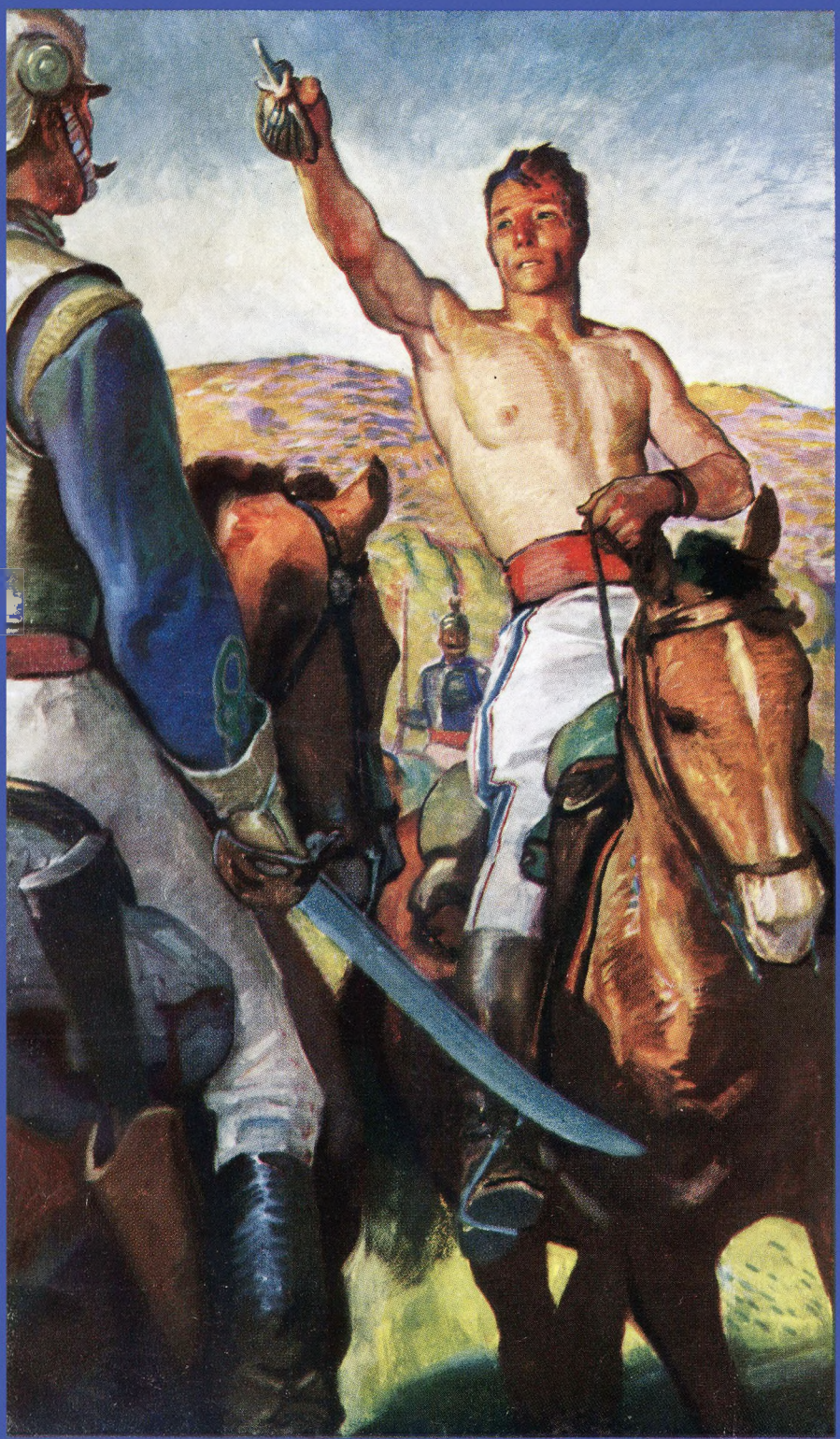
BLUE BOOK

OF FICTION AND ADVENTURE



JANUARY

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"A Price On His Head"

A novel of the West

by **WILLIAM MacLEOD RAINE**

•

"Star Performer"

A novelette of air adventure

by **LELAND JAMIESON**

•

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

H. BEDFORD-JONES

ROBERT MILL

WILLIAM MAKIN

•

"Man's Boldest Adventure"

Magellan's Voyage

by **STEFAN ZWEIG**

•

Fully Illustrated

PAINTED BY HERBERT MORTON STOOPS TO ILLUSTRATE "WARRIORS IN EXILE"

Blue Book's Hall of Fame

Photo by Grattan Condon

LELAND JAMIESON

HE knows a lot about airplanes. And well he may, for he's been flying most of the time since he started in the Army at Brooks Field in 1925 with a class of 141, and was one of eighteen to graduate a year later. He finished at Kelly Field in 1926 as a pursuit pilot. Almost at once he became an instructor in the Army training schools; and at the time he resigned from the Army he was an instructor in the specialists school, teaching pursuit, observation, bombardment and attack. . . . He knows what it's like to tow a target when an over-eager machine-gun pupil gets the towing-plane in line with the target. And he got still more thrills when Hollywood came to San Antonio and borrowed him to double for Richard Arlen in the famous moving picture "Wings."

Since leaving the Army Leland Jamieson has been operations-manager for a commercial line and has flown mail and passengers and—last spring—refugees and food and medicines on the flood-relief job. At present he is flying a big transport plane between Newark and Miami every six days. . . . How big the plane is you don't quite realize from the picture above, for he stands a good six feet three. . . .

He began his writing career with a story in Blue Book in 1928, and as you know, has kept it up ever since and has kept getting better at it—as witness his fine novelette "Star Performer," which begins on page 6 of this issue.

Coming:

"STRANGE ESCAPES"

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Who wrote "Gunpowder Gold" and many other fine stories.

BLUE BOOK

JANUARY, 1938 MAGAZINE VOL. 66, NO. 3

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Cover Design Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

Except for stories of Real Experience, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

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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. As this is a monthly contest, from one to two months may elapse before you receive a report on your story.

Man's Boldest Adventure

By STEFAN ZWEIG

Who wrote that best-seller "Marie Antoinette" and other noted books.

Why I Wrote This Book

BOOKS can originate in feelings of various kinds. As regards "Magellan," I am perfectly clear what the inner promptings were: the book arose out of a somewhat unusual but very poignant sense of shame.

This is how it came about. Last year I had a long-desired opportunity of visiting South America. Greatly did I enjoy the paradisaical days of the Atlantic crossing upon a fine and spacious liner. Then, on the seventh or eighth day, I became aware of a distressing sense of impatience. I was eager to reach port, being glad, day by day, when the clocks were advanced.

Yet I was heartily ashamed of myself. "Here you are," I told myself angrily, "upon the safest of ships upon the most beautiful of voyages, with all possible luxuries at your command. If, in the evening, you find your cabin chilly, you need only stretch out your hand to turn a switch and the air is warmed. Should you be too hot when the sun is high at noon, you need but walk a step or two to reach the room where the electric fans are at work, and ten paces farther on a swimming bath is ready for you. You can get anything that takes your fancy to eat and whatever you like to drink upon this elaborate floating hotel, all requisites being provided as if by magic and in superfluity. You know your destination, know the precise hour at which you will reach it, and know that friends await you. In London, in Paris, in Buenos Aires, and in New York, everyone who is interested in the matter can learn from hour to hour exactly where the ship is. Go upstairs to the wireless room, and an invisible spark will convey your questions or your greetings to any place in the wide world. In an hour, you will have an answer to your message.

"Compare your present circumstances with those of former times, and above all with that of those who made the first voyages which unfolded the world for us. Are you not ashamed of yourself? Try to realize how they then set forth into the unknown, ignorant of the path, embarked upon what were no better than slightly enlarged fishing-smacks, lost in the void, continually in danger, at the mercy of the weather, exposed to every possible privation. For months, for years, no one could tell where they were, and they themselves were not certain whither they were going. Want dogged them; death in a thousand forms was close to them at sea and on land; countless perils from man and the elements threatened them; while for months and for years on their frail craft they were environed by hideous solitude. They knew that there was no one to help them; they knew that they would speak no other ship during their journey upon untrodden paths, and that if they all went to the bottom of the sea, no one would report their fate." The mere thought of the first voyages of the *conquistadores* of the sea made me profoundly ashamed of my impatience.

This sense of shame, once awakened, could not be shaken off; the thought, once it had entered my mind, would not leave me. I felt that, whatever happened, I must learn more about those glorious voyages which had stimulated my imagination during childhood. I went to the ship's library and chose a few volumes. Especially did I wish to learn more of the man whose achievement seemed to me most remarkable; more of Ferdinand Magellan, who with five small craft left Seville to circumnavigate the globe; to learn more of what was perhaps the most splendid Odyssey in the history of mankind, the voyage of two hundred and sixty-five resolute men, of whom no more than eighteen returned upon a worn and battered galleon, but with the flag of victory flying at the masthead.

When, studying the sources, I tried to picture what had actually happened, I could not but believe that I was contemplating a world of fiction, one of the great wish-dreams, one of the sacred sagas of mankind. But this feeling served merely to increase my longing to relate the life-story and the almost forgotten deed of Magellan; to compose this new Odyssey of a dozen nameless heroes. For nothing can be more remarkable, nothing can be more beautiful, than a truth which arouses the impression of improbability. To the sublimest deeds of man, because they so enormously transcend the average capacities of our race, there always clings an atmosphere of the inconceivable; but it is only because these are so wildly improbable, that man can recapture self-confidence. *(Please turn to page 129)*

When jobs are looking for men —thats news!

. . . . . NOW IS THE TIME! . . . . . .

RIGHT now, in many lines there is a search for really *good* men—managers, leaders—men who can take charge of departments, businesses, branch offices, and set things humming.

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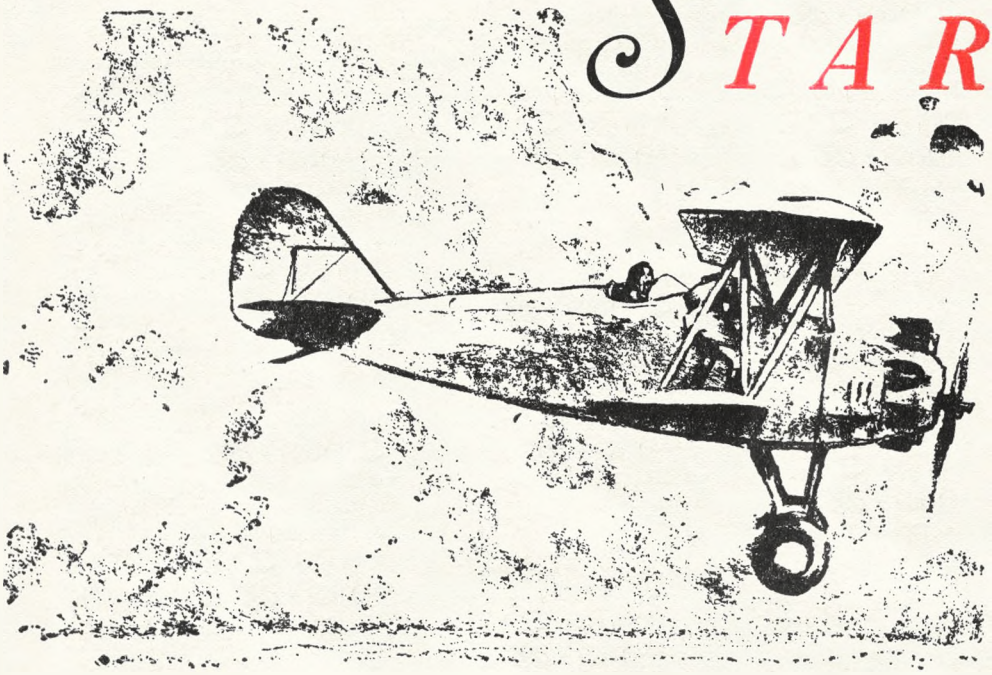


By LELAND JAMIESON

THE snow thickened steadily as afternoon dragged on. At noon there had been only a thin scum over the runways; but now, at four o'clock, all the airport was covered, even the high spot in the far corner, which until two hours ago the moaning wind had kept clean.

Sitting at his father's desk in the lean-to office, Philip Mattick strained his eyes into that gray sky to the northeast, listening.

A heavy car on the highway went past, its engine drumming. For a moment, mistaking that sound while the vehicle was still lost in the snow, relief soothed Philip's nerves. But then he saw it was only a car, instead of Bill's plane. A crease of worry, almost of fear, deepened between his heavy eyebrows; the curves of his young face unconsciously sharpened into angles, and his dark eyes went back through that rattling window, nervously probing the sky.

Once more, as he had done a dozen times since this morning, he picked up the telegram on the desk. His father, Bill Mattick, had sent it from a little town in eastern Iowa—sent it, ironically, collect, although he had been paid for the best charter trip of the year.

CANT CASH CHECK FOR EIGHT HUNDRED HERE STOP OUT OF MONEY OTHERWISE STOP IF RUN SHORT OF GAS ON WAY BACK WILL WIRE FOR HELP BILL

Another engine drummed in the distance, wavered away, and then surged back. On his feet, now, his face pressed against the cold glass, Philip tried to make sure. It seemed impossible that any pilot, even a pilot as good as Bill, could fly in this kind of weather—could fly, and find his way over five hundred miles of farms and hills and bleak, open prairie to this field. It was going to be dark soon, he saw.

Out of the snow, a red tank-truck grumbled, slowed, turned into the road toward the hangar. Philip swore under his breath. The driver stopped at the gas pit, cut off his engine, climbed down from the cab and walked toward the office, beating mittened hands together. He pushed the door open, came in with a swirling of flakes, stamped heavily.

"Hi," he said, stripping his mittens off and fumbling with a crumpled pack of cigarettes. "Looks kinda like snow, don't it!" He lighted a cigarette, pulled receipts from his mackinaw pocket. "Twenty-two bucks."

PERFORMER

A novelette of air adventure that you will not soon forget.

Ben sprawled, found a strut. Philip saw Barnes' tail slam down upon his prop.

Illustrated by Grattan Condon

Philip bit at his lip momentarily. "I wonder if I could sign a ticket for this, this time?" He saw the driver's eyes harden, but he hastened on to explain. "My father's on his way back here from a charter trip—he's got plenty of money with him. But until he gets back, I'm pretty short on cash."

"When's he coming back?"

"He's due here tonight. Of course, this snow may delay him."

"You people got a bill down there now of over a hundred bucks. The boss says to me as I brung that truck out, he says, 'Get the money, Shorty. Get the money, an' then pour that gas into the tank.' I don't know what I can do about that."

PHILIP laid his will firmly against rising anger. You had to have money, to be independent, to be able to say what you sometimes wanted to say.

"You could call Mr. Hayes on the telephone," he said. "Or I'll call him and explain. We need the gas."

"You call him," the driver said. "I'm sorry, bud. I'd give it to you, see, only I got my orders."

"Sure." Philip cranked the old-fashioned telephone, lifted the receiver, said into the mouthpiece, "Brightville 41," and waited, hearing the pulsing hum of the rural line. Then he said, "Ring them again, please," and waited, seeing the driver turn and pace to the window, seeing, through the window, the glowering dusk that was seeping down from the clouds with the snow.

"Aint he there?" the driver inquired. "I guess he went home—you can get him at 76, if he went home." And then, after Philip had tried that number, the driver said: "Well, I'll run out with it again, first thing in the morning. I'm sorry, kid. But the old man gets kinda tough streaks sometimes. You just oughta work for him once—you just oughta."

"Okay," Philip mumbled. There was nothing else he could say. The underground tanks were practically dry, and they needed that gas. He sat there, watching the truck disappear into the gray welter, and he thought bitterly, "Some day I'm going to have money! I'm going to get it! It isn't always going to be like this!"

But, waiting for Bill, he dismissed even that thought, or, rather, he surrendered it to the rising apprehension which slid over him like the cold that penetrated the walls. It was nearly night, now. His straining ears could detect no sounds

"I got a date tonight," Ben grinned.

except the faint ticking of the snow on the window-panes, the low, eerie murmur of wind under the eaves, and the metallic pinging of a hammer in the shop, as Ben, his younger brother, tried to fit a valve guide into a cylinder.

There was nothing further to do, here. And idle, Philip could not stand this increasing sense of dread. He got up jerkily, his lean legs seeming to unfold out of the chair, and went into the hangar.

It was like walking into an icebox, and he went through quickly, shouldering open the door into the shop. Ben was a heavily clothed figure at the bench by the window, his head helmeted against the seeping grip of the cold. His young, handsome face was squinted into a grimace, one eye closed against the curling smoke of a cigarette which hung from one side of his mouth. As Philip came in, he tossed his hammer down on the bench and said:

"You'd think engine manufacturers'd consider guys like us out here in the sticks when they build these things!" He rubbed his fingers together, held them to his mouth and blew on them. "Cripes, it's cold! When's Bill going to get here, anyway?"

Philip warmed his hands over the glowing coal-stove, shook his head. He was two years older than Ben, who was nineteen. Ben was like Bill in many ways, reckless and daring; like Bill, Ben had a glamour that even Philip felt, and admired tremendously.

And now, because actually nothing had happened to Bill yet, and because, although he was terribly worried, he saw no use in getting Ben excited too, he said, "Maybe he landed somewhere to wait until morning. If he didn't, I don't think—"

"He'll be all right," Ben said. "He's too old a head at this game to get in trouble." Lighting a fresh cigarette from the glowing coal of the old one, he frowned and added, "But he'll have no Sunday-school social if he *does* get caught in this mess tonight. I wish he'd come on. But there's no use to worry about it. How long you going to wait out here?"

"I'm going to wait until I hear from him," Philip said.

Bluntly, in his characteristic way, Ben shot out the question, "You worried?"

"Well, not— Hell, yes, I'm worried!"

"Forget it!" Ben gathered his tools and put them in his tool-box. "I'm getting hungry. And I got a date tonight." He grinned suddenly, his wide, straight lips reckless, his blue eyes very bright. "A heavy date!" His curled fingers cuffed Philip lightly on the chest, playfully; then with both hands he described a silhouette in the air. "Judy Anderson —or have you paid any attention?"

"I don't think I know her," Philip said.

"Why don't you wake up to some of the things you're missing?" Ben chided. "Hell, you're two years older than me! Brightville, Oklahoma, may be a little dump of a town, but there're opportunities here. You haven't had a date in two months, I betcha!"

"I never met anybody I liked very much."

"Do you have to like 'em?" Ben laughed, peeling out of his helmet, out of the greasy coveralls he wore over his better clothes. "Well, I can't do anything by staying here. How about me taking the car on in? I'll bring you something to eat, in a couple of hours."

"All right," Philip said, wishing Ben would stay. He wanted company, somebody to talk with, somebody to help him push back the worry that he couldn't seem to hold back by himself. But he said, "All right," and watched Ben drive off into the mat of snow.

AFTER that, he went into the office again, to be near the telephone, built up the fire and sat down in Bill's chair. He tried not to think, but he couldn't help thinking. He thought, "What if

something really has happened to Bill?" and tried to crowd that aside, and could not. He remembered, suddenly, a talk he and Bill had had about Ben; and he remembered Bill's face, how grave and intense it had been when he had said: "Phil, this is something I don't expect to happen, but it might happen—I mean, if I should ever get knocked off. Ben's still a kid. You're a lot more grown up for your age than he is. I'd want you to stick by him, no matter what. He's pretty wild, you know. It would be up to you to make a man out of him."

"Sure," Philip had said uncomfortably. "But I wish you wouldn't talk like that."

"Well, I had to tell you sometime," Bill had said. "I want you to promise me you won't get too sore at Ben. You'll have to put up with a lot, and it'll be tough, maybe, because you naturally don't feel the same way I do about him."

Sitting there, Philip wondered if Bill had had a premonition that day. But that had been more than a year ago. It didn't seem likely.

HE wondered what he would do about Ben, if Bill had cracked up. Ben was a good kid, but wild, as Bill had said. He liked to gamble at anything—money, or his life; it didn't make any difference. To see him perform on a trapeze under the landing-gear, while Bill flew the ship over the crowd on a Sunday afternoon, would make you realize that Ben wasn't afraid of anything, even death. Or, perhaps, he only had that superb confidence peculiar to some pilots, a conviction that refuted forever, even when it was actually happening, the idea that disaster could ever single him out.

Ben had always been that way, ever since Philip could remember—and Philip could remember a long time. He could remember the day when Bill had brought them to this little town, he and Ben in the front cockpit, helmets on their heads and goggles over their eyes; he had been six and Ben had been four. Bill was an ace shortly back from the war, with seven air-victories to his credit, although he would never tell anyone that. . . . Philip could remember, too, the way Bill had used to sit sometimes, motionless, staring out through the window at nothing, looking sad, so that it made Philip sad too, until he sometimes wanted to cry. And he knew, without asking, that Bill was thinking of Philip's mother; Philip could remember how she had been sick for a long time, and then had died.

