league with Salino or afraid of him.

"No use waitin' for him," Tripton told his bronc' as he rode rapidly up the dusty roadway toward the foothills. "A posse will be starting before long; but I don't know as they can do much. Wish I knew what Slim was goin' to tell me about gettin' into Mad River Cañon. Bronc', now that we got to go it alone, mebbe we'll carry out one o' our own ideas—eh?"

Whatever the idea was, it brought a frown to Tripton's face. As he rode on up the foothills the frown deepened. Not far from where the road would dwindle to a mere trail, Tripton turned off into a small clearing. A dirty, frowsy-headed man stepped out of a cabin and eyed Tripton suspiciously.

"Howdy, Fisher!" the Government man called out cheerfully. "Anybody gone up the road lately?"

Bat Fisher lived alone in this cabin. He was known as a harmless, somewhat "batty" prospector who had retired on the proceeds of a "strike" made several years before the ranchers crowded into Peace Valley.

"Howdy, Tripton!" Fisher called out as he recognized the visitor. "Nobody gone up nor down lately. Lonesome as all git-out here. What's up? Hop off an' palaver!"

TRIPTON declined the invitation. Briefly he told what had happened.

"Them varmints ag'in!" spluttered Fisher. "Dang 'em! How many, Tripton?"

"That's a funny thing, Bat! I seen only one, an' I seen him head this way. But there aint a danged sign of a trail on the road! Of course, it's deep dust an' pretty well chopped up; but it seems like I could have seen some sign."

"More'n likely they didn't come thisaway," commented Fisher, turning his unkempt head toward the mountains. "Leastwise I didn't hear no one. You aint goin' up there alone, are you?"

Tripton nodded.

"Hell!" spluttered Fisher. "Don't be a fool, Tripton! Snake Salino an' his gang have got their nest away on t'other side o' the range some place—away down clost to the line. Savvy?"

"Yep. I hear you."

"An' it would take the hull danged United States army to find 'em. More'n that, they'll spot you comin' an' will drop you with a rifle afore you know anything. Now if you—"

"There's a posse comin'," Tripton broke in. "You tell 'em that I'm takin' your word for it an' will head straight over the range. Savvy? Tell 'em to keep a sharp watch for me along the trail on the other side o' the ridge."

"I'll do it," Fisher agreed promptly, bobbing his head. "Wisht I was younger—"

"So long, Bat!"

Tripton waved a hand and rode on, thinking hard. He did not look back. The road soon dwindled to a mere trail. The trail rose rapidly to an abrupt bench.

Over the edge of this bench Tripton and his horse could not be seen from Bat Fisher's cabin. And here Tripton left the trail, swinging sharply to his right over an open space dotted with sage, larkspur, lupine and other semi-desert growth. Dismounting behind a clump of ocatilla, he crept forward to the edge of the bench where he had a good view of Fisher's cabin.

During his frequent rides through that section of the border, Tripton had stopped many times at Bat Fisher's cabin and talked with him. A keen judge of character, Tripton had formed suspicions that he had never mentioned to any one—not even his friend Slim Watkins. Now, as he looked down the hillside to Bat Fisher's cabin, he found his suspicions confirmed.

White smoke was curling lazily from the cabin-chimney. Then, suddenly, came a burst of black smoke. The way it ballooned abruptly from the chimney to be followed almost at once by that slow curl of white, showed that something like turpentine or oil had been thrown on the fire.

This was repeated three times at regular intervals.

Tripton waited no longer. Running back to his bronc' he sprang into the saddle and rode rapidly on down the bench a quarter of a mile. There he swung off into an arroyo that dropped down the broken foothills and passed just back of Bat Fisher's cabin.

As Tripton turned from this arroyo into the clearing he

saw Fisher leap spryly from the old stable. Fisher took one look at the man riding toward him, glanced around at the cabin, started as if to run for it, then stopped.

"What's up, Bob?" he called out as the Government man again drew rein.

Tripton tried to make his voice sound casual. "Just saw you was havin' a little trouble with your fire an' thought I'd come back an' lend a hand."

"Yeah?" Bat Fisher's eyes narrowed. He flung another glance toward the back door of his cabin.

"Yeah," echoed Tripton.

There was an instant of silence. Bat Fisher shifted his feet. He cleared his throat.

"Fixin' to git supper, Bob," he said, looking the Government man squarely in the eyes. "Danged chimney wouldn't draw an' I give it a coupla shots o' kerosene. That aint nothin' to git excited 'bout, is it?"

"Not if that was the truth," admitted Tripton, moving his right hand suggestively to the butt of his forty-five. "An' it's a good story. Still, it's not likely that any one would ever notice that signal—except Snake Salino's lookout."

"Salino's lookout!" blustered Fisher. "Say what the devil—"

Tripton slipped his gun from its holster.

"Fisher,"—he spoke sharply,—"I aint goin' to waste more'n one minute on you! My friend Slim is dead—killed by Snake Salino's gang. You've helped 'em with your dirty treachery—you're a spy. I got a heap more respect for an out-an'-out bandit an' smuggler than I have for you. So, unless you tell me the truth, an' the whole truth right now, you're goin' to land in hell before your damned carcass hits the dirt!"

Above his frowsy beard, Bat Fisher's cheeks turned ashen. For an instant he stared at the gun in Tripton's hand. Then again he flung a glance at the cabin.

"Bob," said Fisher, a calculating glint in his eyes as he looked at Tripton, "I know you aint no hand to bluff. You mean every damn' word you say. An' I know you can shoot the buttons off my pants afore I git ten feet. But listen, Bob! *You aint the kind to shoot an unarmed man in the back!* So—"

And with that, Bat Fisher whirled suddenly and ran for his cabin.

Astounded, Tripton stared at the man; then with a laugh, he jammed his forty-five into the holster, gave his bronc' a gentle but imperative jab with his spurs, and reached for his rope. By the time he had the loop ready for the swing, the horse had put him within a dozen feet of the running man. The loop dropped over Bat Fisher's head; the bronc', remembering its early training as a cow-pony, stopped short. And so did Bat Fisher.

Ignoring the man's furious yells, Tripton swung his horse and headed for the cottonwoods at the edge of the clearing, dragging Fisher through the dust like a thrown steer. Arrived at the nearest tree, Tripton tossed the free end of his rope over a limb, caught it as it fell, looped it over the pommel again and before Fisher could do anything to help himself, urged the bronc' forward. Fisher was jerked clear off his feet, swinging in the air like a sack of grain.

Letting the trained bronc' stand, Tripton dismounted and strolled leisurely back where Fisher hung, rolled a cigarette and got it going. As he did so he kept glancing in the direction of the road.

"Hey, what d'ye mean by this?" yelled Fisher. "What you goin' to do, eh?"

"In about a minute," said Tripton, still looking in the direction of the road from the Watkins ranch, "I'm goin' to take the rope off'n your waist—an' put it around your neck."

"You—you're *what?*"

"Mebbe I'll finish the job myself," went on Tripton, still not looking at the prisoner; "an' mebbe I'll wait for the posse. They're just itchin' for a necktie-party."

At that, Bat Fisher stared, speechless.

"You see," went on Tripton coolly, "when I came by awhile ago I clean forgot to tell you that we got one o' the gang that raided the Watkins ranch. An' that gazabo coughed up everything. Told us everything we needed to know—just where the gang hides out, about your smoke signal, and all. I been suspectin' you for a long time, Bat; but I was curious to see just how you put the gang wise. Now have you got any relatives or friends you want to send a message?"

A man on a horse swung toward the office and dashed by the open door, trailing puffs of smoke.

"Gawd A'mighty!" groaned Bat Fisher. "Bob, I tell you the truth—I don't know a thing 'bout that raid on the Watkins ranch. I didn't even know that any o' the gang had left the cañon. That's a fact, Bob! That's a—"

"That's a lie," interposed Tripton quietly. He had his head turned toward the road as if listening, although he had heard nothing and knew it would be at least an hour before a posse could be raised and started for the hills. "An' you needn't waste your breath. I aint carin' what you say. Listen! Guess that's the posse now!"

Suddenly terrified, Bat Fisher began begging, cursing, pleading. "Save me, Bob, for Gawd's sake! I—I didn't want to jine the gang. They made me. An' I was 'bout starvin'. Only since they moved into the cañon—'bout three months ago—have I been givin' 'em a signal when anyone went up the trail. That's all I ever done. I never went with 'em. An' I tell you I didn't know they was goin' to raid the Watkins ranch. Can't you do something—"

Tripton flung up his hand. Again he pretended to be listening.

"They'll be here in a minute," he said. "An' they're wild over the cold-blooded killin' o' Slim Watkins. If you got anything to say that might save your own neck, say it damn' fast! If you tell the truth, mebbe—"

"I'm a-tellin' you the truth, Bob! An' I don't know anything more. You know where Mad River Cañon is as well as I do. I aint been there since the gang moved in. But

The Mexican slumped forward and slid off the edge of the cliff. Turning over and over, the body shot past Tripton.

a posse can't git near 'em. The lookout got my signal an' they'll be watchin'. If they want to fight it out, they could hold off a posse without showing an eye. An'—"

Abruptly Bat Fisher choked off. The rope had swung around so that he now faced Tripton. For a moment he stared hard at the Government man.

"Say!" he blurted. "You told me you got one o' the gang—an' that he spilled everything. Well, just what did he tell you?"

" 'Bout what you been sayin'," answered Tripton, realizing that he had let his interest arouse Fisher's suspicion. "Can't you tell me something I don't know?"

"Huh! I reckon I can tell you a heap you don't know! What was that *hombre's* name?"

"I didn't get it. He—"

"Oh, you didn't get it, eh? *Did you get him?* I doubt it! If you did, I wonder if he told you what the old Indian showed Snake Salino? Did he tell you how the gang can get out o' the cañon at the other end and across the line into Mexico? Did he tell you what Salino has planned? Did he tell you about Crazy Kate? Huh? Go on an' spill it, Bob! Then, mebbe I'll tell you what you *don't* know. Naw, don't lie to me! I can see by your face you been bluffin'. An' I talked too damn' much! Hell!"

Coolly Tripton eyed the man. Further bluffing, he saw at once, would be useless. In a way, Bat Fisher was a coward; but also he was shrewd and hopelessly obstinate.

"I reckon I've spent enough time on you," Tripton said, tossing away his cigarette. "I was bluffin'—some. Not about Slim. The gang got him just as I told you. An' a posse will be along soon. I'll let them hold court over you."

Tripton walked to where he had left his horse, backed the bronc' until Fisher stood on the ground, then hastened back to the man's side and helped him free of the rope. "We're goin' to your cabin," Tripton said; "an' I want to tell you something right now: if you work any more tricks on me, I'll shoot a leg off you. Now march!"

Fisher obeyed promptly. In the cabin, Tripton found some rawhide, forced his prisoner to lie down on his wall-bunk, then bound him securely. Tripton then found paper and pencil and wrote a note. With a knife he pinned the note to the table where it would be seen by anyone entering the cabin.

"You'll be all right until the posse comes," Tripton told his prisoner. "I'm tellin' 'em in this note where I'm goin'. An' I'm askin' them not to string you up until they see me. So you'd better change your mind an' tell me—"

"You go to hell!" snorted Fisher.

"But listen! When I get back—"

"You aint *goin'* to git back! That's the joke on you! *You aint goin' to git back!* Buzzards will be pickin' your bones afore tomorrer night!" Fisher shouted, and broke into a blood-chilling laugh that made even Tripton shudder.

A moment Tripton eyed the man; then, with that wild laugh echoing in his ears, he left the cabin, gathered up his string and swung into the saddle. To prevent the gang's lookout from learning that he had returned to the cabin, Tripton did not take the main trail, but rode back up the arroyo to the bench where he had started. There he turned and looked back over the valley.

Everything was quiet. Nowhere was there a rider in sight, not even a cloud of dust.

"Queer!" muttered Tripton. "Seems like somebody ought to be headin' for Slim's place by this time! Bronc', I reckon we'd best move along an' trust to luck. Mebbe we can beat them buzzards—an' mebbe not. But we can't do anything standin' here."

He turned his horse back toward the main trail and there once more headed for the mountains.

CHAPTER III

As Tripton rode up the trail, a plan began to take shape in his mind. In fact, it was in pursuance of this half-formed plan that he had taken to the main trail again instead of trying to get to Mad River Cañon without being seen. The lower end of Mad River Cañon was less than a half-mile from the trail that Tripton was following; the upper end was about eight miles farther up in the mountains.

The only entrance or exit, so far as Tripton had ever heard, was at the lower end of the cañon. This was in an almost inaccessible spot. Other than that entrance, the reddish rock walls, for the full length of the cañon, dropped a sheer two hundred feet or more, forming one of those freaks of Nature known as a "blind cañon."

An occasional prospector had found that entrance and had worked the cañon, but everyone had reported no encouraging signs of mineral. Cattlemen never visited it because cattle could not get into the cañon. Trappers and hunters found nothing there to interest them. In fact, until this day, it had been almost ten years since Bob Tripton had heard of anyone going into Mad River Cañon.

On that occasion, Tripton had gone in as guide for a

party of Government scientists whose object was to investigate the old Indian caves in the cañon walls. To house their party during the two years the scientists spent in the cañon, they had cut the stunted pine that grew in the cañon and had erected two small cabins.

"If those cabins are still there after these ten years, that's where Salino has his gang," Tripton mused as he rode on, his gaze straight ahead. "But how to get in the cañon—that's the question! Wish I knew what Slim had to tell me. Or that Bat Fisher had spilled something worth knowing. Even if the posse finds that entrance, a couple o' Salino's men could pick off every one of 'em without showin' the peak of a hat. Salino sure picked a safe an' handy spot; but we'll fool 'em, bronc'—providin' we aint picked off with a rifle within the next half hour!"

The trail rose steadily. Tripton was soon passing places where anyone going to Mad River Cañon should turn off to the right. But Tripton rode straight on, his gaze on the trail ahead, expecting momentarily to hear the whine of a rifle-bullet.

However, nothing happened. Forty-five minutes later Tripton was far up the range. Anyone watching him would have felt certain then that he was not headed for the cañon, but was going across the range and on down into Mexico.

IN another half hour the gray mesquite had given way to the darker piñon. Tripton rode now with his gaze on the left of the trail. He came presently to what he sought, a dim trail that led off to a small spring of cool water. Here Tripton dismounted, got fresh water for himself and bronc', and had a cigarette.

As he rested there a moment in the silence, a queer feeling came over the Government man. It was nothing tangible; it was an intuitive feeling that he was not alone—that he had been followed.

Crushing the cigarette out beneath his bootheel Tripton crept silently back to the trail and looked down the slope. No one was in sight. He listened, but heard only the raucous scolding of a mountain jay farther up the trail. Frowning, he went back, tightened his saddle-cinches and rode back through the pines to the main trail. Again he looked down the slope and listened but saw no one, heard nothing.

Then, instead of following the main trail as he had been doing, Tripton crossed it headed west into the pines for a quarter of a mile, then began circling toward the north.

The afternoon was almost gone and mountain shadows were creeping across Peace Valley when Tripton reached the place he sought—the south rim of the cañon, not far from the lower end.

"Guess we've fooled 'em, bronc'," muttered Tripton as he dismounted. "You take it easy now while I look around. Got to work fast. Soon be dark."

He walked to the brink of the cañon and looked over. It was an awe-inspiring sight. Less than an eighth of a mile wide at this point, it was not less than two hundred feet deep; and the cliff on which Tripton stood dropped straight down a dizzy space to the rock-strewn bottom as clean-cut as if the wall had been carved.

Listening, Tripton heard plainly the hollow roar of the "Pit," and this helped him to get his bearings. Not far from the upper end of the cañon were fifty or more springs. These formed a creek which, as it tumbled swiftly down the middle of the cañon, was fed by other springs and soon became a white-capped torrent known as Mad River. This river, cutting its way through gravel and soft stone, came to an abrupt end at a huge bowl into which it plunged, and from which it went roaring into an underground channel, to reappear again as springs and sinks far out in Peace Valley. Tripton, hearing the muffled roar, knew that he was between the "Pit" and the lower end of the cañon.

With a low whistle to his horse Tripton turned and followed the cliff to his right—back toward the lower end of the cañon where the gang's lookout was undoubtedly waiting. The horse followed, but kept a safe distance from the yawning cliff.