But Bill wasn't like that very often. Most of the time Bill was in a great rush, doing things; and the days were exciting. . . . The Sundays of flying off the field Bill called his airport, circling in and out, in and out, again and again and again interminably, through the hot summer hours from daylight to darkness. And the evenings following those days, feeling the excitement that Bill felt as he stood at the dresser in their rented room at the Widow Padden's, stacking green and gold bills while he counted, on and on, "Ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty"—up into the hundreds, and once or twice into the thousands, and then stopped suddenly and swept both Philip and Ben up in his arms and grinned at them, his eyes as bright as new metal in a face tanned to leathery darkness, and shouted: "We're rich, kids! Do you know what that means? We've got money—lots of it—we're rich!" And on those evenings he never failed to give each one of them twenty-five cents, with which Philip usually bought ice-cream until he was sick.

Like a slowly revolving kaleidoscope it all came back as Philip sat there waiting, hearing the faint, muffled impact of snow on the panes; and why it should seem to haunt him tonight he did not know. But he let his mind wander, for it kept him from thinking about where Bill was tonight, and what might be happening out there in the dark. . . .

In everything, there had been constant change. From the beginning, at six and seven and eight, Philip had enjoyed nothing better than flying, and his summers were spent on the wing, touring a dozen States with Ben and Bill, barnstorming. He was quick and apt and eager, with Bill's energy and drive, and an ambition altogether his own. He wasn't like Ben; he was quiet, shy—a shyness often mistaken for timidity instead of reserve—while Ben was a bluff, hearty little pagan who bullied and pushed his way around, getting what he wanted no matter who was hurt.

FINALLY, tiring of the monotony of barnstorming—which Philip found forever fascinating—Ben wheedled Bill into sending him to military school, where, in four years, he managed to develop a satisfactory swagger, a profane vocabulary, and a worldliness that would be forever Philip's envy. Philip adored him no matter what he did. . . .

Bill Mattick took in a partner, Griggs, who stayed two years and left one night

with Bill's best airplane, and was never seen again. . . . Philip finished normal school in Brightville, working at the field in his spare time, learning to fly.

But somehow, he was not as good a pilot as Ben was. Ben could do things with an airplane that Philip could not do and never would be able to do. Ben didn't try to learn until after he entered normal school. And after he had learned, when he had twenty-seven hours, he quit school suddenly, caught a freight train out of Brightville and was gone a year—at seventeen. When he came back, he had a fresh red scar across his cheek, and he was very thin.

"Being," he explained to Philip carelessly, "just out of a Cheyenne hospital. Listen, chum, don't ever forget that altitude makes airplanes do funny things. That Cheyenne field is 6145 feet above sea level—I looked it up, only I looked it up too late. Spun in with two passengers out of a climbing turn."

Philip said: "What happened to the passengers?"

"Their luck ran out when we hit the ground," Ben said. It didn't seem to worry him. "Me, I got some scratches and a broken leg."

But he was changed, Philip saw, in many ways. He was adult, and he had learned a lot while he was gone—tricks of ballyhoo that packed the crowds into the field. He took Philip's breath with trapeze stunts, and 'chute-jumps delayed close to the ground, and plane changes as two ships flew across the field at fifty feet in the still, cool evening air. And because he could do all these things, he was immediately imbued with glamour in the public's eyes, and certainly in Philip's, too. . . . All this last year he had basked in glory. But he was getting restless again now. Those far horizons were beckoning once more, for there was nothing left in Brightville that he hadn't seen, or done. And, too, during this last year a depression had come sweeping down across the prairie like this wind that blew outside, restricting his activities. For a year—really for longer than that, ever since Griggs stole that plane—Bill had been fighting bankruptcy.

PHILIP'S mind went on and on. And then, abruptly, it stopped.

For out there in the darkness he heard a sound that was no car, that was no truck, a sound that turned his skin to gooseflesh, chilled his blood to ice. It froze him in his chair a moment, before he tore himself loose and flung the door open and went out into the snow, feeling a relief and gladness so intense it hurt.

Faintly, as the plane swept unseen across the sky, the sound still wavered back to him.

The lights on the hangar were burning; and against them, snow filtered down, and swirled down, and drove slanting down in the harder gusts of wind. Philip did not feel the cold, standing there, straining his ears. The sound was gone.

He could feel his heart pounding as it had never pounded in his life before, for he knew that that was Bill, up there.

AND suddenly, heartsickeningly, he realized that Bill was lost—for he knew Bill would have landed, if he had seen the field.

Philip ran into the hangar, got a bucket, dashed back to the gas pit. He dragged out the hose, kicked at the switch, pressed the nozzle down into the bucket. A gallon of gasoline sluiced in, filling the air with its pungent volatility; and then suddenly the pump coughed air.

The tank was dry, of course; in his excitement, Philip hadn't thought of that. Cursing the driver who had refused to leave a fresh supply this afternoon, he ran out on the field with what he had, feeling the precious drops splashing icily against his legs. In the center of the field he stopped, got out a match, and stood there ready to ignite this flare—stood there trying to catch the faint drumming of the plane as it returned.

But it did not return. . . .

Ben found him there, almost an hour later, still waiting to ignite that gasoline to guide Bill in. Philip was half frozen, but he felt no cold. He was standing there dry-eyed, and when Ben drove up in the car, in answer to his frenzied shouts, Philip yelled hysterically, "He went over! He went right over!"

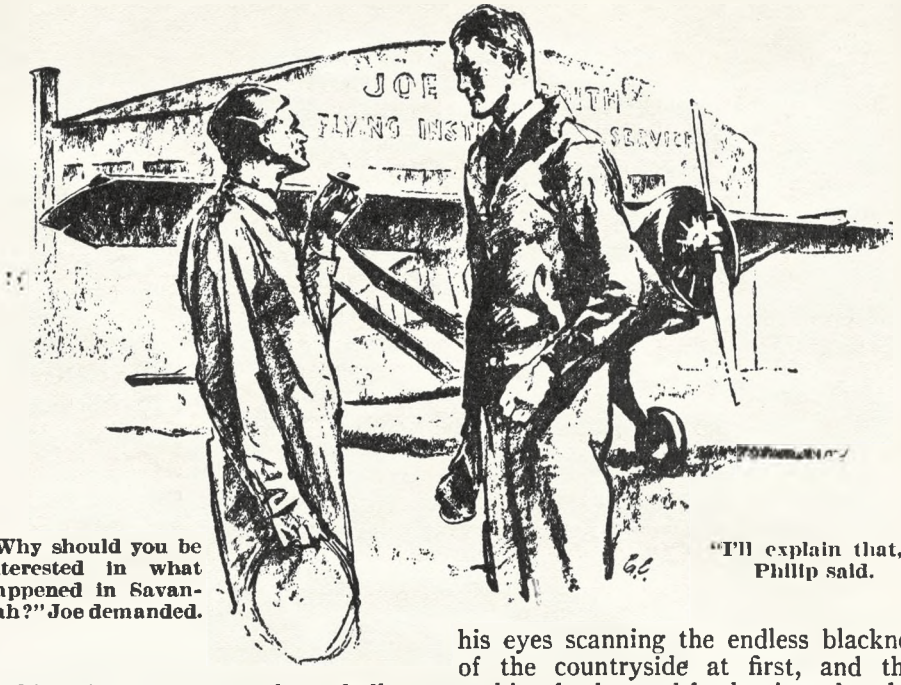
"Bill?" Ben asked inanely, shocked.

"Yes." Philip shivered. "Nearly an hour ago! He was lost—looking for the field! I've been waiting for him—going to light this gas to guide him in. I only had a gallon—afraid to set it off too soon."

Ben said, "Cripes!" and he sounded awe-struck; for the first time in his life he sounded really scared. "Are you sure it was a ship?"

"Of course!" Philip cried. "Of course I'm sure!"

Ben stood there for a long time, not saying anything, as if he couldn't speak.



"Why should you be interested in what happened in Savannah?" Joe demanded.

"I'll explain that," Philip said.

Then his voice came out at last—hollow, cracking: "Good God! . . . Good God, Phil, do you know what that means?"

THE snow had dwindled to occasional flurries that seemed to be squeezed unwillingly from low, wind-torn clouds. A brooding dawn was painting the eastern sky through an anæmic haze that looked like skimmed milk, bluish-white with cold. Philip drove the car, as he had been driving it since midnight, his fingers locked numbly upon the wheel, his feet leaden on the clutch and accelerator as he bucked the drifts on the country roads, up lanes that led to farmhouses where, one after another, time and time and time again, he asked the same questions and received the same replies.

"Did you hear an airplane flying around here, early last night, in the snow?"

"A airplane? In a norther like we had last night—well, I don't reckon we could have heard it, man! Wait a minute while I ask the woman. . . . No, aint been no airplanes near here. You going to wake everybody in the countryside asking that——"

"Thanks. My father's lost. We're trying to find him."

All night, through the black hours, while anxiety seemed to turn him old, while his eyelids became granular with dry fatigue; all night, while beside him Ben sat with his elbows locked around his knees, his face a mask of gray fear, his eyes scanning the endless blackness of the countryside at first, and then probing farther and farther into the white wastes as day began.

Philip had never seen him quite like this before—so openly unnerved. The boy was having trouble holding back his sobs, by morning, and every now and then he muttered something, and then cursed softly in a new, strange way. And seeing these things, hearing them, Philip understood that underneath his bright and hard veneer, Ben was really emotional in a sort of deep and violent way; and Philip understood that if Bill was really gone, as it seemed he must be, Ben would feel it more than he himself, if such a thing were possible. For Ben, perhaps differently, perhaps less independently, idolized his father too. . . .

And so, in the late morning, they found Bill Mattick, ten miles from the field. Or, rather, they came upon the plane, with a clot of farmers gathered silently around it.

IT was not damaged as much as Philip had expected. The landing-gear had been knocked off from the impact with a gully hidden in the snow, and one wing had been crumpled as the craft slid on into the field and through a fence. Philip saw that much as he ran breathlessly, forcing his way through the close-packed people standing there. He yelled, "Where is he?" without knowing he had spoken, for emotion had possession of him now, and he could only feel things—feel apprehension draining all

strength from his body, feel the gagging pain that had come into his throat.

"The pilot?" some one said.

"Yes, of course, the pilot!" Philip cried. "He's my father! Where is he?"

"They took him to town," a farmer said. He was tall, weather-beaten, kindly-looking man, and he peered down at Philip keenly through wise eyes. "You got somebody with you, son?"

Ben came running through the snow just then, and Philip indicated him, and yelled, "Was he hurt? He wasn't hurt much, was he?" In such a minor crash, Bill could not have been hurt badly, he was thinking; and thinking that, relief went through him with a quick rejuvenating warmth. Bill hadn't died because he couldn't cash a check for eight hundred dollars, after all! That realization made him sob suddenly with joy. "Ben!" he yelled. "Ben, they've taken him to town! Can you imagine running out of gas, in that mess of snow last night, and landing blind and cracking up no more than this?" He was half laughing and half crying.

Then he felt the tall farmer's steely fingers on his arm, and something he saw in the man's face checked him coldly.

"He laid there in the wreck," the old man said. "All night, nobody knew he was there, lad. When we found him, he was froze to death."

Philip stood there, mute with pain. Beside him he heard Ben's incoherent sounds, and he turned his head and saw Ben's face go white. He wanted to say something, but his lips moved and no words came out. He put his arm around Ben's shoulder, and led him through the snow back to the car.

IN the dining-room, two evenings later, Ben sat moodily while Sarey Belle, the colored cook, took off the dishes. He had taken half a glass of bootleg whisky before dinner, but externally he showed no signs of that, and Philip had said nothing. But now, when Ben mentioned another drink, Philip said, "Wait a minute, Ben. You'll get nowhere, drowning yourself in that stuff. We've got to make some plans. We're on our own, now. Bill would want us to carry on. . . . All right! The school isn't paying. What are we going to do about it?"

Ben said irrelevantly, "And to think he had to get killed because he couldn't cash a lousy check in Iowa!" and burst into tears and threw his arms down on the table, buried his face.

Philip moved around and shook his shoulder gently. "Snap out of it!" he said. "Do you want to go bugs?"

"Let me alone," Ben mumbled.

"You'll go bugs, dammit!" Philip said. Abruptly he went to the bedroom closet and dragged out two battered suitcases that had gone with them on so many barnstorming trips. He opened them on the floor and jerked bureau drawers open and began to pack.

BEN, a glass of whisky in his hand, came in a little later, to say thickly, "What the hell are you doing?"

"We're going to work," Philip said, not looking up. "If we don't make some money pretty soon, we'll lose the school —and we'll not make any money in Brightville until summer. We'll get some sleep and check out in the morning." Then, when Ben said nothing, Philip looked up angrily and challenged, "Don't you want to go?"

Ben shrugged. "I don't care what we do," he said. "I'd like to get drunk and stay drunk for a year. With—"

Philip suddenly got up, crossed the room, jerked the glass from Ben's uplifted hand.

"I always thought you had a lot of guts!" he said witheringly. "I always thought you were a strong guy! Are you going to pull yourself together and come with me, or are you going to go on acting like a yellow pup?"

Ben's eyes narrowed, gleamed. His fists clenched, his whole body became tense.

"It'll take a long time to forgive you for that!" he said savagely.

"I don't care whether you forgive me or not. What about it?" Philip's anger flared again; he was quick to anger, quick to cool.

"I've a good mind to knock your teeth down your damn' throat!" Ben said.

"Okay. Come on." Philip was grinning now; he loved a fight himself.

Ben shrugged, said grudgingly, "I guess you're right. Let's go. . . ."

The school at Brightville was closed, the hangar padlocked. With the little blue racer that had been Bill's pet, and the six-passenger plane that had been school equipment, they barnstormed eastward, through Oklahoma and Arkansas, down into Louisiana across the flat delta country, and thence into Georgia.

Philip loved the life, the change, the freedom, the excitement. And it was good for Ben, who, right from the start,

was the more valuable of the two, as far as money was concerned. For Ben had a combination of showmanship and flying ability that made him colorful.

But he had never liked responsibility, and he didn't like it now.

"You *work* too hard," he often said to Philip. "Let's have some fun while we're about it!"

It always angered Philip when Ben took that attitude. Philip had a plan, an ambition to be fulfilled; and it was the sheerest kind of pleasure to see the plan developing. There was a mortgage on the Brightville airport, there were debts that Bill had owed. Once he got them paid, and cash enough to buy a full complement of airplanes, they could go back and make money. Bill had made money there for years, before Griggs and the depression had combined to ruin him. Philip knew that he and Ben, together, could do the same again, and he was determined to do it. Every dollar saved brought them nearer to that goal.

But Ben could not see the vision Philip saw. He lived for the moment, working hard when there was work to do, and forgetting all about work when it was finished. His energy was boundless, and it was inevitable that he should surround himself in every town with hero-worshiping boys of his own age, and flamboyant girls with red lips and sultry eyes who idolized him openly. That he paid all the bills was of absolutely no concern to him.

Yet that was transitory, Philip thought; it didn't worry him a lot, although it exasperated him sometimes. The thing that worried him the most was Ben's propensity for showing off before a crowd, his hunger for acclaim. Because, as the weeks passed, he began to do wild and foolish things to get that acclaim.

"SOME day," Philip warned him, "You're going to go too far. You'll make a mistake, or I'll make a mistake, or something will break, and you'll smear yourself across the landscape. I wish to hell you'd realize that this is a business, not a game of daring yourself to see how far your nerve'll last."

"I get a kick out of it," Ben said.

"You'll get a jolt out of it when you smack the ground the last time, too!"

"Oh, for God's sake, quit preaching to me!" Ben exclaimed. "I'll take care of myself. I've always taken care of myself, haven't I? I don't need you to wet-nurse me around!"

Ben was doing stunts that no pilot had ever done above this field before.

"Okay, hot-shot," Philip said, and he never mentioned it again. He recognized that he was getting irritable from the steady, nerve-exhausting grind. And because he felt the need of relaxation, he went, one night, to a party Ben arranged. And there, sitting around a table with Ben and half a dozen local boys and girls, he surprised himself by taking drink for drink with them, and being on his feet

"You're getting ready to get killed, and you know damn' well that you are." "Oh, a tough guy, eh?" Ben sneered.

enough to pour Ben into bed three hours later. For that he won Ben's admiration.

"Boy!" Ben said, when he woke up. "Can you take it! I guess I've had you wrong!"

And somehow, in a way Philip could not understand, could only feel, after that they seemed much closer friends.

Yet there was one constant point of conflict that Philip could not possibly avoid. He had a plan; he wanted, wherever possible, to turn barnstorming into a business. So he paid Ben fifty dollars every week, himself a like amount, and sent every dollar above expenses to the First National Bank at Brightville for their joint account. And every week, every Saturday night, Ben went into a temporary rage about his "tightness."

"I help make it, don't I?" he demanded. "I got a right to spend it, too!"

"Listen," Philip said, "don't ever forget that Bill died because of lack of cash! That's not going to happen to either one of us."

And Ben sometimes said, "Okay, you win;" and he sometimes said, "Phil, I don't know whether you're a wise guy or I'm a fool."

YET he continued ever more restless as weeks passed. He flew his racer, attracting the crowd like flies to see his stunts: his outside loops when he swooped down, screaming past the field, seeming sure to crash; his beautiful slow rolls; the dozen other things he did. But somehow these things were not enough; he wanted other, different kinds of thrills.

In Atlanta, after the ships were "put to bed" and they had gone to their hotel, he announced abruptly, "I feel like a toot. I know a guy in this burg. Met him in school. You might like him. . . . How about a snort?"

It was Saturday night. Philip had arranged publicity and tomorrow was going to be a long and busy day. He was tired—as he seemed always tired, lately.

"I'm not up to it," he said. "How you keep going is more than I can see. But I'll eat dinner with you, and then you go along."

After dinner, they drifted down the street, past the theaters, past the shops, Ben's eyes brightening at every pretty girl. "You better change your mind," he said, at the marquee of their hotel. He jabbed Philip in the ribs, in that playful way he had. "This town's full of cuties! Charlie knows 'em all, I'll bet. You getting old?"

"Maybe I was born old," Philip grinned, and left Ben laughing there....

Ben came in long after midnight. Philip heard his key scraping uncertainly against the lock, heard the door open, heard Ben's deep, slow alcoholic sigh. Then the light snapped on, and Ben stood in the center of the room, weaving a little

on his feet. But Philip did not notice that, at once. He was looking at the clothes Ben wore—an expensive leather coat that had a pair of wings sewn splendidly upon the left breast, an expensive pair of creamy breeches, on his feet an expensive pair of shiny boots. Ben stood rocking back and forth, grinning. He waved his hand in an arc before his face, slowly, palm outward, in a mock salute.

"Good afternoon, my friend," he said.

Unwisely, Philip snapped, "Do you know what time it is? You've got to fly tomorrow, dammit! You've got to do your trapeze act, and that takes steady nerves and strength!"

Complacently, Ben said, "The daily chore! If I didn't remember it myself, why, there you are right in your little bed to call it to my mind." His voice boomed up into a raucous timbre, the tone he used for barking rides. "The sinews of my muscles, sweetheart, are made of tempered steel! Tee-hee! How about a li'l drink?"

"Come on, kid," Philip said, holding his anger tightly in control. "Let's get to bed."

"Dunno if you—if I want to get to bed." He walked across the room, snapped up the shade, looked out across the city lights. "Pretty, isn't it?" he asked. Then he turned back suddenly, demanding, "Hey, guy, how you like my clothes?"

"Go on to bed, Ben. We'll have all day tomorrow to talk about your clothes!"

"Naw," Ben snickered. "Let's talk about 'em now." He came over and leaned down and put his hand on Philip's shoulder, rested his weight heavily. "I saw 'em in a window and I bought 'em, see?"

"With what for money?"

"I gave the guy a check! I wrote a check on the First National Bank of Brightville, palsy-walsy! You send the money to the bank and you feel happy—I draw the money out and I feel happy. We're both happy! Aren't I wonderful?"

"You're drunk," Philip said.

"Sure I'm drunk. I'm scrumptious. Got my picture in the papers in this rig. Got a big write-up—you're in it, too—how you like that? This guy I went to see's a newspaper reporter, see? He said I had everything—everything. 'You've got everything, Mattick,' he said, 'but you need more color,' he said. So I went out and bought some color. Snappy, eh?"

"It looks lousy," Philip snapped.

"Clothes make the man," Ben insisted. "Hey, get up and help me outta these boots. They're tight."

"Okay," Philip said grimly. "Okay. Anything, if you'll only get to bed."

Ben leered at him. "What do you want? I'm gonna die with my boots on—but damn' if I start sleeping in 'em, yet! Get up and put your south side here for me to brace against. . . . See? You pull and I push against you with my other foot. . . . Ah-h-h, that's better!"

NEXT afternoon news-reel cameramen were on the Atlanta administration building, taking telephoto shots of Ben as he put the snarling racer through its paces; as, later, from the trapeze fixed from the landing-gear of the larger plane, he hung by his hands, by his knees, by his heels, while Philip circled low enough for the crowd to see it all.

It was then that Philip got one of the worst scares of his life. Through a glass panel in the cockpit floor he could see Ben let himself down by one hand, and start to come up. But he didn't come up far. He let down again, and hung there, resting. Once more he tried, and could not make it. Then again.

Suddenly a frightened, surprised look spread across his face; his eyes went wide, while his lips moved, saying something that Philip could not hear, of course. But Philip knew then that Ben had hung too long, had lost strength to climb back up.