Tripton had followed the cañon about a quarter of a mile, and the shadows were fast deepening down in the cañon depths, when he found the place he sought. Here the sheer wall was broken by a shelf some forty or fifty feet below the edge. This shelf slanted down the wall, wide in spots, pinching out to almost nothing in places, and with occasional gaps; but from where Tripton stood, that ledge seemed to offer a fair chance of getting safely down to the cañon floor.

Removing his spurs, Tripton fastened them to his saddle, then took off his rope. This was a three-quarter-inch hemp rope about fifty feet long. Tying one end securely to a pine that grew near the lip of the cañon, Tripton tossed the rest over the side. With the coils straightened the end barely reached the ledge below.

But that was enough. Tripton put on his gloves; then, on second thought, removed his right glove and stuck it beneath his belt.

"So long, old-timer!" he called softly. "Better hit the trail. Even if the buzzards don't get me, I won't be comin' back this way."

He wrapped his legs around the rope and slipped over the edge. . . . .

Once started on his perilous descent, Tripton lowered his one hundred and seventy pounds as rapidly as he dared. Not once did he glance in the direction of the cañon that yawned below. Knowing that a single slip would send his body hurtling down to certain death, he centered his attention on his task.

It seemed to Tripton that he had barely started when his hands, legs, and arms felt as if they were being seared by flames. As his foot struck a projection big enough that he could rest part of his weight on it, he stopped to rest a moment, and at that instant he was startled to hear, from the edge of the cliff above, a soft, exultant "*Ha-a-a!*"

Quickly he glanced up. Peering cautiously over the edge of the cliff was a Mexican. He had removed his hat, and his black hair dangled over his forehead; his muddy eyes shone with an evil light. "*Ha-a-a-a, señor!*" the Mexican cried, grinning. "You are brave—but also you are a fool! *Si!*"

He thrust one arm over the edge of the cliff—a knife flashed in the sunlight.

"Wait!" Tripton whispered. "He's turned back!"

"Hey, wait a minute!" Tripton shouted frantically. He had stopped with his right foot resting on the projecting rock, and his right side pressed against the cañon wall, while with both hands he clung to the rope.

The Mexican touched the blade to the rope, then looked down at Tripton and grinned.

"You one o' Salino's men?" demanded Tripton, trying to shift his body so he could get at his forty-five.

"Si!"

"Then you listen sharp! A posse o' ranchers are comin'! They got the entrance o' the cañon bottled up already. Only way to get word to Salino is the way I'm takin'. If you—"

"Ha, you lie—w'at you say—like hell, señor!" the Mexican broke in, still grinning. "You are Bob Tripton, of the Yankee Government. You come to—"

Suddenly Tripton's right foot slipped. Just in time he caught himself, and shifted his left foot to the projecting rock. In the movement, his gloved hand struck his sombrero, knocking it off his head.

Involuntarily, Tripton looked down. As if fascinated, he watched the big sombrero go sailing down to the cañon floor far below.

The Mexican chuckled.

"That is the way the señor will go! Only you—you will go tumbling straight down to those sharp rocks. *Si? Por Dios,* it will be—w'at you say—hell-damn' funny, eh? And Salino will know then that I, Pedro Matanzas, have done—"

The rest was drowned in the sudden roar of Tripton's forty-five. Never in his life had Tripton made a quicker draw. Gripping the rope with his left hand, his right had flashed to the wooden handle of his revolver, and swung up, spitting flame.

The Mexican's knife flashed by Tripton's head. Then, through the billowing smoke the Government man saw a sight he never forgot.

The Mexican had apparently been resting on his knees and his left hand, for the body suddenly slumped forward. Tripton got one glimpse of a bloody face; then the Mexican slowly slid off the edge of the cliff. Turning over and over, the body shot past Tripton, throwing a grotesque shadow against the cañon wall.

It seemed ages later that, from far below, Tripton heard a sound which hardened though he was, made him suddenly sick. More shaken than he had ever been before in his life, he holstered his gun and swung off.

Too late then, he discovered something that sent icy chills down his spine. One of the slugs from the forty-five had struck the rope; one or more strands had snapped. The rope was giving.

CHAPTER IV

OBLIVIOUS now to the pain in his hands and arms, Tripton shot down the rope, trying his best to avoid any sudden jerk. It seemed that he would never reach the ledge; then of a sudden he struck it with jarring force. Only by dropping to his knees did he save himself from toppling off the narrow projection.

This ledge, Tripton now discovered, was wider than it had appeared from fifty feet above; at that, it was dangerously narrow for a man to follow as it slanted sharply down the face of the cliff. But it was the only chance now. Moreover, as Tripton suddenly realized, those shots roaring and echoing down the cañon, would undoubtedly attract some of the bandits. There was no time to lose.

Darkness was now falling with desert swiftness. As he hurriedly but cautiously picked his way down the ledge, Tripton realized that unless he reached the bottom before it became too dark, he would be in a doubly dangerous position. Where the ledge was wide enough, he tumbled down recklessly, leaping like a mountain goat from rock to rock; where the ledge shrank to a scant footing, he hugged the face of the cliff, shoved one foot gropingly ahead of the other and proceeded as fast as he dared.

It was while he was creeping over one of these narrow places, his face to the rock wall of the cliff, and still some forty feet or more from the bottom, that Tripton heard a sharp, astounded voice below.

Again an icy chill went down Tripton's spine. He could not turn around on the narrow ledge, could not even look around. And it was still six feet or more to where the ledge widened.

Following the sound of that astounded voice was a silence, then a violent oath. Tripton kept moving. He knew what to expect, but there was no way to avoid it. And it came.

Below, a gun barked savagely. A bullet cut beneath Tripton's left armpit, struck glancingly on the cliff and sent a spray of fine rock against his face.

TRIPTON did not stop. The wider ledge was now no more than a yard distant. If the man below would only miss the next time—

A second explosion roared and echoed in the cañon. That bullet nicked Tripton's right shoulder, and burned past his ear. Another shot passed just over his head—then, with a gasp of relief, Tripton gained the ledge and flung himself down against the face of the cliff.

Coolly now, the Government man looked around. The firing below had ceased; but there was nothing reassuring in that. Salino's men might be moving farther out into the cañon so they could draw a bead on the man lying on the ledge. Moreover, Tripton also made the discovery that just below him the shelf again pinched out to a bare foothold. He was trapped. And the shooting would undoubtedly bring others of the gang.

"Got to work fast an' sure!" muttered Tripton as he slipped his bandanna over his head. Hooking the bandanna over the toe of his right boot, he began working his way on his back toward the edge of the rock. When he was as near the edge as he could go without being seen from below, he drew his forty-five, reloaded it, then began slowly raising the foot on which hung the bandanna.

Suddenly, from below, came a shot. A bullet tore through the bandanna, grazing Tripton's boot.

Tripton acted swiftly but with deliberate care. Resting his long-barreled forty-five on the edge of the rock, he looked over, saw but one man—and fired. More wise in the tricks of shooting at an oblique angle, Tripton did not miss. The smuggler dropped—and lay still.

For a moment Tripton watched the shadowy figure lying on the gravel. Something in the crumpled attitude of the body told him that this smuggler would not move again—no more than the Mexican who had pitched headlong off the cliff.

"That's two of 'em, Slim!" muttered Tripton, as he glanced around the cañon for signs of other men. "Hope I won't be blamed for forgettin' that I'm a Government officer an' supposed to bring prisoners in alive; but I was a-thinkin' o' you, Slim—layin' there on the floor. So—I'm goin' to mop up!"

Springing to his feet, Tripton started on down the ledge. Although it was more difficult to grope his way over the narrow shelf with his back to the wall, Tripton decided that he didn't want to repeat the experience of being caught on that ledge with his back to the cañon. So, listening for sounds, and still keeping one eye on the man lying on the

Tripton as he fired, leaped to one side. The roar of his forty-five drowned the savage bark of Torres' smaller revolver.

gravel far below, Tripton felt his way hurriedly over the narrow shelf of rock in the growing darkness.

He was still some twenty feet or more above the floor of the cañon when he made a dismaying discovery. Just ahead, the rock had broken off and fallen, leaving a gap of over six feet.

And, at that same instant, from down the cañon came the ring of horses' hoofs.

Hastily Tripton considered his situation. He could not conceal himself on that narrow shelf of rock; neither could he get back to the wider ledge above before the smugglers would arrive on the scene. And a jump to the cañon floor, littered with huge broken rocks, was altogether too risky.

Drawing as near as he dared to the gap, he measured it carefully with his eye. He could make the jump, he believed; the danger lay in losing his balance after he had landed on the other ledge.

The riders coming up the cañon were now so near that Tripton could tell that there were only two of them, and that they were following a trail a hundred feet or more from the wall of the cañon.

That reminded Tripton that he had not seen the horse ridden by the smuggler he had just killed. No doubt he was behind one of the many boulders that were strewn over the cañon floor. It was these boulders, Tripton now realized, and the stunted pine and mesquite that grew in the cañon, that had hidden the smuggler's approach, and that now prevented Tripton from seeing the coming riders.

Perhaps these men would ride on by! Tripton waited, his narrowed eyes peering into the shadows. He could now hear the men plainly. They were slowing down. Now they were almost directly opposite the place where the other smuggler lay dead.

Suddenly the men halted. Tripton heard low, growling voices, a curse—then the clatter of hoofs. Two horsemen came into view, riding straight for the cliff.

"Got to do it!" muttered Tripton—and jumped.

He landed squarely on the other ledge, clawed desperately at the smooth face of the cliff, and regained his balance—just as disaster came from an unexpected source.

Beneath Tripton's feet the ledge suddenly crumbled. Tripton heard the slow grind of rocks, felt that horrible sensation of the world dropping from beneath his feet, of plunging downward into darkness. Jagged projections where the ledge had broken cut like huge, dull saw-teeth into his body, and hurled him outward from the cliff. The floor of the cañon, littered with broken rocks that thrust sharply upward out of the gloom, seemed to be rushing at him with frightful speed.

There was a deafening crash, a blinding flare of lights—then darkness. . . . And then—to Tripton it seemed only an instant later—he was gasping, choking, struggling against the horrible sensation of drowning.

"Stop it, Smoky!" a voice roared in Tripton's ears. "He aint dead!"

"I told you he wasn't," growled another voice. "That's why I brung him in."

"Well, he's goin' to wish to hell he *was* dead," said the first speaker. "Sam, go on an' spit out what you know!"

SOMETHING in that steely tone drove into Tripton's consciousness. Opening his eyes he saw, as in a mist, faces scowling down at him, became aware that he lay on the floor of a lighted cabin, that his belt and gun were gone, and that his face and hair and shirt had been drenched with water. Then, as an agonizing pain shot through his head, he closed his eyes again.

One of the smugglers was speaking. "Me an' Judd was ridin' up the cañon to see who fired them shots. We didn't see no one an' figgered we'd best go on an' see Cavallas an' Pedro—an' just then we heard more shootin'. We got there as soon as we could an' found Cavallas' bronc' standin' in the trail. Looked to us like Cavallas had left his horse there to walk over to the wall, so we headed thataway; an' just then we heard rocks fallin'. We got to the wall *pronto* an' found Cavallas there dead, an' this *hombre* dyin'. Cavallas had been shot clean through the forehead. This gazabo 'peared to have fallen off the cliff. We don't know how to figger it all out, so Judd goes on to the lookout where Cavallas had been; an' me—I pack this *hombre* on Cavallas' hoss an' bring him in. That's—"

The cold, incisive tones of the first speaker cut in.

"Git back up the cañon an' see what Judd has learnt! Tripton must 'a' slipped by Cavallas at the lookout some way, an' Cavallas probably chased him. Tripton aint fool enough to try to get into the cañon alone—so git a move on you, Sam!"

There was a hurried scuffle of boots, the slam of a door. Then, without a word of warning, some one drove his boot-heel into Tripton's already aching ribs.

With a gasp of agony, Tripton's eyes flew open; and out of the rapidly clearing mist came the face of the man bending over him—a face that gave Tripton a shudder.

Like others Tripton had seen along the border, the face held a mottled greenish tint that told of mixed blood; but unlike any face he had ever seen was the flat head, the small glittering eyes, the long nose, and the protruding mouth made doubly hideous by the almost complete absence of a chin.

It was that repulsive. reptilian face that had given "Snake" Salino his name.

"You got anything to say?" demanded the smuggler chief.

Tripton made no answer, merely stared vacantly as the lids drooped slowly over his glazing eyes.

"Damn' bad shape," Salino muttered indifferently. "Something busted inside, mebbe." With long, deft fingers Salino rolled a cigarette, his glittering eyes fastened on his prisoner's face. "Torres," he said, smoke writhing from his nostrils, "you an' Smoky h'ist him on to that box an' see if he can set up with his back ag'in' the table."

Roughly the two smugglers lifted Tripton off the floor and dropped him on a packing-box. As they started to let go, the injured man would have fallen had not one of them caught him quickly.

"Hell!" breathed Salino. "That's what I was afraid of! An' I wanted him to talk! Well, we won't waste no more time on him. You fellows—"

Salino broke off as the cabin door was flung open. Tripton heard swift steps, a faint musical jingle. Beneath his sagging lids he caught a flash of red—and his eyes opened wide, staring.

Before him stood a woman in the bright-colored dress of the gypsy. In her raven black hair were ornaments of gold set with brilliants; silver bangles hung from her ears; necklaces of beads and silver coins encircled her neck; bracelets of silver and gold set with gems adorned her bare arms, while the fingers of both hands fairly bristled with rings. But the woman's face was not the wrinkled brown face of a gypsy. It was a white face—a ghastly white face that showed not the slightest mark of the burning Southwest sun, a dead-white face that matched the blank stare in the woman's colorless eyes.

Again Tripton heard a faint musical jingle as the woman flung up an arm. She pointed a bony finger at the prisoner.

"That is the man," she said in a dead, flat voice. "Yes, that is the man!"

CHAPTER V

FOR an instant there was a dead silence in the cabin. When Salino finally spoke, there was a hint of fear in his voice.

"What d'ye mean? What man?"

"It's the man I knew was coming," the woman answered tonelessly. "When I heard that you had taken a prisoner in the cañon I came quickly to see. Yes, that is the man."

"What the devil are you talking about, Kate?" Salino growled, a worried look on his snaky face. "How did you know—"

"S-sh!" the woman interrupted, with the patient manner of a mother speaking to a fretful child. "Do not be so cross with your Kate. I did not tell you before, for I knew it would only worry you. But this man—I know him. He—"

"We know who he is!" snapped Salino. "Battered Bob, of the Immigration Service. But how'd you know he was comin' here?"

"Because I have seen him coming," the woman answered in that dead tone. "Every night, for nine nights, I have seen him coming down from the clouds; and the clouds were blood and flame and—"

WITH a curse, Snake Salino hurled the woman aside.

"Git outa here, you crazy fool! Wastin' my time listenin' to your mad babblin'! Hell! Git busy, you fellers! Take Tripton out to the other cabin an' throw him on the bunk. Smoky, grab that rope! Kate, you git to hell outa my way or—"

"But don't you understand?" the woman argued patiently. "This man will ruin everything—unless—"

The silver bangles snapped metallically as the woman drew a forefinger across her throat in a swift and savage gesture.

"Don't you worry 'bout him!" Salino growled. "An' you keep your hands off'n him! . You hear?"

Half-carried, half-dragged, Tripton was taken out and across a patch of gravel a dozen steps or so to another cabin. Salino struck a match and lighted the candle that stuck in a can on the table. Torres and Smoky dragged the prisoner across the floor and threw him on a wall bunk. With the rope that Smoky had brought, Tripton was then securely bound.

"Reckon he's 'bout done for," muttered Salino; "but I'm takin' no chances. Smoky, you git back to the cook-cabin an' see that Kate don't git hold o' one o' your carvin'-knives. She's actin' like she's goin' to go violent ag'in."

Smoky shuffled out, closing the door.

"Torres," went on the smuggler chief, "you ride up the cañon an' see what's doin'. If nothin' happens by moonrise, leave Pete at the lookout an' the rest o' you fellers come back. Then we'll make this *hombre* tell us what all this means."

"Por Dios!" breathed the Mexican. "If hees dead, he no can talk. If he no die, how you make heem talk, eh?"