Philip had to do something, and he had to do it quickly; but for an instant he was so electrified with fright that he could not seem to think. Then, desperate, he nosed down sharply, enough to make himself go light in the seat. And in the momentary lessening of gravity Ben got his other hand upon the lower rung, and finally crawled back up.

On the ground, later, Ben said sheepishly, "Thanks, Phil." And then, after a minute, "I guess I'd better cut down on the drinking, some."

The next week, Sam Barnes' telegram came in. It was addressed to Ben.

HAVE SEEN NEWSREELS STOP WILL YOU ACCEPT PLACE AS STAR STUNT PILOT AND ACROBAT BARNES FLYING FOOLS TERMS TWO HUNDRED PER WEEK STOP YOU ALSO GET PERCENTAGE PASSENGER REVENUE STOP THIS IS OPPORTUNITY OF LIFETIME AND PERMANENT STOP WIRE ANSWER STOP MUST REPORT WITH SHIP NEW YORK TWENTY FIFTH TO BEGIN TOUR FORTY STATES

Ben read it hurriedly, while a flush diffused itself upon his face. He yelled wildly: "Boy, spread your glims over this! Now we're set!"

Philip read it slowly, feeling a strange constriction in his chest. "You're set," he said. "That's swell!" He tried to make it sound as if he really thought it wonderful, but his voice was oddly flat.

"What d'ya mean, *I'm* set?" Ben asked. "*We're* set, I said; I won't accept unless they make a place for you." He sat down and wrote out a reply, his pen scratching. Philip stood at a window and looked across the town, seeing the smoke from soft-coal fires drifting up into the placid winter air. He couldn't fight this thing, he knew; at any cost, Ben would want to go with Barnes. He suddenly remembered Bill's words: "I'd want you to stick by him, no matter what. He's still a kid, and he's pretty wild, you know. It would be up to you to make a man of him."

But here was a problem that could not be solved by any effort of Philip's that he could see. To stick to Ben, he himself would have to go with Barnes—and he knew he couldn't go.

For "Barnes," he knew, was the alias of a foreigner, the most successful of all the barnstorming-circus operators, a shrewd and ruthless man, an artist with the implement of ballyhoo. He wanted Ben because Ben could roll the dollars in for him. He would not want Philip.

"Listen," Ben said suddenly, "how's this: 'Glad to accept offer provided my brother Philip Mattick included on suitable terms stop he has been my pilot for all stunts I did not fly myself stop don't feel safe with anyone else flying me stop wire answer.'"

"That's fine," Philip said; Ben's loyalty warmed his heart. "Look, Ben," he added, "what will you want to do if Barnes won't have me?"

"The hell with Mr. Barnes," Ben said, and Philip felt relieved.

WHEN Barnes sent his reply, however, Ben didn't seem to feel that way. He read the message, handed it to Philip, and sat silent, waiting.

SORRY NO PLACE FOR YOUR BROTHER STOP IF YOU WANT THIS JOB YOU'LL HAVE TO HURRY STOP WIRE AT ONCE

SAM BARNES

Philip read it twice. He looked at Ben, and Ben refused to meet his eyes. Then Philip said: "Well, kid, I can't stop you. It's entirely up to you. But honestly, I don't like to see you do it."

Ben said, "It was all right, when you thought you were going too."

"I had a reason for that. I know more about Barnes than you do, Ben. He's a tricky guy. I've heard things about him I don't like."

"I'd like to go," Ben said. "I'd rather you went, too, but if you can't, I'd sure like to take a crack at this alone."

"For how long?" Philip asked.

"A year or two."

"Do you think you'd ever be satisfied to come back to Brightville, to the school, after being on the road with Barnes?"

"Sure," Ben said.

PHILIP knew he wouldn't. Yet that was not the greatest factor in his mind; the greatest factor was the way Barnes drove his star stunt men, or did something to them, that made them crack sooner or later. Every one of them, sooner or later, had been killed—and it had been that way for years. Philip could not understand it.

"Look," Ben said suddenly, "this is Opportunity knocking at my door. I think I ought to take it." His jaw hardened; his eyes came up. "I'm going to take it, Phil."

"I'm not trying to stop you," Philip said. "But you be careful, see. There's something screwy about the way Barnes' pilots get knocked off—it worries me. You be careful. Remember that Barnes is the kind of guy who'll try to shame you into bigger and better performance. If you let him get away with it, you'll be knocked off. Go on—but be careful."

Ben sat there for a minute, looking happier. "You mean that, really?"

"Sure, I mean it."

"What'll you do?"

"I'll drift over to South Carolina and see what I can find."

"Then what?"

"When spring comes, I'll go back to Brightville and start the school again. I'll use my half of the money. If you want your half, you can take it now, or you can leave it where it is."

"Phil," Ben said. He scraped a fingernail across the ball of his thumb, and studied the floor. "Phil, I got something to tell you." He looked up quickly, and then down once more. "I—I hate like hell to tell you, but I guess I'd better."

"Shoot."

"Well, Phil, we haven't got as much money in the bank as you think. You

see— Aw, Phil, I'm nothing but a louse."

Philip felt puzzled, peculiarly upset. "You mean you've been writing checks —again?"

"Before. When I got drunk, I only told you about one."

"How much?"

"I don't know exactly. Maybe a thousand dollars. Maybe a little more." He looked up again, not with defiance, but with a guilty, little-boy look; and some of the anger that had started to boil up in Philip cooled.

"Why," Philip said, holding himself in check, not saying what he wanted to say, not saying even part of it, "I guess it was your money. I guess you could spend it, if you wanted to. But you're a damn' fool, just the same."

"I didn't mean only mine—I mean, there's a thousand of yours gone."

"What?" Philip's voice came out like an explosion. "What did you spend it for?"

Ben shrugged. "What does money go for? My money, I mean. Liquor—pretty things for girls—poker parties." He scraped his shoes against the rug. "But Phil, I'll pay it back to you—honest, I will. I got so bored, just flying every day—I couldn't stand it."

Philip's fists clenched. He wanted to take Ben in his two hands and choke him; he wanted to batter sense, intelligence, into that good-looking head. But somehow he couldn't hit Ben.

"*Aren't* you wonderful!" he sneered, remembering that night when Ben had come in drunk and joked about their bank account. "*Aren't* you!" He could feel his body trembling, shaking; he felt too hot, and out of breath; he had never been so angry in his life. "I send it to the bank and you draw it out! You idiot! You—"

"That's about enough," Ben said, and he wasn't like a little boy right now.

"It isn't enough. You think I'm a fool to work. Okay. Go on and take the racer and join Barnes. But don't come whimpering back to me if you ever get in trouble, see?"

"Don't worry," Ben said. "Don't worry about that." He got up slowly, slowly began to pack his bags.

BUT Ben was scarcely gone, before Philip realized and regretted his mistake. He should not have lost his temper. He should have remembered that promise he had made to Bill, that warning, "You'll have to put up with a lot, and it'll be tough, maybe. But I want you to promise me you won't get too sore at Ben." He had forgotten that promise.

And now that Ben was gone to join Barnes' troupe—that troupe in which stunt pilots didn't live long, for some reason—Philip had to find a way to guard him from the dangers that had overcome the others. Even if Ben didn't like the work, the life, he wouldn't quit and come back now; he was far too proud and stubborn to do that, and thus admit defeat.

"If he gets killed now," Philip thought in agitation, "it will be my fault." And whether it was his fault or not, the idea of Ben in trouble upset him till he couldn't sleep at night.

AT first, he could think of nothing but to follow, to trail behind the circus, maintaining daily contact with Ben, and keeping his eyes open. But he knew that wouldn't work. He had to live. A letter to the Brightville bank showed that he had only seven hundred dollars left in his account. He started to invalidate Ben's signature on future checks against it, and then changed his mind; Ben might need money sometime, and if he had to have it, it was there.

For a week, because he could not formulate a workable plan, he went on barnstorming. But the glamour had gone, somehow. He missed Ben more than he had ever known he could miss anyone, for Ben's absence was heightened by a sense of his own culpability. The money didn't roll in, now; he barely made expenses. For he was just a gypsy aviator with a plane, unknown, untrusted: There was no caroming streak of blue up there to draw the crowd, and, after drawing it, to make it forget its suggestible restraint; there was no swaggering, browbeating barker on the ground to hypnotize and herd the people in. Philip wandered southward, following no fixed itinerary. . . .

It was in Savannah, one damp, raw evening when he was working on his engine, that the night watchman gave him an idea. The watchman's name was Mac, and he was an old, gnarled, loquacious soul. He trudged out on the "line," and stood there talking.

"You flyin' out the field tomorrow?" It was Saturday evening; Sunday was always the big day for local aviation.

"I expect so," Philip said.

"Haven't seen you around here before. Don't recollect your face."

"This is my first time here."

"You stayin' over till next week?"

"I don't expect so. Just tomorrow."

"You'd ought to stay over. Sam Barnes is bringin' his flyin' circus into town. We always have a big crowd, when he's here. Big crowd, bigger than ever this year, I expect. Last year there was a whole lot of excitement—their star stunt man got killed. I seen it."

UNTIL Mac said that, Philip had been listening mechanically. Now he said quickly: "Who was it that got killed?"

"Thought you might be interested," old Mac cackled. "Never saw a pilot yet that wasn't interested in accidents—'specially accidents like that one. Feller by the name of Grant got killed. There was some people said it didn't look like no accident, to them." He tittered with sudden self-consciousness, as if, unthinkingly, he had said too much.

Philip climbed down from the wheel on which he had been standing. "Was that Pete Grant?" he asked.

"That was him—Pete Grant—I recollect his name now. He was their main stunt pilot, too."

"How did it happen?"

"Well, Barnes, he was flyin' one ship, and another pilot named Meredith was flyin' another ship. They come acrost the field low, one underneath the other, and this feller Grant was supposed to make a plane change—go from Meredith's ship to the one Barnes was flyin'. Only, for a second or two they got disorganized, and Barnes' prop hit Grant."

Standing there, a thin excitement diffused itself through Philip's nerves. He remembered having read about this accident in the Oklahoma City papers. He had forgotten it. Bill, his father, had remarked then that it seemed a peculiar kind of accident to him. Philip wiped his hands on a piece of cotton waste, took out his cigarettes and offered one to Mac.

"You said some people thought it might not have been an accident?"

Mac flicked a match to flame with a jagged thumbnail. "There were them as said that, yes siree! But nobody did anything. Barnes claimed it was Meredith's fault—said Meredith pulled ahead too fast—so fast it threw Grant into the prop. Barnes fired Meredith."

"Did Meredith deny it was his fault—that he pulled ahead?"

"Deny it?" old Mac exclaimed. "He was fit to be tied, he was. He was one of them as said it wasn't no accident. Said Barnes had been tryin' to kill Grant for a week!"

"That's surprising," Philip said.

"Do you know Barnes?"

"Never met him. I've heard a lot about him, of course."

"Well, if you knew Barnes, you'd have a better idea of the man than I can give you. Meredith did a lot of talking." The old man tittered again. "But he didn't talk long. Barnes half killed him, in a fight. That man Barnes is the toughest feller I ever see!"

Philip formed a length of safety wire into a coil and stuck it into his pocket. He was through work for the day; his mind was too busy with conjecture, to try to check an engine.

"You saw it, you said," he reminded old Mac. "You've been around airplanes a lot. Whose fault do you think it was?"

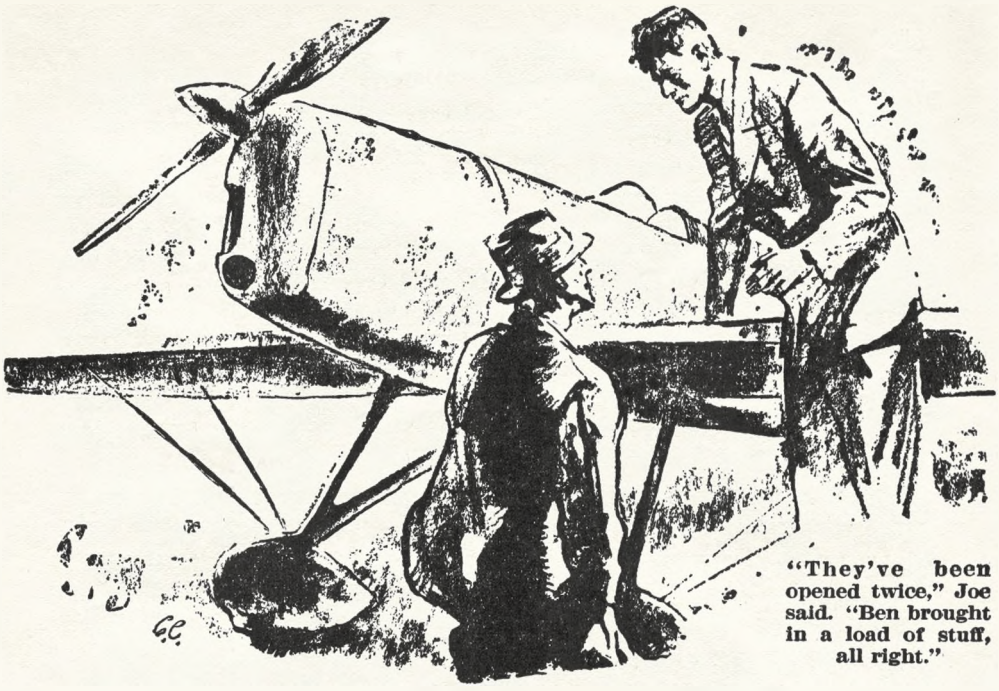
Flattered, the old man smirked, then cackled: "Wa'l, I aint no expert, tell the truth. But I was watchin'. Seemed like to me Barnes was in the wrong. I seen 'em come acrost the field, and seemed like to me he slowed up pretty sudden and Meredith held his speed. But don't you never say I told you! Barnes would murder me if he found out!"

Philip smiled, said, "I won't repeat it. I've got to get to town, now." He didn't add that he thought he saw a pattern to this thing, that Mac had given him a clue which he would follow until he ran it to the ground. "I've got to send a telegram."

ON Sunday, Philip made a little money. That evening, he talked with Mac at length once more. The old man was pleased and eager to describe that accident again. And the more he described it, the more it seemed peculiar—in fact, impossible. For Barnes was one of the most skillful pilots in the country, and of course Meredith, to hold a job with him, was certainly no novice, either. Stunt men sometimes slipped and fell from wings, in making plane changes; a lot of strange and inexcusable accidents had happened, first and last. But to slice a man in two with a whirling prop that he would ordinarily have ducked—it seemed worthy of investigation.

Monday afternoon a telegram came from the Bureau of Aëronautics in reply to Philip's wire.

RE TEL LAST ADDRESS JOE MEREDITH MUNICIPAL AIRPORT JACKSONVILLE FLORIDA



"They've been opened twice," Joe said. "Ben brought in a load of stuff, all right."

Within twenty minutes Philip was in the air, skirting the lagoons and inlets of the coast toward Florida. . . .

He saw the sign on the hangar, even before he landed, while he was lining up with the runway, in a glide:

JOE MEREDITH
Flying Instruction—Charter Service

He landed and taxied up on the rough brick ramp and cut off his engine. And he saw at once, after he had spoken to the man who came out to the plane, after he had said, "Are you Joe Meredith?" and the other had replied, "Sure. What can I do for you?" that here was one of Bill Mattick's breed of men.

"I'm Philip Mattick," he said. "I flew down from Savannah to have a talk with you."

He saw Joe's face tighten almost imperceptibly, as if the very mention of Savannah put him on his guard; and for a moment there was silence, while Joe stood there by the cockpit, his wise and puckered eyes going over Philip's face.

"Why should you be interested in what happened in Savannah?" he demanded.

"I'll explain that," Philip said.

"I expect you'd better, son." His voice was loud unnecessarily, as if responding to some inner turbulence. He was a small man. His countenance was wrinkled and tough, his character as plainly honest, as an old shoe. And then, slowly, his mouth relaxed, and he said slowly, "Son, I talk better in the shade. Get out and stretch your legs and come inside."

The hangar was of sheet-iron, with a white sand floor; inside the building were half a dozen little biplanes such as students use. The lean-to on the field side of the building housed an office filled with an old desk, an older filing cabinet, some battered chairs. Aviation magazines and invoices and oil-stained flying maps littered the desk. Sand covered everything alike. Joe sat down, said, "I talk best off my feet," and grinned and pulled out his cigarettes, thrusting the package toward Philip.

All the time he was studying Philip with a keen, almost embarrassing scrutiny. And now, suddenly, he demanded, "Say, did you ever know a fellow by the name of Bill Mattick? Last time I heard about him, he was out in Oklahoma somewhere."

Philip said, "He was my father."

"You're Bill Mattick's son?"

"Yes."

"I knew it!" Joe exclaimed. "I knew it when I saw you in that cockpit. I was in the same squadron with Bill, overseas! The world's sure small! Where is—" He checked himself abruptly, and a strange, shocked look came into his eyes. He said, "Did I hear you say he *was* your father? You mean—"

Philip nodded dumbly, for that old ache had come back into his throat. And

then, quickly, as if by hastening the story he could make it easier, he told Joe what had happened.

"A bad break," Joe said. "A lousy break for Bill." The look of melancholy vanished; a reminiscent grin came. "I thought a lot of Bill," he added. "He was a great guy. . . . What's this about Savannah?"

"I want to ask you about Sam Barnes."

JOE'S eyes grew bleak, and the hoods came down upon them for a moment.

"What about Sam Barnes?"

"What kind of a guy is he?"

"A louse. First, a louse, then a heel—then a lot of other things I haven't a vocabulary to describe." He studied Philip, his mouth grim, as if he might be trying to establish a connection. "Why?"

"I'll get to that," Philip said. "First, I'd like to know as much as possible about your accident up there, if you don't mind telling me."

"*My* accident?" Joe boomed. He pointed a blunt finger at Philip's chest and roared, "Listen, son, that wasn't any more my accident than it was yours! Barnes did that!"

"Then you're sure it was deliberate?"

"Of course I'm sure!"

"He was trying to kill Grant, then?"

"Grant, and me—me too!" Ridges of anger creased his jaw. "When it didn't work, he tried to put the blame on me. When I wouldn't take it, he beat hell out o' me—he's a big guy, you know. . . . Say, what is this, anyhow? I didn't know anybody knew about my part of it, except pilots in the troupe."

"Old Mac, the watchman at Savannah, told me," Philip said. "The reason I came down here after I found out about it, is that Ben, my younger brother, just went to work for Barnes as the lead stunt pilot. I'd heard a lot about how dangerous it was. I thought I'd ask you. I don't want anything to happen to him."

Joe Meredith frowned. He crunched out his cigarette slowly, looking at the floor.

"You'd better get him away from Barnes, if you don't want something to happen to him. Barnes will kill him, like he's killed the rest of them."

"You mean Barnes has killed all of them?" It left Philip shocked and almost speechless to hear it put that way.

Joe smacked a fist into an open palm, angrily, as if the memory of his association with Barnes distilled fury in his heart. "He won't do it like he tried to kill Grant—like he killed Grant. Not so openly—it would be dangerous to have too many 'accidents' like that. But when the time comes, he'll see that Ben gets killed. . . . With Grant, it was difficult. Grant was on to him, and Grant was too smart to kill himself, the way the others did—Barnes had to do that job himself."

"But why?" Philip cried. "How could a thing like that go on—and why?"

Joe's eyes were burning. "Old Mac didn't tell you that part?"

"No!"

"I guess he didn't know about it. If he'd known about it, he'd have told you. Sam Barnes is the biggest peddler of dope in this part of the country. The air circus is just a blind to hide his operations, son. But do you think I can prove that in court? No—of course I can't, or I'd have done it. But just the same, I know it's true."

"What kind of dope?"

"Morphine, mostly."

"Where does he get it?"

"In the Bahamas, or in Cuba, or somewhere down in that section. Oh, he's a slick one, that guy is. I've been trying to get the goods on him for a year. I learned enough so that he tried to kill me at the same time he killed Grant, but I got away."

BAFFLED, utterly confused, Philip sat trying to fit this puzzle into form that he could understand—that he could believe. It seemed incredible, impossible. He wondered if Joe Meredith was perhaps a little crazy. But when his mind had added up the evidence of repeated "accidents" to stunt men, and when he remembered that Sam Barnes seemed to coin money out of a profession that paid only a reasonable reward to other men engaged in it, he decided that Joe might be correct.

Then Joe was talking again, explaining: "You see, Barnes always hires reckless kids for his top stunt men—kids who have a reputation for doing wild, crazy flying—crazy stunts. So it never looks suspicious when one of them gets killed. That's the first thing to remember.

"He never flies this 'snow' himself—he covers his tracks too carefully for that. He'll send a boy down there, wherever he gets the stuff—but the kid doesn't know why he's going, usually. Sometimes Barnes tells them he has an old friend who's sick and needs money. He gives the kid a thousand dollars, maybe, or even more, to deliver to a certain man.

He always cautions the kid not to say a word to anybody about it, because, he explains, he doesn't want to get the reputation of being a soft touch and get a lot of panhandlers on his trail. The kid understands this, and he wants to do what he's told, and so he keeps his mouth shut.