"If he won't talk to us we'll make sure he doesn't talk to anybody else—ever! Can't take no chances now. Vamoose, Torres!"

The Mexican glided out of the cabin. Salino stood by the table a moment, his glittering eyes on the prisoner, his snaky head turned as if listening. Then he blew out the candle and left.

Tripton raised his head and looked around. His head, and every muscle in his body, ached; but he had not been as seriously injured as he had made believe.

Satisfied that he was alone, he began testing his bonds. The situation appeared hopeless. His wrists had first been bound, then placed over his abdomen and the rope passed around his waist. The rope had then been looped through his bound wrists and carried to his feet. There his ankles had been tied, and the rope drawn tightly over a cross-piece at the foot of the bunk.

The end of the rope had then been run between his wrists again and tied to the cross-piece at the head of the bunk.

All this Tripton learned by trying the rope, for he could see nothing in the gloom of the cabin. "Looks like the buzzards win!" he muttered. "But I got to—"

Abruptly he broke off, thrilled by a sudden discovery. Shoving his body toward the head of the bed as far as his bound feet would permit, he found that he could set his teeth in the knot of the rope tied at the head of the bunk.

There was a ghost of a chance! Desperately, Tripton got busy. . . . Minutes passed. Now and then, breathing heavily and utterly exhausted, Tripton lay still, listening. Outside the cabin there was no sound save that dull, growling roar of falling water.

"That's the Pit, all right!" muttered Tripton. "An' these are the two cabins I helped build. However, all that doesn't do me much good so long as I'm all bound round with forty miles o' rope!"

Fortunately, the knot at the head of the bunk had been carelessly tied; yet to untie it with his teeth, Tripton found was a tedious and trying job. How long it took him, he had no idea; it seemed like hours, for even the slightest movement of his body sent pains shooting through his head.

BUT finally it was done. Gritting his teeth against the racking pain, Tripton sat up. The hardest part was still to be done. A moment he sat still, trying to steady his whirling head, and listening for sounds outside the cabin. Moonlight was showing dimly at the chinks between the logs of the old cabin. And Salino had told his men to come back at moonrise.

Realizing that he had not a moment to lose, Tripton leaned forward to tackle the job of untying the rope at the foot of the bunk—when he heard swift, cautious steps on the gravel. A hand groped over the cabin door.

Instantly Tripton dropped back on the bunk. He turned his head so he could see the door. A shaft of white moonlight fell across the threshold.

Then, across that patch of moonlight, crept slowly a grotesque shadow. A figure entered—with dead-white face and staring eyes.

Motionless, the woman stood in the doorway as if listening; then she turned to face the man lying on the bunk. As she turned, her right arm came into view; and Bob Tripton, to whom danger was all in the day's work, grew suddenly rigid, his heart pounding. Beneath the flash of rings on the woman's right hand was the steely glitter of a long blade.

Swift and silent as a shadow Crazy Kate glided across the room. Tripton felt a cold, clammy hand flutter over his face. The hand dropped to his throat, groped over his chest, and stopped over his pounding heart. Out of the gloom floated an exultant, *"A-ah!"*

At that, Tripton's mind suddenly cleared and began working swiftly. Bound as he was, he knew that what little fight he could put up would be useless.

"Just a minute, lady," he spoke up as calmly as he could. "You got the right idea, of course; but before you do that, I got a favor to ask—"

"I have no time to listen," Crazy Kate intervened in that flat, dead tone.

"Yes, you have. An' it's something that any lady like you would be glad to do for a man who's goin' to die. Now if you—"

"Hush! There is no time—"

"Yeah, you got all the time in the world," Tripton argued earnestly. "It'll take you only a second to run that sticker through me. As I was sayin'—"

"But I will not listen—"

"Yes, you will! You aint goin' to let me die an' you always wonderin' what it was I wanted you to do for me. So let's talk friendly-like. I'm just achin' to know why you're so anxious to—"

Out of the gloom the woman's hand clapped suddenly over Tripton's mouth. *"S-sh!"* she hissed in his ear, then turned to face the door she had left open. Tripton caught the fall of steps on the gravel.

Desperately he attempted to twist his face from beneath the woman's hand. "Wait!" he muttered in a hoarse whisper, realizing that to call for help would not save him now. "Wait! He's turned back!"

"You are right," whispered Kate, and lowered the knife. "But I can't take any more chances." She lifted the long knife.

"But listen, lady!" pleaded Tripton desperately. "What's the idea of you doin' this—murderin' a helpless man?"

"I must do it! If I don't, you will ruin Salino's big scheme, the biggest thing he has ever dreamed of doing. You came here to ruin us. I—"

"What's his big plan? Tell me!"

The woman hesitated.

"Very well," she whispered. "I'll tell you. Salino is planning the biggest thing ever done in the Southwest. He—"

With a startled gasp, Crazy Kate broke off. Heavy steps were pounding on the gravel right outside the door.

CHAPTER VI

SALINO'S voice came through the doorway like the crack of a pistol. "Kate! Hey, Kate!"

With a snarl of mingled dismay, anger, and fear, she shoved the knife beneath Tripton's body, and turned from the bunk.

"So you are here!" shouted Salino. He sprang through the doorway, seized her roughly and hustled her toward the door. There he stopped and looked back at the prisoner. "Say," he called out, "what was this she-devil doin'? She have a knife or something?"

"Of course, I didn't have a knife!" declared the woman.

"You're lyin'!" Salino charged. "I'll take a look-see, myself."

"I suppose she was goin' to work on me some way," said Tripton, moving over the better to conceal the knife. "I hope you'll put her where she won't pester me again."

"So you can talk, eh?" Salino was feeling over the bunk. "Thought mebbe Kate had finished you. Damn' lucky, you are!"

He scraped one booted foot over the floor by the bunk. "I reckon Kate didn't have nothin', or you wouldn't be layin' here all in one piece like you are. C'mon, Kate! I'm sure goin' to tie you up for the night. I got business with this *hombre* an' I can't take no chances o' you spoilin' my game."

Their footsteps had not died away on the gravel when Tripton had twisted on his side and was groping with his bound hands for the knife. He found it—and a moment later had forgotten his throbbing head as he gripped the knife-handle in his teeth and drove the keen blade back and forth across the knotted rope that bound his wrists.

The job was soon done, but none too soon. Salino had evidently made short work of tying the woman, for it seemed to Tripton that they had not been out of the cabin a minute before Salino was back.

Again the smuggler stalked across the floor to the bunk.

"Tripton," began Snake Salino in a matter-of-fact tone, "you sure got me guessin'. How did you get in the cañon? Did Bat Fisher tell you how to get in here?"

"Well, not exactly."

"Then how'd you do it?" growled Salino impatiently. "The boys are back with a story that's about as crazy as what Kate said—they say that you musta found some way o' gettin' down the cañon wall. What about it, huh?"

"I reckon I did," answered Tripton, as if the matter was of no consequence. His strength was returning, but none too fast. There was no time to lose, he knew; for Salino's eyes would presently become accustomed to the gloom and he would discover the ropes had been cut. "I reckon your men saw me ridin' up the trail. Cavallas sent Pedro to follow me, for I was slidin' down my rope when the Mex—"

"Then you *are* alone?" Salino broke in.

"I suppose I might as well admit it."

"Good!" exclaimed Salino. "Now I got a proposition—"

"So have I!" cried Tripton—and his right hand shot up and caught Salino by the throat, while his left arm closed around the smuggler's waist, pinning both arms to his side. Before Salino could resist, Tripton jerked him down on the bunk on top of him, and dug his fingers into the skinny throat.

A choking oath burst from Salino's lips. He began struggling with a strength that surprised Tripton; in spite of his efforts, he was thrown off the bunk, landing on his back on the floor with Salino again on top.

Unable to pull free, Salino again rolled over, this time slamming Tripton against the side of the bunk with stunning force, and jamming his right elbow against the solid wood frame.

For an instant Tripton's arm went numb; and in that instant Salino freed his neck from Tripton's grasp.

"Help!" he shouted wheezily. "Judd! Smoky! Help—"

That last cry ended in a gasp, for Tripton's fingers again closed on Salino's throat. Savagely he tightened his grip.