"Remember, that's for the first trip. When the kid gets back, he doesn't know he's brought in ten or fifteen thousand dollars' worth of dope. But Barnes discovers it, see—and he gets the kid and takes him out to the ship. The wing is already opened up in a couple or three places, and the kid can see where somebody has put the stuff in there and made neat patches so nobody would notice—and where somebody else has cut new holes to take it out. While they're inspecting it, Barnes 'discovers' a package of morphine that's been missed. All this time Barnes claims somebody has been using the kid, as a means of smuggling—that he doesn't know a thing about it—and the kid believes him. But now, when they discover the dope, Barnes puts on an act and says he's scared not to turn the kid over to the law for transporting it—says he's afraid he'll be held as an accessory after the fact. Of course, this scares the kid to death, and there's no danger of his ever opening his mouth. Barnes lets the kid beg him out of reporting the situation, see? The kid thinks Barnes is his best friend in the world."

Joe Meredith paused, and lighted another cigarette and inhaled deeply. Philip, watching his bronzed face, said in agitation, "Ben would know enough to go to the authorities himself. He'd know it was a bluff."

"Would he?" Joe said. "Would he go, when he'd lose his pilot's license, when he might do a long stretch in prison? He couldn't prove he hadn't brought the stuff in for somebody."

"But he'd be innocent!"

MEREDITH nodded. "Sure he would —sure! They were all innocent, the first time. Pete Grant was innocent the first time, too. But when you're afraid of something—enough afraid—you'll do almost anything you have to do! Pete Grant made nine trips for morphine, altogether. He told me that himself. And then he realized he was going to have to keep on until finally he got caught. He balked, and talked to me about it. Then —bingo! Pete got sliced by a propeller, and I damn' near did."

"Then in order to live, a pilot must put up no resistance?"

"In order to exist—*exist*. Barnes is a tough guy. How much is Ben getting, at the start?"

"Two hundred a week, and a percentage of the passenger revenue."

"When he gets back from his first trip, and finds out he's brought in a load of snow sewed in his wings, and's about to be turned over to the law, he won't squawk too loud when Barnes cuts his pay to a hundred flat. He'll like it. Pete Grant was working for sixty bucks a week when Barnes cut his head off with that prop."

Philip said, his voice a husk, "I'm going up there. Now—right now!" Thinking about Ben, his hands were shaking when he snuffed out his cigarette.

"They'll be down here, this week-end," Joe said, and smiled wryly. "One thing about it, Sam Barnes respects me. He's got me under a peace-warrant! Can you imagine that?"

PHILIP scarcely heard him. He sat there, staring at the white sand along the edges of the runways, dazzling in this winter sun. He thought stubbornly, trying to convince himself by the weight of wishful thinking that this thing could not happen to Ben as it had happened to Pete Grant. He thought: "Ben wouldn't be a fool. He wouldn't be a fool enough to get mixed up in dope smuggling. As soon as he discovered what was going on, he'd leave. He'd know enough for that." But would Ben, after all? How could he keep out of it, when he would be involved before he had an inkling of what was going on? It made Philip sick to think about it.

"Couldn't you go to the authorities and get something done?" he asked Joe, finally.

Joe made a helpless gesture with his hands. "I've been to them. They've combed Sam Barnes' hair, almost, and haven't found a thing. Naturally, the pilot involved kept his mouth shut tight. There's not a shred of proof I could show. You got to have proof, to put a man in jail."

"In the morning," Philip said, "I'm going to Savannah. I'm afraid to wait till Ben gets here." The sharp thought tormented him that Ben would not, in all probability, believe a word he said in warning. But that didn't make a bit of difference. He must go. ". . . Ben's still a kid. I'd want you to stick to him,

Ben again went up, putting the racer through its stuff: diving, flying on his back—defying all the laws of gravity, it seemed; Philip waited, his heart thumping leadenly.

no matter what. It would be up to you to look out for him."

But he didn't go to Savannah after all, as it turned out. The next morning Joe called him early. There was a charter trip to Miami for the next day, Friday, one that none of Joe's planes was big enough to handle.

"Wedding party," he explained. "Some goofy people who want to get married in the air, and then fly to Miami. You'll have to bring the minister back with you. This is a three-hundred-and-fifty-dollar trip."

So the next day, just before dawn, Philip took off, carrying the young couple, and a minister, and three friends of the pair. The groom insisted that they climb to ten thousand feet, and arrive there just at sunrise for the ceremony. The best man was a little drunk, and the others, all but the minister, who looked both pained and bored, were hilarious and noisy. Philip saw no point in going to ten thousand feet, but he was being paid to go and so he went. At ten thousand they were above a stratus over-

cast, with the sun climbing from its slot into a pink and golden sky.

Philip flew southeastward, holding his compass course to parallel the beach.

For a moment, when he saw the other ship coming—that was an hour later—Philip thought it was a bird. And then, as it hurtled nearer, it took quick character and form. And as it came still nearer, so rapidly that it seemed to grow in size, Philip's heart seemed to stop beating for a moment.

For the plane was Ben's blue racer, boring northwestward toward Savannah. As it flashed past two hundred feet away, Philip saw Ben's face momentarily—momentarily, before the ship was gone.

All the way to Miami, Philip fought the realization that his warning to Ben would come too late—that it would have come too late if he had gone to Savannah yesterday. Because he knew, now, that Ben was already in Barnes' hands. Otherwise, where had Ben been, last night, to have arrived here just at dawn? Miami? Key West? Cuba? Philip tried to think. But the agitation of his thoughts set up a kind of turbulence inside his mind, so that no clear thought emerged at all, leaving him, for the time being, only the ability to feel. And the greatest thing, the only clear thing that he felt just now, was stark fear.

THE field was lined with cars, the ramps and aprons were overrun by people; for this was Ben Mattick, the great stunt pilot, the star performer for Barnes' Flying Fools, who was up there in that snarling plane. Philip stood with Joe Meredith just outside Joe's lean-to office, watching; and his heart was almost in his throat.

Ben went across the field at a thousand feet, lazily, the engine purring only faintly now above the buzz of people's voices on the ground. It was sheerest beauty, the way he did a series of slow rolls, beginning directly above the crowd, and spinning in a horizontal plane, so that he went completely around the field, never varying the rotation of his wings, never losing or gaining altitude.

Joe Meredith, eyes squinted into slits against the bright reflections from a winter cumulus, sucked in his breath and said, "Bill Mattick's son! I never saw anybody match that for perfection!"

"Did you get a look at the fabric on his wing?" Philip asked softly. "Do you think he really did bring in a load of stuff?"

"Couldn't get near the plane," Joe said. "We'll have to do that after dark, tonight. But if you saw him yesterday heading north halfway from Miami, he must have been down there."

"Have you seen Barnes?"

"No—and I don't want to see him. I've got a court order on my neck. I don't want to poke him and get thrown in jail." And Joe Meredith went back to watching Ben again.

BEN was doing stunts that no pilot had ever done above this field before. He did an outside loop beginning at a thousand feet, plunging down and down and under in shrieking inverted flight. For a moment it seemed that the snarling prop would touch the ground before he started up again. And then, climbing vertically from the bottom of that outside loop, he did four turns of a snap roll—four turns of a spin, except that the nose was pointed at the sky instead of at the earth.

After that, in quick succession, he spun down behind the trees—so that it looked as if he crashed—and zoomed up and skimmed across the field, flying on his side. The lower wing-tip scruffed sand and weeds at one point just before he leveled out. That was the time Philip had to look away, for if Ben had erred in judgment or co-ordination in the slightest way, the plane would have cartwheeled and shoved the engine back into the cockpit.

Philip couldn't watch. Sweat broke out all over him, and he went inside.

But finally Ben's show was over, and the "pushers" in their passenger-crates taxied out to do their part, and barkers started yelling, haranguing, urging people into buying tickets. It was like a county fair. Ben landed, the blue racer settling to earth as gently as a golf ball that lines low down the fairway, sizzling before it makes a bounceless contact with the green. He swung around, the little engine chattering through its sawed-off stacks, and taxied to the roped space reserved for him, stood up in the cockpit, waving at the people for a moment, then climbed to the ground.

"You'd better see him now," Joe said to Philip. "I can't have Barnes find me talking to him. Barnes would figure I had put him wise, and tomorrow there would be another 'accident'."

Philip went elbowing through the crowd. It had been less than a month since Ben had gone with Barnes, but now

it seemed a year. For Ben had changed in that short time. Always in the past he had been reckless, daring in his stunts; but always he had stopped somewhere short of challenging destruction. Now he was challenging it, and to see him do it angered Philip more, even, than it frightened him.

BEN shouldered through people, paying no attention to the slaps upon his back, to the calls of, "Marvelous!" and, "That was wonderful, big boy!" and all the other things, most of them inane, that men and women said to him. He didn't seem to hear them, as if his mind was concentrated too intensely on what he was doing. He was wearing those same clothes which he had bought with Philip's money in Atlanta, but now, somehow, there was a hardness in his face and manner that had never been in them before—a look and manner that seemed to make that gaudy dress peculiarly appropriate.

Philip met him in an opening in the crowd. Ben looked surprised; his handsome face went pink beneath the tan. He said, "Hi, hot-shot," and thrust out his hand. "Where did you come from?"

"I've been around," Philip said. And added, "Maybe I'd better ask you that same question."

"Meaning what?" Ben's eyes were averted then, picking his way toward the hangar.

"Skip it," Philip said. "How've you been?"

"Okay."

"How's everything going?"

"Swell!" He sounded, Philip thought, a little too loud, too quick in saying that. And there was something else about it that Philip couldn't quite define.

"You don't sound as if you felt very swell about them. And you must have been sore at something to make you put on a crazy show like that."

"Will you stop riding me?" Ben flared with violence. "I don't see you for a month, and when I do see you, the first thing you have to do is start badgering me to death!"

Philip tried to calm himself. He knew Ben's temperament, knew he should go slowly now. He said, "I'm not badgering you, Ben. I want to talk to you, that's all. What happened yesterday morning when you landed at Savannah?"

"Noth— I wasn't flying yesterday morning," Ben replied. He snarled, "Let me alone, can't you?"

"No, I won't. You're going to talk to me. What are you mixed up in, with Sam Barnes?"

"I'm flying for him!" Ben said. "*Flying* for him! What's the matter? Can't you understand that?"

"Sure," Philip said. "Sure, I can understand that. It's some other things I can't understand, yet. That's what you're going to come clean with. You're going to, or I'm going to push your face in. There's a limit to this smartness you love to put on for a front. You're getting ready to get killed, and you know damn' well you are."

"Oh, a tough guy, eh?"

"Tough enough, when I have to get tough. Now you answer a question: What were you doing heading north yesterday morning at ten thousand feet above Titusville?"

"You must be nuts," Ben said, "because I wasn't there."

Philip seized his arm.

"You *were* there. I saw you myself. What happened when you landed at Savannah?"

Ben jerked loose from Philip's hand. He was in a vicious mood, now. He yelled, "You *are* crazy!" and then went on in a low voice, held low by a terrible restraint that showed in every muscle of his face: "I don't know what you're talking about. I wasn't over Titusville yesterday, or any other day."

"You're a liar, Ben—"

He saw Ben's fist traveling up in a quick arc, but it was too late to duck, too late to get his hands up. Yet, peculiarly, during the time it took for the blow to reach his jaw, he could think that he was a fool to have lost his temper and say a thing like that, to have tried to use force on a man impervious to force, a man more stubborn, even, than himself. And then he felt a vague, dull shock.

HE woke up with people crowding in on him, and there were men on all sides yelling: "Air—air! Get back! Give him air!" Some one was lifting him, and he was on his feet. His senses seemed to reel.

Then Joe Meredith was saying in his ear, "Take it easy, kid. You're all right," and was leading him away.

But he wasn't all right. His brain was clearing, and his legs were not quite so much like rubber, now; but he was not all right. His mind was saying in a dull, cold fury, "Okay—let him get in trouble. Let him get killed, if that's the way he

wants it. Nobody can stop him. I've tried, and I can't stop him." The trouble, he was thinking, was that Bill had not seen enough of Ben—the present Ben—to understand this problem. There was a lot to put up with, as Bill had said there would be. But the trouble was, there was too much.

"Where is that guy?" Philip said to Joe. "Where'd he run to? I'm going to mop up half this airport with him when I find him."

"You're going to let him alone," Joe said. "You're coming home with me. Tonight we'll come out here and see what we can see about his plane."

THE airport was dark, now, except for a faint glow of boundary lights that bloomed green and amber in the clammy ground fog which lay like a wet blanket against the cold surface of the earth. Joe Meredith, behind the wheel, looked at his watch and said: "Two-thirty. There'll be nobody but a watchman out there, now. We're lucky, kid. I didn't think it was going to fog in quite so early."

Philip didn't answer. All evening he had been trying to convince himself that it did not, really, make any difference to him what Ben did, what fate Ben suffered. There was nothing he could do to change it. He had tried to do something, and look what Ben had done! And yet, he could not feel that way. Ben was his brother, and he was a kid. Maybe a wild, dumb kid in some ways, but when he was himself, there wasn't anyone to take his place.

"He's in it, all right," Joe said. "I'm sure he's in it. I saw Barnes talking to him this afternoon—just the way Barnes used to talk to Pete Grant. He's got Ben scared stiff, in my opinion."

"That must have been why Ben was so wild this afternoon," Philip said miserably. "Barnes was putting the pressure on him, maybe."

"Barnes knows how to do that, well enough." Joe's voice was ominous.

They stopped, slowing to a crawl and then pulling off the road and sitting there a moment. Philip could see the beacon, now, through the fog—a ghostly spray of light that twirled and twirled, silently, buried in the mat of stuff that blotted out the weaker lights. Joe stepped from the car and led the way across an open field, avoiding stumps and palmettoes as if he had cat eyes. Philip followed. They crawled through a fence, went down a path inside the field, careful to keep the boundary lights between themselves and the night-watchman's office. The line of Barnes' planes was just ahead.

In another minute they had found Ben's ship. Joe took a tiny pocket flashlight and crawled under the right wing, cupped his hands around the light and spilled it up against the fabric. There was a new patch just inside the main compression member, and two others farther out. On the left wing there were four places that had been cut similarly, each a large L, and then sewn and patched with tape.

"They've been opened twice," Joe said. "Ben brought in a load of stuff, all right."

"The patches don't seem very noticeable," Philip exclaimed. "They look like inspection openings, the way they're located."

"They put 'em there for that reason—to make anybody think that they are inspection openings."

"They weren't there a month ago, I know that."

Until he had actually seen the patches himself, Philip had been clinging, perhaps subconsciously, to the hope that Joe was wrong, that he himself was wrong. But now there was no shred of hope left for him to cling to. Ben was in this business too deeply to extricate himself—or to be extricated without trouble.

AND the more Philip worried over the situation, the less possibility there seemed for Ben's escape. For Ben was proud, almost arrogant in his belief that he could look out for himself. It was possible, Philip thought, that Barnes had sent him into Florida—to whatever destination Barnes had wanted him to go—and that Ben had come back unaware of what he had brought with him in the plane. That, however, Philip discarded as improbable—else why had Ben refused to admit having been over Titusville when he was there?

No, he knew that he had brought back morphine, and Barnes had worked the old technique of fastening responsibility upon him—and Ben had taken that responsibility and sealed his lips about it rather than face losing his flying-license and perhaps a quick indictment at Barnes' hands. And now, today, tomorrow, in the days to come, Barnes would be like a lynx stalking a weaker animal, waiting to see whether Ben would continue to accept the situation—

and bow down obediently—or whether, like Grant, he would rebel and have to be destroyed.

But analysis brought Philip nothing. He wanted action—drastic action that would split this case wide open. He wanted evidence, facts, the power to do something. Yet Ben refused to talk, refused to admit, even to him, Philip, that he had been on any flight. The thing was hopeless, and Ben was playing everything the way Barnes wished it to be played—and thus getting deeper and deeper in a skein which could be untangled, eventually, in just one way.

PHILIP went back to his hotel room in a state of frustrated agitation. Tomorrow, he thought, he would drag Ben aside and tell him what he knew—force Ben to listen. Tonight there was nothing he could do.

But under the message-clip against his door, as he went in, he found a note, phrased in the polite and usual form: *"Mr. Mattick telephoned at 11:10. He wishes you to come at once to his room at the Jernigan Hotel."*

It took five minutes to walk the two blocks down Bay Street. It was after three o'clock in the morning, but Philip did not think of that. He was thinking that Ben wanted to tell him about this situation—that Ben had waited until there was no danger of being seen or overheard. He went up to the elevator, knocked on the door, heard Ben's sleepy voice say: "Who is it?"

"Phil."

"Wait a second."

Then the door was swinging open, and Ben was standing there, dressed only in his shorts. "I just got in," Philip said. "I found your message. I came over right away."

"Oh," Ben said, and he grinned and a sly gleam came into his eyes. "So you never run around at night! You just got in."

"Yeah, I just got in." Philip tried to show nothing of his feelings, after that affair this afternoon. He wanted Ben to talk, to get this whole thing off his mind.

"I'm sorry about this afternoon," Ben said. "I lost my head. I nearly went into the ground, flying across the field on my side, and I was kinda excited. I'm sorry as hell about that, Phil."

"That's okay," Philip said. "I didn't come over here because of that."

"Well, that's what I wanted to tell you," Ben said.

Philip sat down on the bed and lighted a cigarette. He hid his apprehension, his impatience, the indignation that burned so hotly at the core of him.

"Ben," he said patiently, "I'm your brother. Whatever else I am, I'm your brother—and I think a lot of you."

Ben said wryly, "Well, it's mutual, if you can believe that, after this afternoon."

"I know it is. That's why I'm upset now." Philip paused, and the room was silent with a kind of tension that built up with each second. "I know what you're up against, kid. I'm not trying to pry into your business—it isn't that at all. I—I know you're in a spot, and I'm scared, because of what may happen to you."

With an infinite deliberation, a kind of uncertainty, as if he doubted the wisdom of his words yet felt the need to talk with some one, Ben said:

"How much do you know?"

Philip shrugged. "Barnes sent you down south somewhere on an errand, and when you got back you found you'd brought in a load of morphine and you were at Barnes' mercy as to whether he turned you in or not. Right?"

Ben was silent. His lips worked thoughtfully.

"Right," he said at last.

"You had your choice of going to jail, or keeping your mouth shut, too."

"Right again."

"And then today he hung that over your head like a sword of Damocles to see that you put on a stunt performance that would scare people half to death."

Ben nodded.

"All right," Philip said. "Now what?"

"After while, I suppose I'll go and get another load of dope."

"It's logical to assume that. It's logical to assume that you'll keep on going after them, until you're suspected of it. And as soon as you're suspected, you'll meet with an 'accident' which will remove the suspect and the witness."

"Granted," Ben said softly.

"THEN why stay?" Philip cried. "Why not quit right now, before that happens? We can go back to Brightville. It's almost spring. We can get out of here while you're in one piece. Once you're away, Barnes can't do much, if anything. He's built up fear in your mind, until the main thing now is, you're afraid of fear."

Ben paced across the room, came back, paced again, then sat down on the bed

across from Philip. "That's the thing I've fought out with myself tonight. It was just as you described it, Phil—the first part. For the last day and a half I've lived in hell—because I was afraid of fear. But beginning tomorrow, Mr. Sam Barnes is dealing with a different breed of cat than he ever went up against before."

"That doesn't make any difference," Philip said. "The thing for you to do is to clear out of here tomorrow morning as soon as this fog lifts!"

Ben shook his head. "I'm staying. Tomorrow, when the show's over, I'm going to the F. B. I. office and lay this thing on the table. Maybe they won't believe me. If they don't, they won't get any more evidence, so they can't do anything to me—much, anyhow. If they do believe me, and I think they will, I'm going to sit tight, let Barnes believe I'm the yellow rat he thinks I am—until he sends me for another load of stuff. And then—blooie! We'll bag him and his gang."

"You're crazy," Philip said. "Don't worry about him. Get out of this yourself!"

"I'm just stubborn enough," Ben grinned, "that I'm not going to let him get away with it."

"If he gets any word about it, he'll knock you off so fast you'll never have a chance!"

"He won't get word of it."

Philip held up his hands in a quick gesture of frustration. Yet in his heart he admired Ben more, probably, than he had ever done. He himself, he knew, would not have had the courage to face a thing like this the way Ben proposed to face it. He would have run, just as he wanted Ben to run.

"Okay, kid," he said. "I admire your nerve, if not your judgment. What can I do to help?"

"Go on home and get some sleep and forget you've been over here tonight. . . . Do you know what that louse did to me yesterday? I had a contract for two hundred bucks a week and a percentage. He cut me to fifty flat! I'm going to get him, if it's the last thing I ever do."

"Watch your step, in these stunts, kid."

"Right! Now, I've got to get some sleep. Phil, I'm sorry as hell about this afternoon. I was so upset I didn't know what I was doing."

"Forget it."

"I'll never forget it!"

The ships closed with each other. For a moment the wing was under Ben's feet.

"Well, I have. And anyhow, good night!"

Philip went out, his emotions queerly garbled, so that no one of them was definitely predominant. He felt jubilant, light-hearted, good. Yet he felt more worried than he had been before he came. Ben was a right guy—but he was carrying this game, perhaps, too far. What if Barnes got wind of it? The end would come for Ben before he had a chance.

SO intent upon the myriad aspects of the situation was his mind that he failed to see a man who had been standing at Ben's door all the time he had been in Ben's room. A man who, when

the latch clicked, darted back into the shadows and pressed himself against the wall, and then, a moment later, followed far enough to catch sight of Philip's face as he stood in the corridor waiting for the elevator.

And after Philip had gone down, this man went to his room on the floor below, called Sam Barnes on the telephone, said in a hoarse whisper:

"Framed."

"The kid?"

"Figurin' to play along until you shoot a load, then plant G-men for you."

There was a drawn-out pause. Then Sam Barnes' voice ripped along the wire, incredibly vicious, yet not one decibel louder than before:

"Book the kid for his trapeze show tomorrow, see? I'll fly."

"You sure you can work that?"

"Don't you remember that newsreel where he got down by one hand and couldn't get back up? The kid looks strong. He looks strong, see?"

"Oke."

THIS was Sunday morning, and warm, for February, even in Florida. Philip turned in at the field at eight-thirty. Already there was a scattering of cars, although it would be another hour or so before the passenger-hopping pilots began blaring their rapid, methodical circles in and out of the airport. Now they were helping mechanics check engines and planes, supervising miscellaneous fueling operations. Ben had the first job—to attract the crowd—and they were waiting on him.

He came out a few minutes later, riding with Sam Barnes. He got out of the car and shouldered through the thickening group that waited at the hangar where he housed his ship. He looked jaunty; he bantered with Sam Barnes, and Sam bantered back, joking affectionately although profanely, as was Sam's way. There was a warm bond between these two, it was quite evident.

Philip, from Joe's office, saw all this, but he was not for a moment reassured. There seemed to him too much effusiveness about Sam Barnes this morning. He did not know the man, had never met him; but he had a kind of sixth sense about people, and especially about men. Presently, when Barnes had wandered down the "line," Philip went inside, where Ben was pulling on a pair of coveralls preparatory to his sky-writing performance.

"What's the program for today?" he asked, hiding the intensity of his excitement.

"Sky-writing," Ben said. "Then my racer and its stuff. Then the trapeze. Just the old routine. Barnes is flying me on the trapeze."

Philip said sharply, "Does he usually do that?"

"Parsons does it, usually."

"Are you sure Barnes doesn't suspect anything? You sure they wouldn't have your room wired, to hear anything you said?"

Ben grinned. "Not a chance. That was the first thing I thought about. I took me a good look all over for that! Forget it. This is just routine."

"Okay," Philip said, and sauntered out, back to Joe's office.

But he was worried. He couldn't get over it. It was a nameless sort of worry, a sense of something so intangible, so utterly elusive that it was haunting, weird. Yet it persisted. He went back, presently, to Ben. "Listen, pal, don't do the trapeze stuff with Barnes. If you've got to do it, insist on some other pilot, won't you? Don't give him a chance."

Ben grinned confidently. "I've got to act as if nothing in the world were wrong," he said. "As soon as I act scary, he'll suspect me. Don't you see? For Pete's sake, forget it. I'll look out for myself. What can he do?"

But there was plenty Barnes could do. Philip knew it, and of course Ben knew it, too. But Philip had to leave just then, for he saw Barnes coming through the hangar door. Barnes was a tall, heavy, dark-skinned man with lynx eyes, greenish-yellow.

SO Ben took off, his sky-writing ship logy with its load of oil. At five thousand feet he wrote the name of the gasoline the troupe was using—thereby insuring Sam Barnes an adequate supply at no other cost. He came down, and the passenger-pilots went to work for one short hour, until the crowd had been worked through. Then Ben again went up, putting the racer through its stuff, snarling, diving, flying on his back—defying all the laws of judgment, all the laws of gravity, it seemed; while Philip waited, heart thumping leadenly, his hands moist with a stark and paralyzing fear.

The day wore on; the crowds came, paused, fell under the barkers' spell and

flew and went away again, or stayed to see the show. There were the 'chute jumps, in which Ben today did not participate. And then, as the winter sun drooped low in the west, when the air was chill and calm and smooth, the loudspeakers thundered their announcement of Ben Mattick, the star performer of the show, who would go aloft and do his famous trapeze stunts from a plane that circled steadily around the field.

BARNES, smiling, calm and affable and playing to the crowd, walked out and got into the plane—a monoplane not unlike Philip's, that had a trapeze attached to a false spreader-bar between the wheels. It was upon this bar, as well as from the trapeze, that Ben performed. There were steps fastened to a strut to permit easy access from a trap-door in the cabin floor. There was a glass window between the pilot's feet just big enough for him to see the man on the trapeze. Ben got in behind Barnes, and Barnes took off, climbed lazily, and came back across the field. He was flying at three hundred feet, still climbing slightly. Philip, watching, saw Ben slip through the trap-door and crawl down to the bar.

Suddenly, for no reason that he could understand, Philip felt impelled to some activity—anything to break this strain that was pressing in upon him like a hot and suffocating mist.

He turned to Joe Meredith, watching beside him, and said bluntly:

"How about lending me one of those biplanes you've got back there? I've got to fly."

"What's eating you?" Joe said.

"I don't know."

But something was eating at the vital nerves that stabilized his vaso-motor system. He felt a sort of prickly heat that broke out alternately in spots across his back, across his chest. "I've got to get up there!" he cried.

"Okay," Joe said. "Drag out the Fleet. It's full of gas."

Philip got it out, with two mechanics helping. He didn't know what he intended doing. He was so nervous that he could scarcely think. All the time, he was watching Barnes' plane as it circled low, circled steadily, while Ben, down there on the bar, down there on the flimsy rope trapeze, did all his daring stuff. . . .

In the air, Philip flew out across the pine woods at two hundred feet, and then, when Barnes turned away, he followed, closing up the gap, staying just behind and just below. Barnes couldn't see him, here. Barnes probably didn't know that he was in the air. What he could do up here, he had no least idea. But he was near Ben. He could see what was happening when it happened—if anything did happen. Not that he could do anything about it, except see.

Ben was through with the trapeze stunts, now; he had coiled the trapeze up and was working on the bar. He hung by his knees, and swung himself to a sitting position for a rest. Barnes was keeping him up here too long, Philip thought in cold, black anger: Ben had been doing stunts now for nearly half an hour.

Then Ben hung by his heels, and climbed back up and rested. The plane circled, circled low, came back. Philip stayed exactly underneath the prop wash, a hundred feet behind. Nothing was going to happen. His fears were needless, silly, he thought now.

Finally, the last thing on the program, Ben let himself down and hung from the bar with both hands. Barnes flew across the field. Ben let himself down by one hand, and started to come up.

And at the precise instant when Ben tried to come up, Barnes put the plane into a short, sharp climb.

IT was not noticeable from the ground. From that viewpoint, it looked as if Ben had started to come up, and then decided not to, so that he reached with his free hand for the bar and missed it, and let himself down again and clung there willingly once more. But Philip knew that wasn't what had happened. Barnes, by increasing the force of gravity as Ben reached for the bar—by going into a sudden though slight zoom—had made Ben's weight more than he could lift.

It happened again! Ben tried to come up. Barnes kept him down. Ben was waving with the other hand now, frantically. He evidently hadn't seen Philip in the Fleet, behind. He was waving at Barnes, gesticulating with his other arm that he had not strength enough to climb back up.

He tried. He fought to get back up. And just as he attempted it each time, Barnes zoomed.

Now Barnes was heading for the river, the broad St. Johns that stretched away from Jacksonville tortuously toward the Atlantic. There were no boats down

there—no boats of any kind. Barnes could see that. He was going to throw Ben off into the river. It was close enough that people at the field could see it happen. It would look as if Barnes had meant to drop Ben in the water to try to save his life. But Philip knew that was not the fact: Barnes was going to drop Ben in the water so that he would drown.

This would be another apparent "accident."

Desperately, Philip tried to figure what to do. If he flew directly underneath, close enough for Ben to drop into the cockpit of the Fleet, Barnes could see him coming, could turn or swerve and make the plane-to-plane transfer utterly impossible. Besides, Philip was in the rear cockpit, not in the front. The front cockpit, empty, was underneath the upper wing.

Ben was shaking his fist at Barnes now, struggling to change the other's plans by sheer force of his will. He couldn't get back up. He never would be able to get back up now, even if Barnes didn't keep him down there. His strength was almost gone. In another moment, in another second, in another minute, his hand would slip from that steel bar, his hand already damp, no doubt, from perspiration generated by his fright. He would hurtle down through space, with no parachute to stop his fall, and he would strike—

But there was no other chance to save him, and Philip took the one available. He pulled up just below Barnes' tail, eased forward as quickly as he dared. He had to be careful, now, that his propeller didn't strike Barnes' as he closed with the other ship. He had to hurry, for the only way this thing would work was by surprise. One chance. If he missed the first one, Barnes could keep him from ever getting up to him again. All Barnes had to do was start and hold a turn, changing the radius of it a little now and then.

THE ships closed with each other. Philip's prop was whirling underneath Barnes' tail, and then underneath the fuselage, moving forward. And then, for a moment, the wing was underneath Ben's feet.

Breathlessly, Philip pulled up—up a yard, another half a yard. The wing smacked solidly against Ben's feet. He looked down—and instantly let go.

At that exact moment Barnes nosed down and throttled back his engine, trying to let Philip slide ahead, trying to catch Ben with the prop. Ben was slipping off the wing. He was clawing wildly for a hand-hold as he went. Philip was trying to reach up with one hand to catch him, trying to fly at the same time, trying to watch Barnes too. He snatched his throttle closed, nosed down, reached up for Ben. The wing was just above his hand.

Ben fell off the wing, sprawled across the fuselage behind the forward cockpit, and with both hands found a strut.

OVERHEAD, the shadow of Barnes' plane was like a vulture swooping down upon its prey. But Philip's ship, slower inherently, having more parasite resistance, slowed more quickly than the other. Slowed, but did not nose down so rapidly. Philip did not see the thing about to happen until he felt the crash.

Ben, momentarily, was safe. Philip looked up in time to see Barnes' tail slam down upon his prop, while the vibration set up by the impact seemed about to flail the plane apart. But that was a metal prop; it did not disintegrate as a wooden prop would instantly have done. It chewed through the frail metal of two longerons, chewed into the tail section. And then, as Barnes' ship pulled clear ahead, the vibration was so bad that Philip had to cut the switches and swing instantly to get beyond the river.

Ben, meanwhile, was sliding down into the cockpit—sliding down, and collapsing in exhaustion there. Philip looked back, to find Barnes. He saw the ship, out of control and whirling downward in a slow, flat spin, just before it hit the water. He didn't see it hit the water, for just then he had to give his full attention to pancaking down into a little garden set between two flanking walls of pines.

And of course, from that position, he did not see the splash of impact, did not see how quickly Barnes' plane sank. There were no boats anywhere upon the river just then; Barnes himself had seen to that before he headed there. The river at that point was ninety feet in depth, the current swift and treacherous with undertow. . . .

The school at Brightville flourishes, these days, for Ben always was a lad to draw the crowds. But he does it with the racer, now. Philip has the trapeze hung upon the office wall.

Another fine story of air adventure by Leland Jamieson will appear in an early issue.

Warriors in Exile

VIII—"ONE NIGHT IN MAGENTA" *gives you a spirited story—and a vivid picture of the Foreign Legion's little-known campaign in Italy.*

By **H. BEDFORD-JONES**

I WAS talking that evening with Ponson, the dark Alsatian, in our familiar café, when I noticed that we had a new waiter at our table, a man who was evidently an Italian by origin, and who seemed a very pleasant fellow. Then my attention came back abruptly to Ponson, who had a notion of writing a history of the Foreign Legion. He had spent fourteen years in the Corps and was saturated with its history and traditions. None of our other friends showed up that evening. I was admitted on sufferance to these gatherings of Legion veterans; and

"So you have no interest in politics—only in chemistry, eh?" Wettstein asked.

now Ponson was appealing to me for assistance in his proposed history.

"It's very odd," he observed, "that the Legion has had contacts with practically all phases of life except one—the commercial. I have a bibliography of every book known about the Legion. Plenty of memories, memoirs, experiences and so forth, but no popular history of the corps that will bring in its legends, touch on its great deeds, introduce the human element of these men. And nowhere is there any relation to trade and commerce."

The dark eyes of our waiter flashed down at us.

"Pardon me, gentlemen; you speak of the Foreign Legion. Will you permit me to say that you're wrong? I know of one instance, at least, where the Legion did have contact and relation with things commercial."

Ponson gave him a sharp look. "What do you know about the Foreign Legion?"

The waiter smiled and hunched up his shoulders in a shrug that was both whimsical and apologetic.

"Nothing, of my own knowledge; much, from what I have heard. That is to say, it is about the Legion in Italy, under Napoleon III, when he beat the armies of Austria there. If it had not been for your Foreign Legion, the entire commercial history of the world might be different today."

"You must tell me about this," said Ponson sharply. "When do you go off duty?"

The waiter glanced at the clock: "In five minutes."

"Then join us as soon as you're free. Bring an extra bottle of wine."

Our unknown friend departed. Ponson lit a cigarette.

"This may be worth while; it may supply a missing gap! Do you know, that Austrian war and the activity of the Legion in it is a very vague subject? Difficult to get in any proper light, in the right perspective. So many great events were happening about that time, in 1859 and after, that it's been neglected. And as for the Legion—*pouf!*"

"This chap," I suggested, "may be a false alarm."

"True. And he may not. It'll do no harm to see."

PRESENTLY our waiter reappeared, dressed in street attire. At Ponson's invitation he pulled out a chair and sat down. Did you ever notice the queer difference in a waiter, once he lays aside his

apron and jacket and becomes as other men?

Well, this one looked different now. He was amiable, pleasant as ever; but new things appeared in his face: a weariness, a defeatist expression; the world had used him hard. He accepted a cigarette, sipped his wine, and began to moralize.

"They talk about the terrible conditions all over the world, the hatred, the killing, the slaughter of whole classes in Spain and Russia and elsewhere—but that has always existed," he said rather sadly. "We see it with different eyes because of radio and telegraph, perhaps; it has always been like that, only it seldom comes home to most of us. The instinct of the race is always to take and kill, or to turn and rend. Once ordinary respect for law is cast aside, men kill."

"What has that to do with the Legion in Italy?" I inquired. "There was no butchery in that war."

HIS brows lifted; his gentle eyes rested on me.

"There was hatred—Italian, Austrian, French, Swiss."

"Swiss?" I frowned at him. "Why, the Swiss had nothing to do with it!"

Ponson intervened with a nod.

"He's right. The Emperor formed a Swiss Legion, which became at the time of the war in Italy the 1st Regiment Étranger. Some odd things about it, too. This corps had not been to Africa and did not carry the big leather cartridge-pouch of the old Legion. Also, it wore green, not blue. A peculiarity of Swiss mercenaries is that they must wear a color of their own. The French have always gratified the desire. In the museum at Berne you can still see the uniforms of the Swiss general who commanded this brigade of ours, and they'd make you smile."

Our waiter shrugged. "Well, I know nothing of all that," he said; "but a Swiss was in the Foreign Legion, and he hated the Austrians terribly. His name was Basseti. He was a young man and had been a chemistry expert of some kind in London, assisting the famous chemist Perkin; but sorrows and illness had driven him from England, so that, thinking life would always be unkind, he was now in the Legion. I have a picture of him—I'll show it to you later. You know those days of marching in Italy, before the battle of Magenta?"

Ponson broke into a laugh.

It seemed obvious he could be nothing but an inoffensive and inept student.

"I've heard of 'em, yes. The Emperor flung out his line to circle around, in a march of a hundred kilometers, to take the Austrians in flank. They had a damned poor system of making the front and rear ranks couple up at night—the men marched fifteen hours a day, and covered only six or seven miles!"

"Magenta is only about six miles west of Milan," said the other. "Before the drive started, weeks before, Basseti was captured and taken into Milan; but he managed to kill a guard and escape at night. Peasants helped him on his way, and he got into Magenta. Eight thousand Austrians were garrisoned there, and Basseti went into hiding. He was trying to reach the French army again, but no one knew where the French were. The Italians who were hiding him turned him over to Dr. Torini, and there the story really begins. And remember, above all things, the hatred."

"What hatred?" I questioned, as he paused.

What hatred? The hatred of the Italians, now forming into a free nation, for their Austrian oppressors. The hatred of Austrians for French, of French for Austrians; the hatred of bad for good, that comes with the loosing of law and the storm of men and rushing armies—the hatred of the oppressor for him that is oppressed.

HATRED and fear blew in the air of Magenta, these days.

Austrians were billeted in citizens' homes throughout the town. Anyone suspected of revolutionary sentiments was arrested; houses were searched; everyone was under suspicion—all except a near-sighted scientist. No one suspects a near-sighted man.

They excitedly told Basseti this, as he lay under a mass of hay in a loft.

"Come quickly! Torini says it's safe for you with him. An Austrian officer's in his house, but he says to bring you. You'll be his assistant."

"Torini?" Basseti stared at them in wonder. "Not the chemist, Dr. Torini?"

"The same, the same. Hurry! The Austrians are searching farther down the street—they've heard of a stranger. They'll shoot you as a spy if they catch you."

An escaped prisoner, a soldier in the French service—yes, capture meant a firing-squad. Basseti's Italian was none too fluent; under close questioning, he could not hope to evade.

The Italians assisting him hauled him out into the dark streets. They hurried him along, avoiding Austrian patrols, hiding now here, now there, and at last shoving him into a dark doorway that stood open.

A woman's hand found his and led him on through darkness, and so into a lighted room.

She looked at the young Swiss—in rags, unshaven, haggard; he looked at her—alert, blooming, lovely, a girl of twenty. They smiled at each other.

"You're safe," she said quietly. "This room is yours. Everything you need is here. The clothes will fit you. Shave, dress, sleep—Father will see you in the morning. Do you know anything about chemistry?"

"Something," croaked Basseti, repressing his smile.

"You're to replace Father's assistant—he's in Milan now, and won't be back soon. We have an Austrian officer here; you must beware of him. We'll say you returned from Milan this evening. That'll be all right, but you must know something of chemistry."

"I do. Is your father Dr. Torini, the famous Torini?"

"Yes." She stared. "How do you know of him?"

"Why, I studied under Perkin in London—your father's friend!"

The girl clasped her hands. "It can't be—it's too good to be true! Wonderful! But I must run; Captain von Wettstein is waiting for me. You'll find food and wine there in the cupboard. Good-by. Good luck!"

She was gone, and Basseti was alone; but no longer alone. Her presence lingered; her eyes, her smile, remained with him, her voice like a 'cello.

Shaving, bathing, eating, Basseti was lost in wonder at the chance that had brought him to this house of all in Magenta. He was a soldier of the Legion; but he was also one of those men who have somehow retained a faith in God. Perhaps it was this belief which impelled him to attempt desperate things with a laugh. It is always your studious, quiet fellow who can face forward into hell without a whimper.

MORNING found him downstairs and talking with his host Torini—a pinched, inoffensive man with straggling beard and thick glasses; the last man to be suspected of being a patriot and the center of revolutionary activity in Ma-

genta. A few words, and in upon them came Captain von Wettstein, brusque, bluff, overbearing, a very deadly man in his way, being a great swordsman and hating all Italians—except one.

TORINI calmly introduced his assistant and ordered him to the laboratory.

"I'm working with those aniline crystals sent me from London," he said to Basseti. "Be careful not to disturb anything; get your notes in shape for me."

It was all very matter of course, as though Basseti really were his assistant just come home from a routine trip to Milan.

Basseti left the room, and found the girl Maria waiting outside.

"Come," she said simply, and conducted him to the laboratory.

There she showed him where everything was kept, gave him an apron, and he began to clean up the place. She left him quickly; not before one look, one smile, passed between them. Shaven and rested, he looked very different from the ragged refugee of the previous night.

The laboratory was a small room, built onto the house in the gardens. Basseti knew nothing whatever of the newly discovered aniline dyes with which Torini was working. All over a work-bench stood little earthen pots, filled with crystals and with powders. At that time, very little was known about these coal-tar products; the colors to be produced by them, in conjunction with mordant agents, were as yet largely unsuspected or unproven.

Here were bits of wool, tufts of cotton cloth and pile, little vials of acids—everything with which to experiment on various materials with the various crystals and their agents. Basseti looked over the notes of experiments, but could make little of what was going on. At a step, he turned to see Wettstein, slender and elegant in his uniform—a thin, pinched face, intently malevolent eyes, youth aged by dissipation.

"An interesting place, this where you work," said the Austrian affably. "So you are Swiss, I understand? From what part of Switzerland?"

Basseti told him, quite truthfully; he understood perfectly that Wettstein was perhaps not suspicious, but was merely careful. Switzerland! He spoke of it, spoke of his stay in London, his studies. So frank and open were his replies, so obvious did it seem that he could be nothing except an inoffensive and inept student, that Wettstein nodded and accepted him at face value.

Him, a soldier of the Legion, hunted as a killer by all the Austrian police!

"So you have no interest in politics—only in chemistry, eh?" Wettstein gazed around. "What is this apparatus for?"

Basseti explained this and that. In the midst of his talk Dr. Torini came in, listened, and went about his work.