To Tripton it seemed a fearfully long time before Salino stopped struggling and his body became limp. Taking off his bandanna, the Government man gagged Salino, then lifted his body on to the bunk and bound him with the ends of rope that were still fastened to the cross-piece at the foot of the bunk.

THAT done, Tripton took Salino's cartridge belt. It was well-filled, and the forty-five in the holster was loaded and in working condition. "I sure feel better now," muttered Tripton as his fingers caressed the handle of Salino's six-gun.

Quietly he tiptoed to the door and looked out. Straight ahead, a hundred feet or so, Mad River tumbled, roaring, into the Pit. Beyond that, stunted pine gleamed darkly in the moonlight; while farther on uprose the sheer, naked wall of the cañon, its rim sharply outlined against the purple sky.

The other cabin, where Tripton had been taken first, was close by on his right. As he stepped out on to the gravel and moved cautiously toward the other

"There's One Man We're Going to Keep"

"ED WILSON, there, is one of the most ambitious men in the plant. I notice that he never fools away his spare time. He studies his International Correspondence Schools course every chance he gets.

"It's been the making of him, too. He hasn't been here nearly so long as Tom Downey, who was laid off yesterday, but he knows ten times as much about this business.

"I'm going to give him Tom's job at a raise in salary. He's the kind of man we want around here."

How do you stand in your shop or office? Are you an Ed Wilson or a Tom Downey? Are you going up? *Or down?*

No matter where you live, the International Correspondence Schools will come to you. No matter what your handicaps or how small your means, we have a plan to meet your circumstances. No matter how limited your previous education, the simply-written, wonderfully-illustrated I. C. S. textbooks make it easy to learn.

This is all we ask: Without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, put it up to us to prove how we can help you. Just mark and mail this coupon.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
"The Universal University"
Box 2443-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "**Who Wins and Why,**" and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X:

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Architect
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Building Estimating
☐ Wood Millworking
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Structural Draftsman
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Electrical Engineer
☐ Electric Wiring
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Welding, Electric and Gas
☐ Telegraph Engineer
☐ Telephone Work
☐ Mechanical Engineer
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Pattern Maker ☐ Machinist
☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
☐ Civil Engineer
☐ Highway Engineering
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Gas Engines ☐ Toolmaker
☐ Diesel Engines
☐ Aviation Engines
☐ Bridge Engineer
☐ Automobile Work
☐ Plumbing ☐ Steam Fitting
☐ Heating ☐ Ventilation
☐ Sanitary Engineer
☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ Steam Engineer
☐ Marine Engineer
☐ Refrigeration
☐ R. R. Locomotives
☐ Air Brakes
☐ Train Operation
☐ R. R. Section Foreman
☐ R. R. Bridge and Building Foreman
☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Coal Mining Engineer
☐ Navigation
☐ Agriculture
☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
☐ Cotton Manufacturing
☐ Woolen Manufacturing
☐ Fruit Growing ☐ Radio
☐ Poultry Farming

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Personnel Management
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Accountancy
☐ Cost Accountant
☐ C. P. Accountant
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Secretarial Work
☐ Spanish ☐ French
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Lettering Show Cards
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Complete Commercial
☐ English ☐ Signs
☐ Civil Service
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Mail Carrier
☐ Grade School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning
☐ Lumber Dealer

Name..

Street Address..

City..

Occupation..

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

Here's a position—and a career—for ambitious men

Many positions are open in this uncrowded profession. You start at a definite salary, and advance rapidly to $175, $200, $250 per month plus expenses. Travel, or remain near home. We'll train you with three months' spare time home instruction, and upon completion, assist you to a salaried position, or refund your tuition. Could anything be fairer?

SEND TODAY FOR FREE BOOKLET

For ten years we have assisted our graduates to salaried positions. Railways look to us for men. Our booklet shows how we can make your future a certainty. Send for it today.

STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE
Division 12 **Buffalo, New York**

Book on Law Free

Write today for this new book. It tells you how a law training will shorten your road to success. It also carries a vital and inspiring message to every ambitious man. Find out about the opportunities that await the law trained man. Find out how you can learn law right in your own home. No obligations. The book is absolutely FREE.
Write Today—now—while low tuition fee is in force.
American Correspondence School of Law
3601 Michigan Ave. Dept. 1151 Chicago, Ill.

Old Money Wanted Do you know that Coin Collectors pay up to $100.00 for certain U. S. Cents? And high premiums for all rare coins? We buy all kinds. Send 4c for Large Coin Folder. May mean much profit to you.
NUMISMATIC CO., Dept. 108, Ft. Worth, Texas

Coming:
An intriguing tale of adventure, love and mystery in South America.
"The Flowing Road"

cabin, he was surprised to see no light. Listening, he heard no sounds within.

Puzzled, Tripton turned between the two cabins, went to the rear and crossed to the other side. Here he discovered, close to the cook cabin, a large tent, the roof covered with branches of mesquite.

"So that's it!" Tripton exclaimed softly. "Tent covered with mesquite so that the boys of the airplane patrol won't spot it! For same reason the cabin is kept shut at night so a light won't show."

Moving as silently as possible on the loose gravel, Tripton went to the front of the cook-cabin. Near the door, where he now saw a thin sliver of light, Tripton dropped to his knees and listened.

"—Smart woman until the dope got her," some one was saying. "Used to take care of everything on the Mexican side for us. It was on account o' Kate that Salino chucked the dope business and went to handlin' Chinks. Lot more money in dope, but when the stuff got Kate, it sort o' got under Salino's hide. He keeps sayin' now that he'll put a bullet through her some day; but she just tells him in that cool, nightmare voice that if he does, her spirit will come back an' haunt him. An' Snake is just that superstitious that he believes it. So he don't shoot. But tomorrow—"

"Yeah, tomorrer!" broke in a growling voice. "Say, don't Snake trust any o' us any more 'ceptin' you? What's all this mysterious business, anyway? Where're we goin'? An' what're we goin' to do? Go on an' spill it, Judd!"

Judd did not answer at once. Boots scuffled on the floor, then crossed to the door where Tripton crouched, listening.

A hand fumbled at the door-latch.

CHAPTER VII

As he started to rise, Tripton snatched Salino's gun from its holster; but, on second thought, he dropped flat on the ground. Time enough to fight if he were discovered. If not discovered, he might hear what Salino had planned.

The door-latch was on the opposite side from where Tripton lay. A makeshift affair, the door opened out. Some one now pushed the door open a few inches. Whoever it was, he was apparently looking in the direction of the other cabin—where Tripton had left Salino a prisoner.

Then the door was closed. Again boots scuffed across the floor.

"Reckon Snake is havin' a palaver with Tripton," said a voice Tripton recognized as Judd's. "Well, fellers, I know that Salino trusts you, but you know he's queer. Gets an idee in his head an' he hangs on like a bulldog. That's why we're goin' to Monument City tomorrer."

"Monument City!" exclaimed some one. "What in tarnation is in that dead hole that int'rests the chief?"

"Revenge," Judd said curtly. "Some o' you fellers know, an' some o' you don't, that the Gov'ment got Salino onct an' put him away for three years. An' over in Monument City lives the Gov'ment agent that caught Salino. It was all in a day's work with him, of course; but you know how Salino is. He blames the whole thing on the man who caught him. Well, when Snake Salino starts out to git even with some one, he does it up brown. So you fellers listen!

"Early tomorrer we'll ride into Monument City. Men will be posted at the road so that nobody can git out o' town for help. We'll then rope the immigration agent Salino is after an' string him up right in the main street.

"But that aint all—after the hangin', we're goin' to drive every damn' man, woman, and kid clean out o' town into the desert.

"An' then we helps ourselves to whatever we find. There'll be plenty o' money in the two stores, the postoffice, the Gov'ment office, an' other places, to say nothin' o' what we'll find in the houses.

"All we find goes to us. Salino says he won't take a cent from the place, he hates it that much. So we'll clean up an' have enough that we can slip across the line an' lay low for a spell.

"An' now comes the grand finish. After all the folks are driven off, after we've cleaned the town, we'll set fire to the whole place—every damn' house in the burg. Fellers, tomorrer night, Monument City, the town that insulted an' humiliated Snake Salino, will be nothin' but a heap o' stinkin' ashes; an' stickin' up out o' them ashes will be the roasted carcass o' the Gov'ment agent who sent Salino to prison!"