The Austrian officer, with a careless jest, departed. At once Torini turned to his assistant.

"You know what you're about. My daughter tells me you studied with Perkin in London. Good! We are professor and assistant—nothing else. Remember, one word amiss, and not only are you lost, but I and my daughter as well. Close your lips, your heart, your brain, to any thought except that of chemistry. You understand?"

"Perfectly, my master."

"And slump your shoulders a bit. Right! Also, beware of that Austrian." Torini turned to his work-bench. "Now, about these aniline powders and crystals: I am experimenting a little with these new dye bases. We get new and amazing results every day, but ceaseless labor is demanded. Twice I've discovered a marvelous color, only to find it useless—"

The days passed uneventfully, on the surface; but below, with a growing tension, an ever-increasing suspense, a swift growth of emotional forces. Wettstein, except for his garrison duties, was like one of the family.

BASSETI realized perfectly what was happening. He had the gift of vivid imagination; not only the situation but its possibilities lay open to him, and appalled him. To leave here, to reach the French army as he had hoped, was impossible; the Austrian army completely encircled Magenta, and occupied the entire railroad line and the Ticino River beyond. Rumors of action, of battles, flew thick and fast. No one knew what was occurring or where the French were.

And within this house grew the makings of a terrific explosion.

Torini, in the utmost secrecy, was head of the Italian local activity—an intricate network of secret agents, momentarily paralyzed by the presence of the whole Austrian army. Maria, rather than her father, conducted the actual work. Captain von Wettstein held a high rank in the Austrian secret police—and was ardently wooing Maria, after the fashion of

"Chemistry occupies us, my friend—nothing else; one never knows what ears may be listening."

a gay Viennese. Torini was, perforce, blind to this, as he was apparently half-blind to everything else excepting his work.

Normally, Maria was fully capable of handling the arrogant Austrian; but the times were out of joint. She dared not antagonize him, lest he summarily clap Torini into prison in order to have the father out of the way.

"You see, it's Italy we must think of; my father must remain at liberty to carry on our work—such things as giving you refuge here," she said to Basseti as they sat talking one evening in the garden. "Father deliberately refuses to see what's going on. I don't want him to see too much and lose his head. After all, Wettstein is still tractable; and I can afford a kiss or two for the sake of Italy."

Basseti's deep eyes flashed. "Perhaps your father isn't the one in danger of losing his head," he rejoined slowly. She looked at him gravely in the starlight.

"Be careful! I haven't asked you to interfere, my friend; you've questioned me; I've been frank. Any outbreak from you would endanger us all. I learned today that they have sent your description everywhere and have put a price on your head—you killed a guard, remember. They don't forgive such things, these Austrians."

"And there are some things men don't forgive," said Basseti gloomily.

She laughed lightly and left him; she was going to an officers' ball with Wettstein that evening.

Basseti did not laugh. He was frightened by the necessity of self-control.

Those days were hard for him. It was difficult to keep occupied day and night in the laboratory with Dr. Torini, to fasten his mind on work with the same grim intentness that the older man displayed, and to forget that under this very roof Wettstein was pursuing his affair with Maria. Torini gave him the example, yes; but that helped little.

UNDER the surface Basseti was explosive. And he was fiercely and frankly in love with this girl; from that first meeting, the flash had sprung between them. Hunted, with a price on his head, he must be circumspect not only for his own sake, but for that of the family sheltering him. Yet at every meeting with Wettstein, he was conscious of the bristle, the clash, between them. A subconscious enmity had sprung up that boded ill. . . .

The days passed with tightening tension. Dinner, on the first of June, was an electric meal, the very air surcharged. Wettstein was prodigal of news, sneeringly triumphant. The French were close, within a few miles; a battle was imminent, a victory in which the Austrians would emerge the masters of Europe.

Torini, blinking, colorless, without opinions, went back to the laboratory. After a little, Basseti followed, fists clenched, deep fury in his heart and eyes; the laughter of Wettstein, the ogling, the deliberate forcing of himself on Maria, was maddening to Basseti. He marveled that the girl could endure so much. He himself, in passing, exchanged one look with the Austrian, and veiled his eyes.

He tried to discuss matters with Torini, but the latter refused point-blank.

"Chemistry occupies us, my friend—nothing else. One never knows what ears may be listening. Now get that sulphuric acid ready; somewhere we must find the right agent for this dye, and then who knows? A new color may be born!"

"Dyes and acids be damned," muttered Basseti, but forced himself to obey. . . .

Noon of the next day: Wettstein appeared and joined them at luncheon; he was excited, filled with energy, with news. It burst all restraint.

"We have the accursed French where we want them!" he exclaimed vibrantly. "We've been retreating; now Kuhn, our chief of staff, has taken over command. For another two days, Kuhn will continue to draw back—then suddenly hurl every division forward and cut through the extended French line and annihilate them! The old cavalry strategy; it can't be beaten. Is it not splendid?"

"It sounds well," Torini agreed mildly, blinking across the table. "By the way, did you get the address of that chemical firm in Pesth I wanted?"

"Chemical firm? When the fate of nations is to be decided at your very door?" the Austrian snorted. *"Gott,* what a man it is! No, I forgot all about it."

Basseti caught the eye of Maria, understood the look she gave him. Humbly he rose and excused himself. In the hallway outside, she joined him, a flush in her cheeks.

"You heard — you heard?" he exclaimed, twisting his fingers in futile despair. "You must get that information through to our army at once, today, tonight!"

She shook her head. "No. It's impossible. Our system is paralyzed."

"Then I will," he said brusquely. "I must, I must!"

"How?" she demanded. Basseti shook his head.

"I don't know. There must be some way of getting through the Austrian lines."

"Only by the bridges across the Ticino," she replied. "That is impossible. Those bridges are guarded by their whole force, against the French advance. Please, for my sake, contain yourself, have patience!"

"For your sake,"—Basseti suppressed a groan,—"I would move the world—but I cannot see our army lured into this trap and do nothing about it. Tonight, something may turn up."

And that night, something did—though not as expected.

THE three of them had just finished dinner. Wettstein, flushed by wine, by the assurance of victory, by impending battle, was in no mood to delay his personal triumph. To Dr. Torini, to Basseti, he was affable but haughty; for Maria, he was all smiles and jests. As she was passing him, he caught her by the arm and seated her on his knee, and laughed.

"Tell me," he said to Torini, his arm about her waist, "have you a grindstone in that laboratory of yours?"

"Eh?" And Torini blinked through his thick glasses. "A small one, yes."

"Good. You,"—and Wettstein gave Basseti a curt gesture,—"go to my room, get the saber that's lying under my bed, and put an edge on it, a keen edge."

"What?" Maria, laughing, touched the saber he wore. "But here it is!"

"No; the other is my dress saber, with a gold hilt." And Wettstein twisted his mustache. "I want to use it tomorrow or the day after on these accursed French, when we have them in our trap. I have special permission to leave the garrison and join my cavalry regiment for the occasion. So, my Maria—shall I bring you back the ears of Napoleon the Little, eh?"

BASSETI rose and went on the errand; but as he left the room, he exchanged one look with the Austrian, and this time he did not veil his eyes or what lay in them.

Trembling, he got the saber and took it to the laboratory. The edge was not good, but the point was all that could be desired. He laid the weapon on the big bench, and stood hunched in desperate thought. There must be some way—some way! He forgot about the task assigned him. He went back to the doorway, heard a quick, light step, and saw Maria, almost running. She scarcely paused; but he glimpsed the tears on her face, the quick frightened breath of her bosom.

"No, no!" she gasped, as he would have stopped her. "In the garden—later."

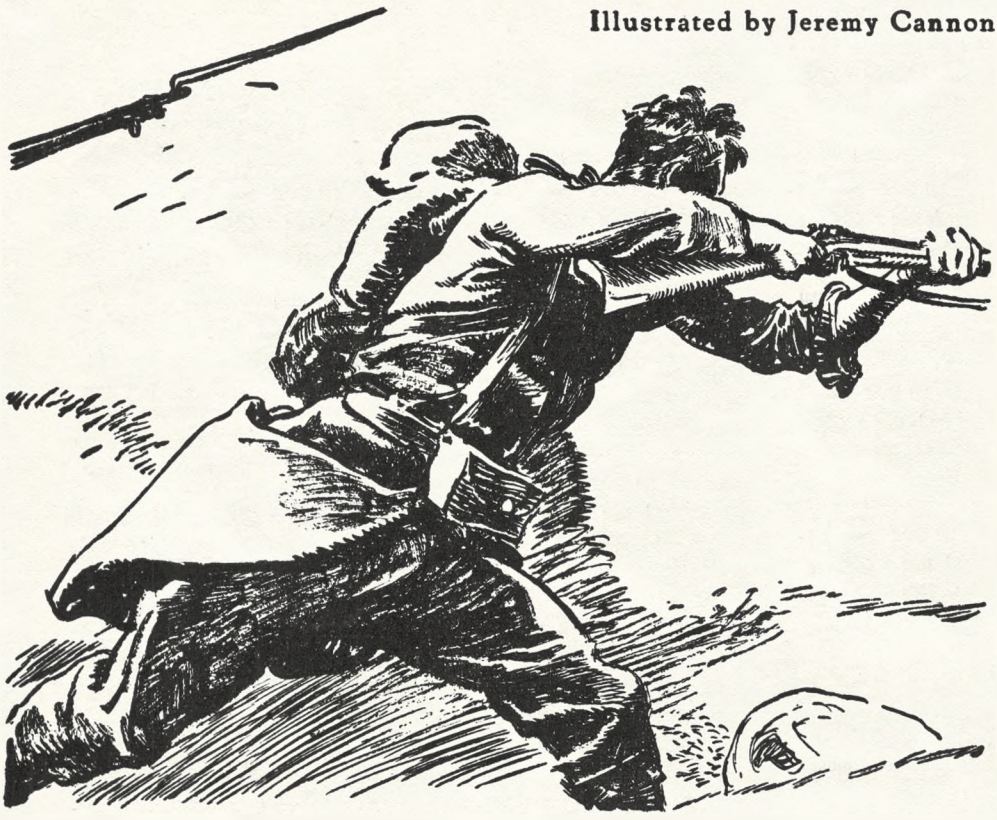
She was gone. Basseti went back to the work-bench under the lantern and scowled at the gold-hilted saber. He could imagine what must have passed; Wettstein must have gone beyond all bounds. And no interference from Torini? Strange! That man was by no means so impassive as he seemed. . . .

"Attention!" barked a voice in French. "Attention!"

Drill, day in and day out, of the Legion—it is a terrible thing. It affects the nerves, the brain-reflexes, the muscular reactions, as it is meant to do, until a man becomes an automaton who moves at the word of command, and moves instantly.

So with Basseti. At the word, he stiffened, came to attention, even before his

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon



It was a fight to the death, a battle from house to house, with no

mind could realize that it must be a trap. He turned, and looked into the eyes of Captain von Wettstein. The Austrian was standing in the doorway, bared saber in hand; a thin, cruel smile flashed over his face and was gone. He advanced toward the staring Basseti, who knew himself lost.

"So, you are a soldier! A French soldier. That is to say, a spy."

"I am not a spy," said Basseti simply.

Wettstein eyed him.

"No? My man, when you looked at me as you left the dining-room, the truth flashed over me. You answer the description of that Frenchman who is hunted for killing one of our soldiers; an escaped prisoner. You appeared here at the correct time. You posed as the assistant of Dr. Torini. So, then! He has been shielding you here. You know what that means for him—"

AS he spoke, the Austrian advanced, the point of his saber extended. Basseti backed before him, until he could back no farther. He stood against the work-bench. Almost under his hand was the gold hilt of the other saber.

For an instant he cringed, shrinking back, apparent terror in his face.

"No, no!" he cried, as the steel point advanced at him. "Don't kill me—I'll tell you everything!"

"Indeed?" Wettstein halted, smiled again, and twisted his mustache. "Very well, you are under arrest. And everyone in this house is also under arrest—"

With a movement so sudden that the eye could not follow it, Basseti had seized the saber under his hand and taken one swift sidewise step. The blade whirled and came with a clash against that of the Austrian. Startled, astounded, Wettstein turned about and thrust. But as he did so, the point of Basseti's steel passed through him, transfixed his heart, drove into the wall behind him, and held him pinioned as he died.

One convulsive movement. The Austrian's hand swept out his saber, lost it, struck the dye-pots and paraphernalia on the work-bench, and then fell again. The saber rattled on the floor.

Next instant Dr. Torini appeared in the open doorway, a revolver in his hand. He stood there for a long moment, motionless, blinking at the scene, at the

quarter asked. Death struck on every side, but left Basseti unharmed.

staring and speechless Basseti. Then he lowered his revolver.

"Apparently you were a moment ahead of me," he observed mildly. "I congratulate you."

Basseti came to life. Words erupted from him, a torrent of eager words. The older man listened, shrugged and gave consent.

"It is a perfectly insane thing to attempt; but why should you not attempt it?" he said in his calm manner. "You speak German; at least you'll have a chance to die in action, which is more than I can hope for with my feeble sight. Yes, by all means. I'll bury his body in the garden tonight; his horse is in the stable—yes, it might be done. Hm! You've made a mess of my experiments, but that can't be helped. Here, I'll lend you a hand with his clothes. Leave him where he is until we get them unbuttoned."

And this man of science fell to work, as calmly, as coolly, as he had come here to kill Wettstein. To his ex-assistant, it was amazing.

So, in another ten minutes, Basseti was garbed in the officer's uniform of the dead man, the gold-hilted saber now at his hip. Only then did he recollect his tryst, and after a word to Torini, passed out into the gardens.

"Maria?"

SHE came to his voice, sighted him in the starlight, halted. Basseti broke into a laugh and seized her hand.

"Behold! Never mind what's happened, Maria; I'm off in five minutes. With the uniform, the passes, the papers of Wettstein, I may win through. Wish me luck!"

"You!" She trembled suddenly. "But where is he, then? What's happened?"

He told her, with a shrug. She stared at him in the obscurity; he was indeed a vastly different man now, in looks and deeds—and future. She gasped:

"But you know—you know what it means! If they catch you, if anything goes wrong, you'll be shot—"

"Then wish me luck, and nothing will go wrong." He drew her closer; she flung herself upon him passionately, vehemently, all restraint melted in fear. They still stood there in each other's arms when Dr. Torini joined them.

"My children, you are optimists," said this strange man dryly. "You, my son, may not live out this night; but, if by any chance you do live, I shall honor you. Here are all Wettstein's papers. Get off, and get off quickly. I'll help you saddle his horse."

Another fifteen minutes, and Basseti was riding through the town. He passed the gates, holding down Wettstein's pass to the lantern of the guard; then he was on his way for the Ticino and the bridges.

IN the early morning of June 3rd, a detachment of French cavalry sighted a lone rider approaching, a man naked to the waist, in Austrian uniform breeches, a broken saber in his hand. This was Basseti, who had rid himself of his upper uniform lest it bring bullets upon him. The squadron surrounded him, and he saluted.

"Private Basseti, third company, 1st Regiment Étranger, reporting for duty!"

He poured out his news. If true, it was important; but he was greeted with open suspicion, and was sent back under guard. It was past noon when the Legion was encountered and not until then was his identity established; and it was later still, when messengers were sent dashing off to find Marshal MacMahon and the emperor.

Thus, it was not until the next morning that the word he bore really went into effect; and then the French columns were hurled forward in a smashing attack, just as the Austrians were moving up to take the initiative.

But the first blow, struck the hardest, was decisive.

The Austrian lines were broken, their columns crumpled, the whole line of the Ticino and the bridges was taken. Straight at Magenta, toward noon, was hurled the second brigade, with the Legion well in advance, as always. Espinasse, that old Legionnaire, had the brigade; Chabrier, hero of a score of African campaigns and of the Crimea, was colonel of the Legion.

Down across the brooks and vineyards they drove, to see, too late, a tremendous Austrian column pouring upon them.

"Drop knapsacks! Fix bayonets!" rapped out Chabrier, and turned to the bugler. "Sound the charge!"

Basseti, in uniform again, his heart burning at sight of the little town where destiny awaited him, was in the van. The Austrian rifles crashed once. Gaps broke in the line. Chabrier was down under the bullets, and a howl of fury broke from his men as they swept past his body. Then they were into the masses of Austrians —into them with a rage, an insensate ferocity that staggered the whole Austrian column.

More of the enemy regiments poured up. The Legion wavered; but now the Zouaves were charging in, and the Austrians broke. Basseti found his bayonet streaming red, found himself charging with the rest, on and on, until the Austrian defense stiffened and determinedly formed anew.

On through the vineyards they fought; then Espinasse came up with the other troops as the afternoon was fading into dusk. Forward again, on into the town beyond—and the garrison of eight thousand Austrians awaiting them. Here it was a fight to the death, a battle from house to house, with Espinasse dead and no quarter asked. Basseti was on fire now, as death struck on every side but left him unharmed; down the street, on to the next house, into the garden with the bayonet, into the house itself where rifle-flashes split the darkness. But never the one house he sought, the one garden he knew so well.

EIGHT o'clock, nine o'clock—the hell continued unabated. Suddenly Basseti knew where he was, recognized the street, gathered half a dozen men around him. The Austrians were breaking now; the street, the next street, was cleared.

With a rush, Basseti was through into the street beyond, running full tilt. Here was the doorway, here was the garden wall.

Basseti's voice lifted hoarsely.

"Maria! Maria!"

Their rifle-butts pounded the door. She opened, in the darkness; Basseti was clasping hands with her, pressing her to him while his comrades crowded in.

"Friends—they'll watch the street. Take them to the windows, Maria; they'll keep all safe for you. Give them wine. Where's your father?"

"In the laboratory," she panted; "working. Go to him, quickly! I'll follow—"

He was already on his way, laughing excitedly. What manner of man was this Torini, to be working in his laboratory while a battle raged all around?

When he broke in, Dr. Torini was stooping over the workbench. Glancing around, peering and blinking, Torini finally recognized his assistant in this powder-smudged, breathless Legionnaire.

"Oh, it's you—alive, eh? That's good," he exclaimed. "Come here, come here at once! Arrange things on the bench exactly as they were before you left—hurry!"

"What the devil's wrong with you?" demanded Basseti. "Did you bury Wettstein—"

"Never mind all that." Torini waved his hand. "The acids, the dyes—everything, just as they were! Look at this; it's the most marvelous thing I ever saw, and I've not been able to discover what agent was used—when Wettstein disarranged everything, it must have happened then—"

He held up a long tuft of wool. At first, Basseti thought it dipped in blood; then he perceived that a dye had colored it, a marvelously vivid scarlet-purple hue.

A laugh seized him, until he saw that Torini was in frightful earnest. Swiftly he went to the bench and arranged everything there, the dye-pots, the acids, everything, as he had last seen them. He remembered the dying gesture of the Austrian—the outflung hand crashing things to chaos. He comprehended that in this accident, something had happened; some combination of crystals and acid and wool—

He flung himself into it with a will, then glanced up.

"Do you know we've won a battle? At least, on our front—"

"Battle be hanged," exclaimed Torini, blinking. "Here, the wool was lying exactly here—you can see where the red dye spilled! It's an unknown shade, absolutely new and glorious!"

HE drew himself up against the wall. It was just there Captain von Wettstein had stood. His hand swept out to the work-bench. A cry broke from him.

"Ha! I never suspected it—look, look! There are the crystals, there's the acid, the wool—yes, it's a combination I haven't tried—"

He stooped forward eagerly. Basseti turned to the doorway, saw Maria there, and gayly joined her. Her lips touched his, then she drew back.

"Come! We have bread and cheese and wine. What sort of a discovery did you make that got him so excited? Is it true there's a tremendous battle going on?"

"And if I haven't lost my senses, we've won it," said Basseti. "But I've won more than anyone else this night—"

So he had, indeed, as Maria made very clear to him.

Later, as the two of them sat with the Legionnaires, talking and eating and drinking and preparing to make themselves comfortable until dawn, Dr. Torini burst in upon the lot of them. He was excited, transported with delirious joy, and held up a dripping skein of wool.

"Look at it!" he cried out. "The most wonderful color ever seen, the royal Tyrian purple of the ancients—all from a crystal and a bit of acid! And the wool takes it perfectly, cotton takes it perfectly—eh, Maria? Who's that you're kissing?"

"My future husband, and I think with your consent!" replied the girl, amid a burst of laughter from the interested Legionnaires. One of them bawled out loudly:

"Here's a name for your color, good doctor! The name of your town, the name of this day's victory—Magenta! *Vive la Légion*, comrades, and a health to Magenta!"

OUR waiter had finished his story. . . . He sipped his wine, lit a fresh cigarette. His rather sad eyes touched upon us; the eyes of a waiter who sees everything upon his table except the people sitting there.

"Upon my word," and I turned to Ponson, "I have heard some story about magenta dye having been discovered during or just after the battle—why, there's the hookup you were looking for! The Legion and commerce, certainly!"

Ponson nodded. "Right. Is that story true, my friend?"

The waiter smiled a little and produced from his pocket an ordinary old black leather daguerreotype case. He opened the case and handed it to us.

We looked at the daguerreotype of a slender, erect head, a thoughtful face, a man's face. No uniform, but such a face as Basseti might have owned, that man with fire inside him.

"Basseti, yes," said our waiter, nodding to our glances. "Doesn't that answer your question, gentlemen?"

"I don't see how," Ponson said sharply, as he returned the little picture.

The waiter pocketed it and shrugged.

"It should," he replied, and smiled at us as he came to his feet. "You see, gentlemen, my name is Basseti too. Good night."

The moving story of the forlorn hope of the Legion who stormed the Heights of Ste. Suzanne in the Franco-Prussian war will appear in our forthcoming February issue.

A Price on

A stirring novel of the old West, by the able author of "A Man Four Square," "Oh, You Texl" and many other noted books.

By WILLIAM MAC LEOD RAINE

THE rider drew up at the summit and shifted his weight to ease muscles cramped from travel. A long slant of light was streaming over the hilltop through the greasewood, and flooded the ugly sprawling little town with its main street running crookedly along the edge of the creek. There was a heat in the sun that set a coma of listlessness over Fair Play. A flop-eared hound wandered across the road. Otherwise there was no sign of life except the smoke drifting lazily from the chimneys.

"Safe as a Sunday school—maybe," the man decided, a doubtful sardonic grin on his hard brown face.

"We'll rock along, Maverick," he said to his chestnut gelding. "You never can tell till you try."

But before Blake Forrest descended the steep path he made sure the .45 rode lightly in its holster fastened to the leg of the chaps. He was not looking for trouble, but if it was forced on him, he wanted to be ready for it.

Maverick jogged down a stony ravine and came out of a gully to a road coated with a yellow powder made fine by a thousand trampling hoofs. Fair Play was still asleep. Even the dog had disappeared. At the hitch-rack in front of a corner store three saddled horses drowsed lazily in the sun. On the false front of the building was painted a sign:

SAMPSON & DOAN
Dry Goods & Merchandise
POST OFFICE

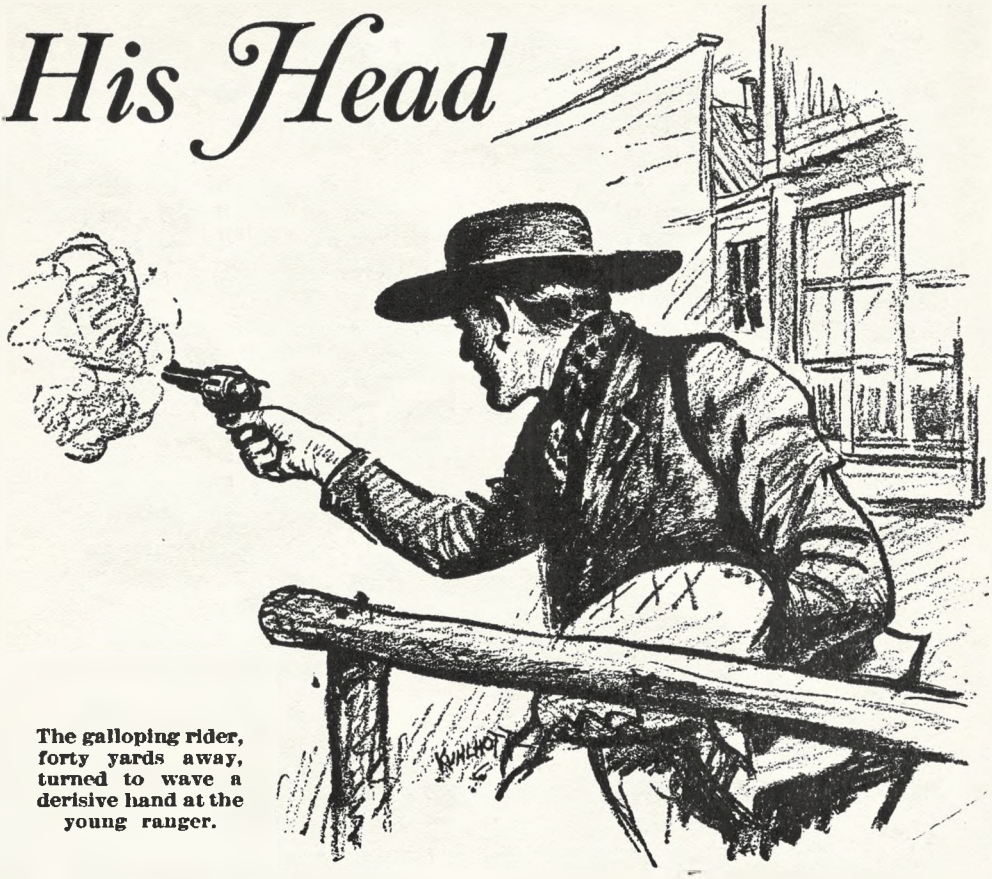
Forrest swung from the saddle and tied at the rack. But caution was still strong in him. There was a likelihood that he might have to leave in a hurry. He put his mount at the right of the line, and fastened the bridle-reins with a slip-knot.

When Forrest sauntered into the store, there was a deceptive lethargy in his manner. It showed in the drag of his spurred feet, in a certain sleepiness of the half-hooded eyes. Yet the glance that seemed to sweep the room so indifferently missed nothing—took in the proprietors and the clerk, two cowboys sitting with chairs tilted against a counter, a very young man engaged in talk with them. The slow look even picked up the intent of a poster tacked to the wall of the post-office division in the rear of the store. From that placard stared back at him a face remarkably like his own. The well-trained blue eyes just touched the printed sheet in passing, but long enough to get a phrase in black-faced type: *"One Thousand Dollars Reward for the Arrest of Blake Forrest."*

AT the entrance of the stranger, all conversation halted momentarily. Those in the room observed him with the quiet Western steadiness that has nothing of offense in it. They saw a face brown and strong, all the loose uncertainty of youth hammered out of it. They saw a body compact, lean, graceful, a hint of tigerish litheness in the ease of its movements.

Forrest nodded casually to those present before he turned to Doan with his order for coffee, bacon, flour, sugar and canned goods. Though his mind seemed to be on the purchases, he was very much aware of the three loungers in the store. One of them he labeled dangerous, the lad talking to the cowboys. Though he wore no uniform to mark his occupation,

His Head



The galloping rider, forty yards away, turned to wave a derisive hand at the young ranger.

Texas Ranger was stamped all over him. Outlaw though he was now, Blake Forrest had once been in the Force himself. There was no prescribed costume; yet the rangers did not dress quite like other men on the frontier. A novice could not have told the difference, but to Forrest it stood out plainly. This youngster had on a flat black hat. The legs of his jeans trousers were thrust into the tops of high-heeled dusty boots. From the sagging belt around his waist, garnished with cartridges, hung a scabbarded revolver.

The ranger strolled to the front of the room, stood there a moment watching the newcomer covertly, then returned to his former position. His eyes studied the picture on the poster, shifted to the stranger, and back again to the photograph.

The reckless gayety that had snatched Forrest from humdrum paths and largely dominated his life began now to drum in his blood. He thought: "Mr. Ranger is loaded to the hocks with suspicions but would hate to make a mistake."

He lit a cigarette and moved toward the rear of the store. "Hot for this time of the year," he mentioned.

"That's right," one of the cowpunchers said.

The ranger asked a question, not offensively: "Stranger about here?"

"Yes," Forrest answered.

"Working for some cow outfit?"

"Ridin' the chuck-line right now."

"From down Santone-way, maybe?"

It was not good manners to ask casual strangers in Texas whence they came. Forrest showed surprise innocently.

"From most everywhere in my time," he said gently, indifferently.

"Takes in some territory. Ever been in Rosedale?"

"Why Rosedale?" he asked, with a smile that did not encourage curiosity.

The younger man persisted. It was his business to find out things.

"I'm a ranger," he said, "so I thought you might have met or heard of some of the wanted men on our list."

"Might have," admitted Forrest coolly. "There are plenty of them."

"Ranger Steve Porter," one of the cowboys said by way of introduction.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Porter," the newcomer said cheerfully. "It's a good job for a young man, if he does get only

"Can't be more than fifty thousand guys in Texas the description fits," he commented casually.

thirty a month and find his own horse and weapons. Think of the service to the community, running down scalawags and putting them out of business! By and by you'll have Texas all combed up nice and respectable as Iowa. All good citizens stand back of you when you go to smoking out the bad men. . . . Quite a way back of you, though. Healthy life too—if you live to enjoy it."

"Don't suppose you've been down in Bexar County recently," Porter said.

"Your don't suppose is correct."

The ranger tried another lead. "No reason why a top hand should be out of work these days. Plenty of outfits are shy of riders."

"I'm a little particular who I work for," the stranger explained, his low voice almost a drawl.

"Where was your last job?"

The suspected man laughed. "My goodness, you'll be asking me next where I got my horse. Maybe you think I'm in yore little 'Gone to Texas' book." *

Forrest had the advantage age and experience give. He was sure of himself, a confidence born of many dangers safely passed. Young Porter's mind was like an open book to him. The ranger was strongly of the opinion that he was Blake Forrest, wanted for bank- and train-robbery. But he was not sure, and he could not afford to make a mistake. The officers of the force had drilled it into the men that innocent citizens were not to be arrested on long chances.

"I'm no Paul Pry," the ranger said, flushing. "But I thought you might have picked up some information on your travels about this Forrest, who robbed the T. & P. Maybe you noticed that poster."

Since it was called to his attention, the stranger noticed it more particularly now. Porter watched him while he read, and caught a look of startled surprise on the man's face, erased by a swift cynical smile. If guilty, he was a cool customer.

Beneath the photograph Forrest read a very accurate description of himself. The bandit was set down as about thirty years old, weight 165 pounds, height five foot ten, hair black, eyes blue. His color was given as coffee brown. Body muscular and graceful. Manner pleasant and friendly unless angered. A dangerous man who would probably resist arrest. The only known mark to distinguish him was a scar on the back of the right hand, from base of thumb to wrist.

"Can't be more than fifty thousand guys in Texas the description fits," commented Forrest casually.

"With that scar on the back of his right hand," the ranger differed.

The man under observation happened just now to have thrust his right hand under the open vest he wore. Steve Porter had tried several times to get a look at it and had not yet succeeded.

"That's right," assented Forrest genially. "All you got to do is collect the fifty thousand I mentioned and take a look at the back of their hands. You-all won't have more than a couple of hundred suspects then." He eyed the picture carefully. "This Forrest guy sure looks tough. We'd ought to thank you rangers for riding on his tail so close."

"He looks a heap like some one I've seen lately." The ranger turned to one

*The Texas Rangers carried a book containing a list of three thousand outlaws, most of whom had migrated from other States hurriedly. It was a custom for the law-officers of the communities where they had previously lived to mark opposite the names of the missing bad men the letters *G. T. T.*, an abbreviation for *Gone to Texas.*

of the cowboys. "Don't he remind you of some one, Bill?"

Bill would have bet his pay check against a 'dobe dollar that he could put a finger on the original of the picture without rising from his seat, but he had no intention of saying so. This was strictly none of his business.

"Cain't say he does," was his noncommittal answer.

"He looks like a dozen birds I've known," the stranger said hardily. "Why, he might be my own brother."

"I don't think you mentioned your name," the ranger suggested. "Meet Bill Andrews and Joe Means."

It was a neat little trap, but Forrest avoided it. He did not remove his hand from under the vest, but stretched out the other.

"Glad to meet you, gents. I crushed my right hand, and it's sore. My name —well, one name is as good as another. Call me Jim. My father used it except when he was waiting in the woodshed for me; then he called me James. Jim —Brown."

"I don't want to be annoying," the ranger said, "but—"

"So you can't go round treating honest men like outlaws—asking to look at their hands, and that sort of thing. You're p'intedly right; a decent citizen wouldn't like that. He would think it an insult."

"An honest citizen would be willing to give an account of himself, Mr. Brown."

"Sure. Why not? I'll start. The other boys can give their life-histories later. Mine is short and sweet. Ran away from my step-father when I was fourteen. Came West. Got a job. Lost it. Got another. Quit it. Moved on to another place. Finally I got to Fair Play."

"Have you any identification papers, Mr. Brown?"

FORREST had been taking stock of the situation. The back door was nearer than the one he had entered, but his horse was at the front of the building. A showdown was coming, and he did not like it. Two first considerations were in his mind: he did not want to be arrested; nor did he want to kill this young fellow. It was bad business to wipe out a ranger. The man's companions would keep coming until at last they got him. Moreover, he was by temperament no killer. He had nothing against Steve Porter, outside of the fact that just now he was devilishly in the way. He must use strategy.

"You're putting the wagon before the horse, Mr. Ranger," he remonstrated. "Every man is presumed to be innocent until he is proved guilty. See the constitution of the U.S.A. If you want to arrest me legally, that's different. Get a warrant, and I'll surrender like a lamb."

"A ranger doesn't need a warrant."

"Hmph! Personally, I'd rather be arrested by due process of law than at the whim of some wise ranger who is particular where I wear my scars. But let that go in the discard. The poster mentions two hold-ups, one of the Rosedale bank and the other of the Texas & Pacific express. For which one are you collecting me?"

"For either one—or both."

"Perhaps I was at Northfield too, with Jesse James and the Younger boys," the stranger suggested. "I had as much to do with that stick-up as with the Texas & Pacific one."

"You can explain all that to the judge."

"Decided to have me tried, have you? With or without evidence?"

"There's evidence enough. It's my duty to arrest you."

THE stranger's face broke into a swift gay smile. "We're going at this the wrong way, Mr. Porter. What say we walk over to the Sheriff's office together and put our cards on the table? If you're not satisfied with my explanation, you can take me into custody until you have checked it up."

"Suits me," the ranger replied, greatly relieved.

"Good enough."

Forrest walked to the counter, ran his right hand swiftly into a hip pocket for money, and paid for the goods he had purchased.

"I'll put these supplies on my horse," he said to the ranger. "Come along out with me."

He led the way to the door, his right hand under the parcels. As he went, he chatted cheerfully. "I got a couple cans of peaches. They're kinda bulky, but I have a craving for them. A fellow gets tired of sowbelly and coffee."

Steve Porter wished he had been longer with the rangers and was more experienced. He did not doubt this man was Forrest. Why otherwise would the fellow frustrate all attempts to see the back of his hand? But he had to be sure before he arrested him. After all, it would be better to do this after the showdown at the Sheriff's office.

"I'll tie this flour on behind the saddle and stow the other things in the saddlebags," the stranger said. "Be ready to go with you in a jiffy."

"You-all bought quite a lot of grub," the ranger said pointedly, "for a man drifting from camp to camp."

"Yes. I'm kind of a lone wolf. Like to sleep in the hills sometimes. A fellow gets thataway—feels crowded with too many neighbors."

"Some fellows," agreed Porter, and slanted a long look at him.

Forrest filled the saddlebags and lifted the flour to the back of the horse.

"I'll help you tie it," the ranger said, and stepped forward, still intent on finding out if this man had the advertised scar.

"I'm obliged to you," the older man said easily. "If you'll hold it a minute, I'll tie the other side."

He walked round behind the horse to the other side, reached forward and jerked loose the slip-knot, and vaulted to the saddle. Swiftly he swung his mount and started it with a jump. His body low, he dashed up the road in a cloud of dust.

The ranger, left holding the sack of flour, stared after him in startled surprise. When he did drag out a revolver, the galloping rider was forty yards away. He fired twice, to no effect.

Forrest turned, to wave a derisive hand at him. Instantly the ranger was fumbling at the knotted bridle of the nearest horse. Before the fugitive was out of sight, young Porter was astride the cow-pony and in pursuit.

CHAPTER II

BEFORE Forrest had gone three hundred yards he knew that the ranger had not horse enough under him to catch Maverick. The chestnut was a powerful rangy animal with plenty of endurance and a fair amount of speed. Steve Porter was not gaining.

For about a mile Forrest held to the road. He topped a sharp rise and looked back. The ranger's mount was beginning to take the slope a couple of hundred yards in the rear. Forrest, as soon as he was out of sight, turned up an arroyo which twisted its way into the hills. The brush was thick, and before he had traveled a stone's-throw, the cactus and the mesquite had him completely hidden. He drew up for a moment to listen.

To him there came the sound of pounding hoofs on the road. The ranger did not stop at the arroyo, but held a straight course ahead. He would pull up at the turn just in front of him when he discovered the man he wanted had deflected into the chaparral; but that extra two minutes of time ought to be enough for Forrest. Porter would not know at what point he had disappeared, and before he had picked up the trail, Maverick would be among the cow-backed hills which rose like waves of a rolling sea. Once lost in these, he would be as hard to find as the proverbial needle in a haystack.

The arroyo ran into a hill pocket, the sides of which were sown with a thick growth of prickly pear. Forrest took the left-hand slope and presently looked down on the tops of many folded hills. Back of these was the ridge toward which he was working. For another hour he rode steadily, then decided to tie up for dinner at the first good place that offered.

HE was pushing his way up a shale bluff when he halted abruptly. Down in the valley to the left something had crossed from one bunch of mesquite to another. The object had looked to him like a man, and if so almost certainly one in trouble. Whatever it was, it seemed to be dragging itself along with difficulty.

He watched for a minute and saw the object reappear in the open. A man or a boy weaved forward weakly. What was he doing here on the desert on foot? Presently the figure stopped in the shade of a mesquite and sank to the ground.

Forrest turned Maverick down the slope toward the valley. This was not a trap, since nobody could be expecting to find him here. Somebody desperately needed help. He rode across the spine-covered plain at a canter. When the figure rose and moved toward him, hands outstretched, he could see by the slender lines that this was not a grown man. But when he leaped from the horse and moved to meet the wanderer, he was startled to see a woman. She was in boots and Levis, and in spite of her youth, was haggard from exhaustion.

"I've been lost all day and all night," she said hoarsely. "Any water in that canteen?"

He untied the canteen from the saddle and handed it to her. She drank as if she would never stop.

From one of the saddlebags he got a can of peaches, and from a scabbard beside the saddle a small hatchet. With

the heel of the blade he slashed open the top of the can.

"The juice will be fine for your parched throat," he said. "And the fruit will slip down easily. Be careful you don't cut yourself on the jagged edge."

"Throat's swollen so I can hardly swallow," she croaked. "It's been terrible. I thought—"

She stopped, to keep from breaking down.

He knew what she had thought, that she was going to die alone in the desert of thirst. From this terror, which had been riding her for many hours, he tried to deflect her mind.

"How did you get lost?"

"I was riding from the Granite Gap ranch to Fair Play. My horse got scared at a rattler, acted up, and threw me. When I tried to catch him, he bolted."

"A girl ought not to tackle this desert alone. . . . There are live-oaks up on the bluffs where you'll get more shade. Soon as you've finished those peaches, I'll put you in the saddle, and we'll ride up there. I'm going to let you sleep. You're young and tough. In a few hours you will be good as new."

She fished a peach out of the can with a forefinger. "My throat is a lot better already. I'm hungry too."

"You don't want to eat too much all at once. The peaches will do for a start."

When she had drained the can, he brought Maverick up alongside her. The face of the girl was streaked from tears, and grimy with dust. Her eyes were sunken and red. But he could see that normally she would be very pretty.

She looked at him, and he noticed she was fighting back tears. "If it hadn't been you—"

"It would have been some one else," he said, not believing it. "We'll go now."

The rescued girl tried to raise one foot to the stirrup, and could not get it high enough. She was too near exhaustion. He put a hand round the blue overalls at the ankle, said "Now!" and gave her a lift into the saddle. After he had fitted her feet into the leathers above the stirrups, they moved across the valley and up the slope to the grove of live-oaks on the bluff.

She started to dismount without help, but from behind he took her round the waist and lowered her lightly.

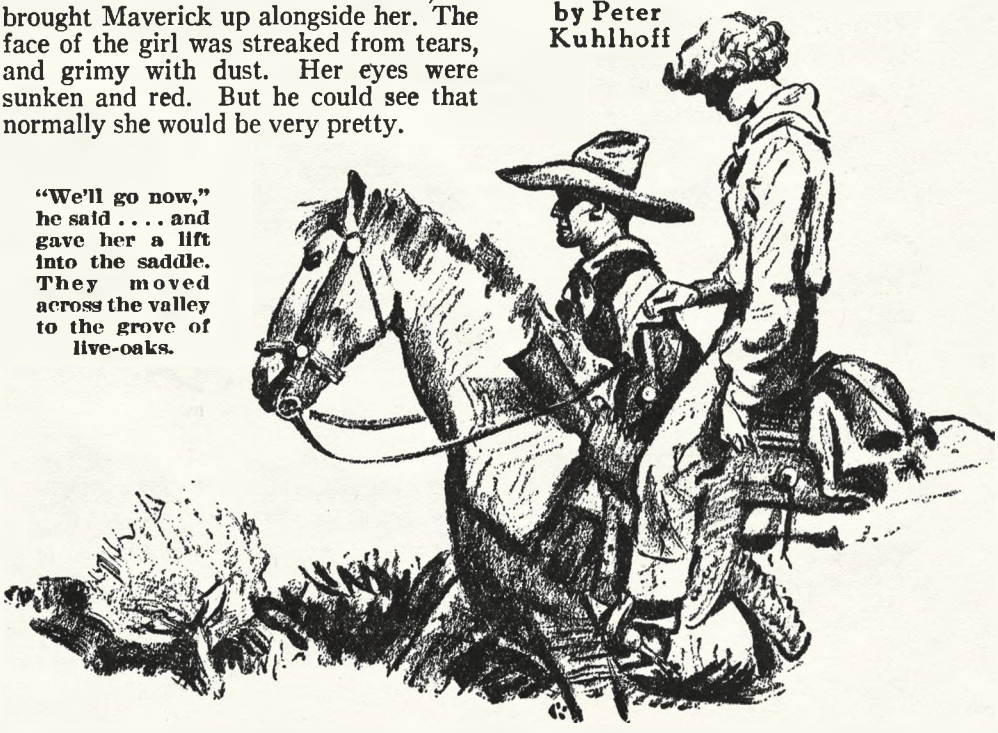
"I'll light a fire and fix you up some food," he said. "By that time you'll be ready for some more. Go rest under that tree till I tell you to come and get it."