There was an instance of silence; then a crash, as if some one had brought his fist crashing down on a table.

"Hooray!" boomed a hoarse voice.

"Shut up!" warned Judd quickly. "Remember, you aint s'posed to know nothin' 'bout this until Salino spills it. Torres, you best go an' see what's keepin' the chief. Battered Bob Tripton is the slickest cuss this side o' hell. Mebbe—"

Quick as a cat, Tripton sprang to his feet. With his left hand, he caught hold of the door, jerked it wide open. He shoved the muzzle of Salino's gun against Torres' stomach as the latter stepped out.

Taken completely by surprise, Torres instinctively flung up his hands.

As Tripton backed the smuggler in through the doorway, he discovered why, even with the door open, very little light showed from the cabin. Over the doorway hung a heavy curtain of sacking.

Torres backed past this curtain into the cabin. Tripton followed.

"Put 'em up!" he ordered. "Everybody! Quick!"

Something in his tone, the look on Battered Bob's face, completely cowed the men. Every hand went up.

Coolly Tripton surveyed the smugglers. There were five of them. One Bob Tripton recognized as the man Salino had called Smoky. Sam was another. Torres made a third. The two others he had not seen before, but one of them must be Judd, the man who seemed to be most in Salino's confidence.

"I was hopin' you'd start something," Tripton remarked. "As a Government agent, it's my duty to take you all prisoners. But after what you did to my friend Slim, an' after what I heard you were plannin' for tomorrow, I'm just itchin' for an excuse to—to mop up. Torres, you step over there an' line up with the other skunks!"

A scowl on his dark face, murder gleaming in his eyes, Torres obeyed.

"Now, one at a time, each o' you lay your guns on the table."

Torres was the first to move to obey. A crafty glitter in his eyes, he drew his gun slowly, took two steps to the table, hesitated—then dropped the weapon.

Tripton laughed, but it was not a pleasant laugh. "Lively now, the rest of you!" he ordered. "Reckon this aint your fightin' day! Now I want to know something, an' I want to know it quick. Where did Salino put Kate?"

"He tied her up," said one of the men, and from the voice Tripton knew him to be Judd. "Tied her up in that tent just west o' this cabin."

At that instant several things happened. After placing their weapons on the table, the smugglers had not again raised their arms. Now, watching Torres, but really thinking of Crazy Kate, Tripton saw him move his right hand as if to hook his thumb in his belt. Instead, his hand darted through the opening of his shirt—and came out with a snub-nosed revolver.

Tripton, as he fired, leaped to one side away from the curtain. The roar of his forty-five drowned the savage bark of Torres' smaller revolver.

Torres crumpled. The gun slipped from his fingers. He crashed to the floor.

Judd and two of the other smugglers had started for where their guns lay on the table; but now they backed off, instinctively raising their arms. Fear and mystification showed in their faces.

Glancing from man to man, Tripton discovered that they were not looking at him. They were staring at the sack curtain over the doorway!

Tripton looked quickly around. The curtain was swaying in—as if some one had caught hold of it—some one who was slowly slipping to the floor.

Suddenly, behind the curtain, a body collapsed to the floor. Out from beneath the curtain thrust a hand and an arm. It was a white hand, glittering with rings that matched the gaudy bracelets. The palm of the hand was red with blood.

CHAPTER VIII

THE sight of that hand broke the spell that seemed to have come over Tripton and the others. The men leaped for their guns.

In their haste and excitement the smugglers collided with each other. One man was thrown against the table with such force that his outstretched hand missed the gun and struck the lamp, knocking it off the table. The chimney broke to bits; but the burning wick, instead of going out, flamed up with a lurid light. Silhouetted against that light the struggling men at the table looked to Tripton like huge, grotesque shadows.

Then the room was in pandemonium—the crashing roar of forty-fives all but drowning the shouting and cursing of the smugglers.

At that instant Tripton, out of the corner of his eye, saw the curtain over the doorway snatched aside. Into the room leaped a figure with a drawn revolver.

"Salino!" shouted one of the bandits; his cry was swallowed up in the shattering detonation of heavy forty-fives. The man in the doorway staggered, and the smoking gun slipped from his fingers.

In the gloom, Tripton had not recognized the man, but he was taking no chances. He had fired instinctively, and none too soon. Now, with a bullet-hole in his right shoulder, and blood streaming from a long gash over his left ear, he rolled over quickly, firing with his left hand. With bullets smashing into the floor and wall all around him, he kept moving and firing.

Then the hammer clicked on an empty shell. Again changing his position, Tripton started to throw the shells, when a slug struck the gun and knocked it from his hand. For an instant the shock numbed his whole arm; then, as he moved to pick up the gun, he realized that the firing had ceased. Through the smoke he saw a huge form lunging for the door.

Fighting down the weakness that was coming over him, Tripton leaped to his feet. Empty-handed, he sprang at the man, whom he now saw was Judd. The two clenched. With his gun, apparently empty, Judd struck the Government man over the head. Tripton reeled back, recovered quickly, and drove his left fist straight into Judd's face. Judd staggered backward, tripped over a body on the floor, and fell sprawling.

HIS head reeling dizzily, Tripton was groping on the floor for his forty-five when without warning something happened—so frightful that for an instant Tripton was too stunned to move.

He had noticed, when he first came into the cabin, an old-fashioned gasoline stove against the left wall. This stove, of course, served the smugglers' purpose precisely, giving them a handy means of cooking without any betraying smoke.

Along the opposite wall, Tripton had noticed shelves containing canned goods, groceries, and a large can with a red label—evidently gasoline.

Apparently somebody's stray bullet had struck that can, for gasoline had spread over the floor and at last reached the still spluttering lamp-wick.

With a hissing roar the whole side of the cabin burst into flames. Out of those flames, yelling with terror and pain, dashed Judd. His clothes ablaze, he shot out of the cabin door.

Shouting to him to stop, Tripton sprang to one of the wall-bunks, snatched up a blanket, and bounded out the door after the unfortunate man. But Judd, on fire, and cursing with pain, had too much start for Tripton to catch him. Tripton was close behind, so close he had to stop suddenly to save himself, as Judd reached the river-bank. With a wild shriek the crazed man leaped far off the bank and dropped, like a blazing, spent rocket, into the river.

Hoping against hope, Tripton raced down the bank, keeping pace with the swift waters, but he saw nothing, heard nothing. Only the white-capped river rushing between its high rock banks to tumble, roaring, into the Pit.

A sudden realization of the growing light made Tripton turn quickly. Flames were leaping through the flimsy cabin-roof. Fighting down the reeling dizziness that threatened to overcome him, Tripton dashed back to the cabin. With dismay he saw that the interior of the cabin was a mass of roaring flame. The sack curtain over the doorway was burning.

A Bigger Job—and You're the Man

Are you hunting a bigger job, or does the bigger job hunt you? Why waste priceless years at routine work, when you can acquire at home in a comparatively few months the specialized knowledge for which big firms pay big money? Thousands of men have greatly increased their incomes by the new home-study business training under the LaSalle Problem Method. Let us show you how you can do just as well or better. The coupon will bring you complete information, together with details of our *convenient payment plan;* also your free copy of a remarkable book—"Ten Years' Promotion in One." Make your start toward that bigger job *today.*

— — *Find Yourself Through LaSalle!* — —

LaSalle Extension University
Dept. 1369-R Chicago

Please send me full information regarding the course and service I have marked with an X below. Also a copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation to me.

Ten Years' Promotion in One

- ☐ **Business Management:** Training for Official, Managerial, Sales and Departmental Executive positions.
- ☐ **Modern Salesmanship:** Training for position as Sales Executive, Salesman, Sales Coach or Trainer, Sales Promotion Manager, Manufacturers' Agent, Solicitor, and all positions in retail, wholesale or specialty selling.
- ☐ **Higher Accountancy:** Training for position as Auditor, Comptroller, Certified Public Accountant, Cost Accountant, etc.
- ☐ **Traffic Management:** Training for position as Railroad or Industrial Traffic Manager, Rate Expert, Freight Solicitor, etc.
- ☐ **Law:** LL. B. Degree.
- ☐ **Banking and Finance:** Training for executive positions in Banks and Financial Institutions.
- ☐ **Modern Foremanship:** Training for positions in Shop Management, such as that of Superintendent, General Foreman, Foreman, Sub-Foreman, etc.
- ☐ **Industrial Management:** Training for positions in Works Management, Production Control, Industrial Engineering, etc.
- ☐ **Personnel Management:** Training in the position of Personnel Manager, Industrial Relations Manager, Employment Manager, and positions relating to Employee Service.
- ☐ **Modern Business Correspondence:** Training for Sales or Collection Correspondent, Sales Promotion Manager, Mail Sales Manager, Secretary, etc.
- ☐ **Stenography:** Training in the new superior machine shorthand, Stenotypy

- ☐ Ry. Station Mgm't
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Credit and Collection Correspondence
- ☐ Railway Accounting
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Commercial Spanish
- ☐ Stenotypy
- ☐ Telegraphy
- ☐ Paper Salesman's Training

Name..

Present Position..

Address..

Sousa

says: *"Complete Equipment of Conn Instruments enhances musical value of any band at least 50%."* More than 50 years of experience, and exclusive patented processes make Conn instruments superior. FREE Trial, Easy payments if desired. ***Write for FREE book. Mention instrument.***

C. G. CONN, LTD.
148 Conn Bldg., Elkhart, Ind.

CONN
WORLD'S LARGEST MANUFACTURERS of BAND INSTRUMENTS

RAILWAY MAIL CLERK
GOVERNMENT CLERK
MAIL CARRIER
POSTOFFICE CLERK

WANT A STEADY GOVERNMENT JOB?

$1260 to $3400 Year

Men—Women—18 to 50
STEADY WORK
Paid Vacations
Common education usually sufficient
Mail Coupon Today—SURE

COUPON
Franklin Institute
Dept. T-267
Rochester, N. Y.
Gentlemen: Rush to me FREE of charge, list of U. S. Government big pay positions now obtainable. Send me, FREE 32-page book describing salaries, hours, work, vacation and giving full particulars on how to get a position.
Name ....
Address ....

$500 IN CASH PRIZES

IT has been remarked that there is at least one good novel in every person's life. Whether this is an exaggeration or not, we do believe that nearly everyone's experience includes at least one episode so unusual and dramatic as to deserve description in print. With this idea in mind, we each month offer five prizes of one hundred dollars each for the five best stories of real experience submitted to us. In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is barred. In length the stories should run about two thousand words and they should be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably but not necessarily they should be typewritten and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable. A pen name may be used if desired, but in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return.

Gritting his teeth against the pain in his right shoulder, Tripton gathered up the limp form of Crazy Kate. Midway between the burning cabin and the river he laid her on the gravel. "Lucky if I can get Salino out now," he muttered as he raced back to the cabin.

The flames scorching his face, smoke blinding his eyes, Tripton picked up the body that lay just inside the door. As he laid it beside that of the woman, the light from the burning cabin fell across the man's face, and Tripton started violently. Clearly revealed in the light of the flames was a face that Tripton had never seen before!

Mystified, Tripton stared at the man for an instant; then turned and ran for the cabin where he had left Salino a prisoner. The door was still open. Moonlight streamed across the rough board floor. In its light, Tripton made out the figure of Salino, bound and gagged just as he had left him. . . . And buried deep in Salino's chest was Crazy Kate's knife!

"Gawd A' mighty!" breathed Tripton, stepping back from the bunk. "She—did that—thinking it was me!"

FOR a moment he stood there, staring at the silent form of the smuggler chief. Outside, the muffled roar of the Pit now mingled with the sullen roar of flames.

"Blood an' flame!" echoed Tripton in an awed voice. "She said I was comin' in blood an' flame—an' she sure was right. I thought I was playin' a lone hand; but it looks like Fate—or Justice—was settin' in on the game. Anyway, Slim, I've done my job. I've—"

Abruptly Tripton choked off. Above the crackle and roar of flames he heard the swift pound of hoofs on the gravel. Clearly revealed in the moonlight and in the light of the burning cabin was a party of riders. The one in the lead had leaped from the saddle and was hurrying toward Tripton.

"*Slim!*" cried Tripton. "Is it *you?*"

"Sure it's me! Say—"

"An'—an' you aint dead, Slim?"

"Hell, no! Nuneo's bullet clipped my forehead. But the doc says that what really knocked me out was the crack I got back o' the ear when I fell an' banged my head against the corner o' my desk. But what—"

"Did you say Nuneo? I thought—"

"That it was the Salino gang? No, it wasn't, Bob. I'd fired Nuneo for stealin'. He came back crazy with tequila and shot us up. We found him at Garcia's, then got worried about you an' hit out for Bat Fisher's place. Read your note tellin' how you figgered on gettin' into the cañon, an' struck right out. Brought Bat along an' had him dicker with the man Salino had at the lookout. That *hombre* suddenly disappears. We figger he's bustin' down the cañon to warn Salino, so we—"

"Wait, Slim!" protested the Government man. "All that blood I saw—"

"Gosh, that scared me too, when I saw it!" cried Slim. "But it was just a quart o' currant wine that Berenzi an' I had just opened when Nuneo busted in. Hey, Doc, get busy on this man! He's in bad shape. Tripton, what in tarnation you been doin', anyway?"

Tripton looked around. Over there was Mad River tumbling, roaring, into the Pit. Not far from the river-bank, the bodies of Kate and the guard lay on the gravel, the moonlight and flames lighting their upturned faces. And over there, two men were carrying Snake Salino from the already smoking cabin, while the other cabin was a mass of flames.

"What have I been doin'?" echoed Battered Bob as he swayed and caught at Slim's arm. "Nothin' much, old-timer. Just—just moppin' up!"

THE END

FROGFRONT

(Continued from page 89)

the front door, Mr. Sanderson drew back his foot a trifle menacingly. The once-pompous Mr. J. Clifford Townes either misunderstood or understood his movement too well—he broke and ran with a speed almost unbelievable in one lately so proud and stiff.

Then grave danger began to exist of a certain blonde and beautiful young telephone operator's sharing the untoward fate of the fabled cat whom curiosity killed, before ever Juliet could get into action an imperiously wiggling finger at the newly dominant Mr. Sanderson.

"Ben, honey," she requested in new meekness of spirit, "tell me! Tell me all—before I pop!"

"Oh, nothing—nothing much," Ben prolonged for himself the sweets of mystifying her. "I just took a chance."

"*You?* Took a chance? Never!"

"Yeah, I just got overheard, was all—"

Juliet started guiltily at the word *overheard*. "Yes?" she gulped.

"Yeah, you see I'd been trying all through to remember something. This guy Townes, you know, had a way of tapping his foot nervous-like when he was fussed. And, finally, I got his number! So all of a sudden up there when he's just reaching for the big check, I sings out—and he jumps back. And I've *got* him!"

"Got him?"

"Yep. By the way he wilts when I sings out, '*Frogfront!*' I know that *he* knows that I've placed him: my old schoolmate I told you about—the banker's son—out of jail on the forgery sentence! And his new line's a beaut—buying cars for big money, and offering to sell them a couple of days later for half—figuring on impulsive lads like old Stuffed Shirt going off half-cocked and jumping to wrong conclusions about his check not being good, to bring on a chance for blackmail. Nine out of ten'll pay and keep quiet, then!

"But *this* time he runs up hard against Yours Truly, the dumb boy from the old home town! That is why he ran, and why Mr. Brookes has still got his agency, and why he's just slipped me a raise, and—why you're going to get the best job of all now, hon, as *Mrs.* Benjamin Sanderson—no more kidding!"

But Juliet was babbling through happy tears:

"Oh, Ben, I—I always did think I could raise a m-m-mean pot of dahlias—if you'd only woke up like this before—and showed me I could risk it with you!"

NATURAL CHARM

A CIGARETTE so mildly mellow, so alluringly fragrant, so whole-heartedly satisfying that you respond to it as instinctively as to the charm of natural beauty.

Camels are mild! But their mildness is never flat —never artificial. Through every step of their manufacture the delicate, sun-ripe fragrance of choicest tobaccos is scientifically preserved.

Swing with the crowd to a smoke that's all pleasure. Don't deny yourself the luxury of

CAMELS

© 1930, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Winston-Salem, N. C.