"You're babying me. I ought to help." She was coming back to normal, but her smile was still a little wistful.

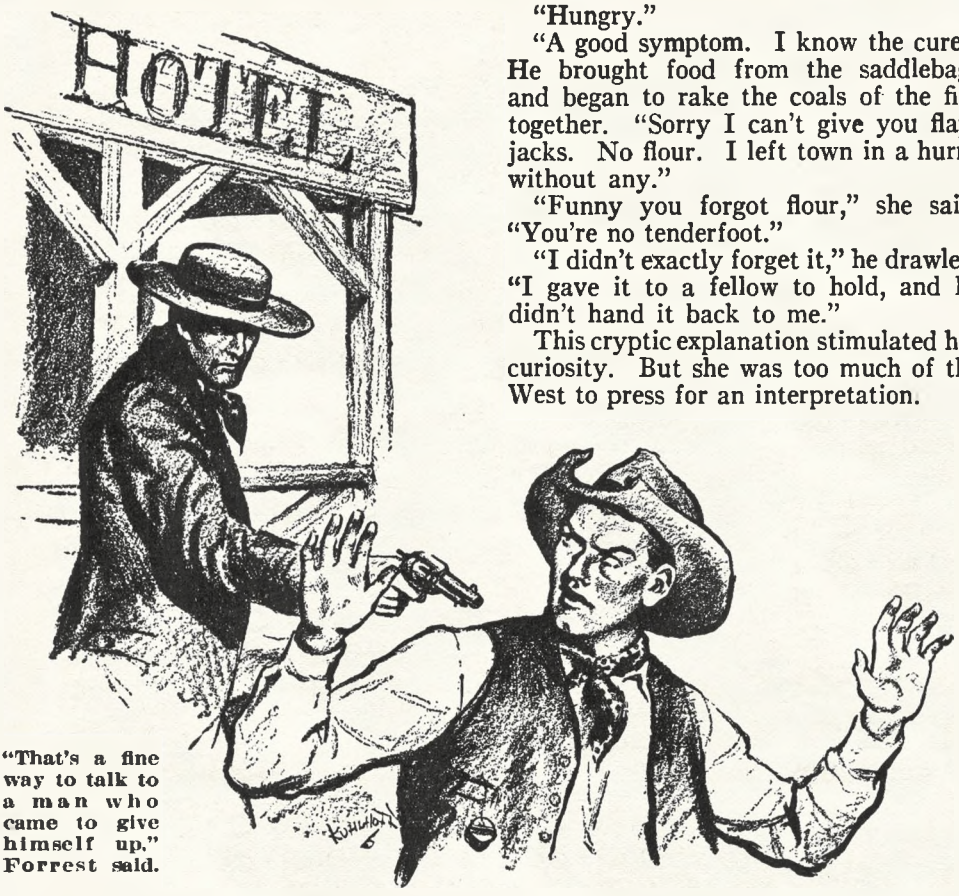
When dinner was ready, he saw that she did not eat too much. His manner was matter-of-fact, almost brusque. This was no time to help her feel sorry for herself.

He spread the saddle-blanket for a bed. "Don't worry," he said. "It's all

Illustrated by Peter Kuhlhoff



"We'll go now," he said . . . . and gave her a lift into the saddle. They moved across the valley to the grove of live-oaks.



"That's a fine way to talk to a man who came to give himself up," Forrest said.

over. Nothing is going to harm you now."

"You're good to me," she told him, with a swift look of gratitude.

Though she had not expected to sleep, her eyes closed almost at once.... When she awakened, it was from the cold. His slicker had been spread over her. It was night, and a million stars lit the sky.

She saw the man sitting beside a fire not far away. He sat crosslegged, as riders of the range usually do. While she watched him, he rose to replenish the fire. He chopped dry branches and brought them back with him. Never had she seen anyone move more lightly and surely.

She was slept out, and the desire for talk was strong. An urge was in her to discover what manner of man he was.

"What time is it?" she called.

"About four o'clock."

She rose, shook her clothes together, and moved over to him. "I must have slept about fifteen hours. Why didn't you wake me?"

"You needed the rest. How you feeling now?"

"Hungry."

"A good symptom. I know the cure." He brought food from the saddlebags and began to rake the coals of the fire together. "Sorry I can't give you flapjacks. No flour. I left town in a hurry without any."

"Funny you forgot flour," she said. "You're no tenderfoot."

"I didn't exactly forget it," he drawled. "I gave it to a fellow to hold, and he didn't hand it back to me."

This cryptic explanation stimulated her curiosity. But she was too much of the West to press for an interpretation.

"My name is Janet King," she mentioned. "Curtis King of the Granite Gap ranch is my father."

He had to think a moment what name he was using. "You may call me Brown —James Brown."

The hoarseness had gone from her throat. The sound of her light laughter was lovely. "You say it as if you're not quite sure," she challenged.

Her audacity brought a smile, a little grim, to his face. "I mentioned it to a man this morning who didn't seem at all sure."

"I've held you here all night," Janet said. "It was very good of you to look after me, but I'm sorry to have detained you."

He was cutting open a can of tomatoes. "No trouble at all. I'm as well off here as anywhere, except that I must get Maverick to water soon."

"If you're looking for work, my father could probably use you as a rider," she ventured hesitantly.

"I had some notion like that this morning, but I've changed my mind," he told her, thinking of the poster he had

seen in the post office. "I'm expecting to move on quite some distance from here. But I'm much obliged, Miss King."

Dimples flashed in her piquant young face. "What are you going to do with me?"

"I've been thinking about that. I could take you back to your ranch."

"No. There are papers at Fair Play I have to sign, not later than today. It's important that I be there."

He thought, with ironical humor, that it was important he be not there, but he did not say so. Instead, he hummed in his soft slurring voice some words of an old camp-meeting hymn.

"I want to be ready,
I want to be ready,
I want to be ready,
To walk in Jerusalem just like John."

Janet could see he was considering what she had said. The song was an accompaniment to his reflection.

"If you're too busy to take me—" she began.

"I'm not doing a frazzling thing. Just fiddlin' around. But I wasn't exactly heading Fair Play way." With his hunting-knife he cut some slices of bacon and dropped them into the frying-pan.

"If you-all have an appointment to preach somewhere, just take me as far as the road. I'll get to town all right."

He laughed at the demure sarcasm in her voice. "I'm the son of a preacher, even if I'm not one."

"I've heard about ministers' sons," she mentioned.

"It's a fact they're mostly scalawags," he admitted. "I wouldn't know why. —But about getting you to Fair Play, I'll fix it somehow."

While they ate breakfast, the first thin line of blue along the horizon's edge proclaimed the coming of day. He brought in Maverick and saddled. The saddlebags containing the provisions he left hanging to the limb of a live-oak.

"I'll pick them up when I come back," he said. He gave the saddle seat to Janet and rode behind her.

CHAPTER III

THAT Fair Play was no place to show himself now Blake Forrest knew. But some devil of recklessness rose in him, as often had happened before. And it was the last spot in the world where anybody would be looking for him, since he had just left on the gallop to escape capture. If by bad luck he met Porter he would have to trust again to Maverick's speed.

It had always been easy for Forrest to persuade himself of the wisdom or at least of the safety of any course on which he had set his mind. Just now he wanted to see Janet King to the hotel, where she was going to stay until she could get some clothes to make a presentable appearance at the home of the friends with whom she meant to stop. Her original plan had been to change before she reached town, but her horse had made that impossible by running away with the bundle wrapped up in her slicker.

EXCEPT for a pair of Mexicans squatting in the shade of a wall, the street was as deserted as it had been when Forrest arrived the previous day.

"I'm glad there isn't a band to meet us," Janet said, laughing back at him over her shoulder. "I'm so grimy people would think I was your squaw coming in to buy a new blanket."

"I'm being glad with you about that welcome committee," the man behind her agreed dryly. "You never can tell. Some of them might think I ought to stay permanently."

"Are you as popular as all that, Mr. Brown?" she asked lightly.

"*Popular* isn't quite the word, Miss King. . . . Well, here you are at the hotel, right side up, delivered with care."

He slipped from the horse, and a moment later Janet stood beside him on the two-plank sidewalk. She noticed the sweep of his swift keen glance up and down the street. It disturbed her a little. If he was going to have trouble, she did not want it to be at Fair Play, after he had brought her here.

"I'll not forget your kindness—not ever," she said.

The palm of her hand met his in a quick firm pressure.

"It's been a pleasure, Miss King. I don't reckon we'll meet again, so I'll say you've been a game little lady with heaps of sense, and I'm wishing you all the luck in the world."

He could not doubt the friendly warmth in the eyes so quick with life. It told him, what the look of many a woman had told him, of an interest that might grow keen if given an opportunity.

"Not all the luck," she corrected. "I hope you have your share, and more."

On swift impulse, she added: "I'm afraid you are going to need a good deal."

"Those blue eyes of yours take in plenty," he said. "I can stand quite a bit of luck right now, all of it good."

"I hope you haven't made a mistake bringing me here. If you have, I won't forgive myself soon."

Carelessly, he shrugged his well-muscled shoulders. "Don't worry about me. I'll do fine."

"Then good-by—and thank you, oh, a thousand times." Abruptly she turned and disappeared into the hotel.

Forrest began to lower the stirrups, his mind full of this young woman with the eager eyes so avid of life. He was working on the second when a sharp summons startled him. A young man had walked out of the hotel and stopped in his stride. Without turning his head, Forrest knew that a revolver had flashed from a holster and was covering him.

"Stick 'em up, Mr. Blake Forrest," a strident voice was ordering.

He had been caught napping. Even while adjusting the stirrups he had made sure nobody was approaching along the street, but he could not at the same time see behind him. He slewed his head round, grinning.

"Nice to meet you again, Mr. Porter," he said coolly.

"Get 'em up," the ranger commanded curtly. "No shenanigan! Try any funny business this time, and I'll pump lead into you."

Forrest raised his arms. "That's a fine way to talk to a man who came back to give himself up," he said easily.

The ranger had no idea why he had come back, nor did he greatly care. It was a piece of luck for him such as probably would not happen ever again.

"Step back from the horse without turning," he said. "Keep your hands in the air. If you make a break, it will be the last you ever try."

Forrest did as directed. "Don't worry about me. I'm a lamb in wolf's clothing, Mr. Porter."

The young man relieved him of his weapon and made sure he had no other. "Walk down the street in front of me," he snapped. "Move slow—and keep your fists up."

THEY stopped at the Sheriff's office. "I'm turning this man over to you for safekeeping, Sheriff," the ranger said. "You probably recognize him from his picture. He's Blake Forrest."

The Sheriff recognized him, but not from his picture. He had known him ten years before at Tascosa. Forrest had been a hell-raising cowpuncher in those days, yet he had not been known as one who lived outside the law; oddly enough, Waggoner was the one who had been under suspicion then.

"Jim Brown is the name," the prisoner said mildly.

"It didn't used to be when I knew you as a kid, Blake," the Sheriff mentioned.

FORREST looked at the Sheriff more closely. "If it isn't Buzz Waggoner! You've put on sixty-seven pounds of tallow since we met up. Last time I saw you was just before you jumped a bronc' to light out in front of Cape Willingham's posse."

"That little matter was cleared up long ago, Blake," the Sheriff replied amiably. "We're dealing with your troubles now."

"Put cuffs on him, Buzz," the ranger said.

Waggoner found a pair of handcuffs in a drawer and fastened them on Forrest.

"Ranger Porter is just a kid, Buzz," explained Forrest. "Still a little wet behind the ears. Thinks it is his duty to go around arresting everybody he doesn't know."

Steve Porter pointed triumphantly to the scar on the back of one of the hands in the cuffs. "Knew it was you all the time," he said. "You were too smart about keeping it under cover."

"Say I'm Blake Forrest: does that prove I'm the man you want?"

"Sure it does. Your mask fell off, and the express messenger recognized you. That's howcome we knew it was a Blake Forrest job."

"What is the name of that express messenger?"

"You'll find out in plenty of time." The ranger turned to Waggoner. "Be sure you lock this man up safely, Sheriff. He's a desperate character. Don't take any chances with him."

"We'll get along all right," Waggoner said. He was a big, good-natured man beginning to run to fat.

"Think I'll see him in a cell before I go," the ranger said tartly.

"Seems to me I was elected sheriff, young fellow," Buzz reminded Porter without rancor. "You don't have to leave him with me, you know; but if you do, I'll be the one taking charge of him."

"All right. I just want to make sure. He's slippery as a barrel of snakes. You

know how he gave me the horse-laugh yesterday."

"Seems to me I did hear something about that, Steve," Waggoner said. "Left you holding a sack, didn't he?"

Porter reddened.

"That was yesterday. Today's different. If you don't want me to see him put safe in a cell, you better give me a receipt for him."

The Sheriff scrawled one. It read:

"Received from Ranger Steve Porter one prisoner named Blake Forrest." He signed it with his name.

Reluctantly the ranger departed. He would have preferred to see his captured bandit behind bars. After he had gone, Waggoner smoked a cigarette with his prisoner in the office, though he was careful that the desk was between them and a .44 in the open drawer within reach of his hand.

"Sorry to see you here, Blake," he said. "You're too smart a fellow to be in a jam like this; you know crime never pays."

"Why, Buzz, I've only got to look at your career to know different," Forrest answered. "At Tascosa I see you lighting out like the heel-flies were after you, a few jumps ahead of a posse which claimed you had been using a running-iron too freely. Next time my eyes are refreshed by a sight of you, they are looking at an honest-to-God sheriff probably all lined up to be governor one of these days. If crime doesn't pay, you got no business where you are, Buzz."

The Sheriff grinned sheepishly.

"I don't say I'm any model for schoolmarms to point at, Blake. All I say is that I seen the error of my ways and pulled up in time. After what you did for me, I hate like Billy-be-damn to see you go to the penitentiary."

WITH much more confidence than he felt, Forrest smiled at him cheerfully. "Then you'll be glad to know I'm not going there, Buzz."

"Well, I hope you're right. Maybe you got an ace up yore sleeve. But the way I heard it, Gildea says you robbed his bank at Rosedale without even wearing a mask. Then on top of that the express messenger of the train you robbed recognized you when you held up the Texas & Pacific. I don't see any jury in this State letting you loose against such evidence."

"Who is that express messenger who claims to have recognized me?"

"Fellow by the name of Terrell."

"Ray Terrell?"

"That's right. One of the Terrells from Deer Trail."

The man wearing the handcuffs relapsed into silence. The manner of pleasant friendliness was wiped from his face as a wet sponge erases the writing from a slate. His eyes had grown hard.

"Reckon I'd better be fixing you up with a room," the Sheriff said.

He drew a bunch of keys from the drawer and took his prisoner into a corridor that led from the office to the jail in the rear of the courthouse.

"I aim to make you comfortable, Blake," the fat man said. "If there's anything you need, holler, and I'll fix you up best I can."

CHAPTER IV

AFTER Janet King had bathed and made what first-aid repairs to her appearance was possible with soap and water, she went out in her boots and Levis to buy at Sampson & Doan's such clothes as she needed. Doan came forward to wait on her himself; the Granite Gap ranch trade was valuable, and as the oldest woman in a house full of men, Janet had a good deal to say about where much of the spending was done.

He was surprised to see her casual costume, but did not let his astonishment reach the surface.

"It's nice to see you in Fair Play again, Miss King," he told her. "Let me see, it has been a month since you were here last, hasn't it?"

He was a baldheaded little man with an unctuous smile and a habit of rubbing his hands when cajoling a customer.

Janet explained that her horse had run away with the clothes she had expected to wear in town, and that she wanted to buy what was necessary until she reached the ranch. Since she was rather particular about what she wore when she was not riding the range, it took her some time to select a print dress, underclothes, stockings, shoes and accessories. The last thing on her list was a comb and brush. Doan led her to a showcase at the lower end of the store to let her see what he had in stock.

Her glance fell on a poster tacked to the wall of the post office compartment. From it the face of her rescuer James Brown smiled cynically at her. She read what was written beneath it, her heart beating a wild alarm.

One Thousand Dollars Reward

for the Arrest of

BLAKE FORREST

Wanted for the Robbery of the Valley Bank at Rosedale and for Holding up the Texas & Pacific Express at Crawford's Crossing. Forrest is about thirty years old, weighs 165 pounds, and is five foot ten in height. Eyes blue, hair black, complexion tanned to a coffee brown. Body muscular and graceful. Manner pleasant and friendly unless angered. This outlaw is a dangerous man who will probably resist arrest. Officers are warned to take no chances.

N. B. The only distinguishing mark on this man is a scar on the back of the right hand from the base of the thumb to the wrist.

She had known it, she had known all the time, Janet told herself, that this man was somehow living outside the law. It was written on his reckless sardonic face, was imprinted in the grace of his rippling motions. None the less a chill went through her. He had not only been a friend in need; anybody in the district would have done as much for her as he had. But his personality had filled her with a quick excitement.

"Are they sure this man is guilty?" she asked. "I mean—is the evidence against him complete?"

"He's the fellow, all right," Doan replied eagerly. "He came in here yesterday, bold as brass, to buy supplies and was recognized by a ranger, young Steve Porter. Steve tried to arrest him, and he jumped his horse and lit out, leaving the boy holding the sack. He actually was holding a sack of flour this Forrest had handed him. Never saw the beat of the scalawag's nerve. He planned it, cool as a cucumber, to make his get-away, and by gum, pulled it off."

"I know; but what I mean is, maybe this Forrest didn't do these hold-ups. Maybe it was some one who looked like him."

Doan shook his head. "No chance of that, Miss King. He walked into the private office of Jake Gildea, the president of the Valley bank at Rosedale, and forced him to hand over sixty-five hundred dollars. Gildea knows him well as I do you. Seems they weren't friends. And when he was robbing the train, his mask fell off and he was recognized."

A stringy boy of about fourteen ran into the store, his eyes shining with excitement. "Steve Porter has got that outlaw Blake Forrest," he screamed.

Doan turned on him severely. "What do you mean telling lies, Bud Newsome? I saw Steve in town not more than an hour ago."

"Sure. That's where he arrested him. Right here in town. Honest to goodness! Cross my heart!"

The clerk ran out of the store to verify the news.

"Some one has been joshing you, Bud," explained Doan. "Why would Forrest be at Fair Play when Steve ran him out of town yesterday? It doesn't make sense."

Janet walked out of the store in a turmoil. If he had not brought her back to town, he would not have been captured. It was because he had befriended her that he had been taken.

"Miss King—Miss King," a voice behind her called.

She turned. Doan had come running out of the store. "Did you decide you want the white comb and brush?"

"Yes."

"Shall I send all the things to the hotel?"

"Yes—at once, please. I'm in a hurry."

WHILE Janet was dressing in her new clothes, her mind was busy with the problem of this captured outlaw. She was going to ask Henry Vallery, her father's lawyer and an old family friend, to see Forrest and look after his interests. There was nothing else she could do to help him. She was unhappy that he had been caught in town after bringing her here, she told herself, yet she was not responsible because his sins had found him out.

Henry Vallery took the same view. "If a man puts himself outside the law, he'll have to take whatever punishment is coming to him. You're not in this, Janet. It won't do you any good to get mixed up in it. Your father wouldn't want folks to associate your name with a bad man like Forrest."

He was a benign-looking old gentleman, white-haired and kindly, a little fussy and nervous. But she knew he was a very good trial lawyer. After he had protested sufficiently, he would capitulate and do as she wanted.

"Would my father want me to desert a man who had got into trouble because he brought me in from the desert and didn't leave me to die?" she asked.

He sputtered around a good deal, then threw up his hands.

"All right. I'll go talk with him. I can't see what good it will do, since he's headed for the penitentiary. But I'll go."

"I'd like to wipe out my debt to him. If he hasn't any money, I'll take care of your fee. You know I have money Mother left me."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," he stormed. "First thing you know, this fool town would be gossiping about you and him. You've done enough for him. Now you can go back to the ranch and forget about it."

She smiled up at him. "I'll not forget how nice you've been about this, Uncle Henry. And you do see, don't you, why I've got to help him if I can?"

As a retainer in advance, she kissed him swiftly, and fled. . . .

To Buzz Waggoner and Henry Vallery, walking along the corridor to the jail cells, came the sound of a fairly good tenor raised in a camp-meeting song:

"It's me, it's me, it's me, O Lawd, standing in the need of prayer,
It's me, it's me, it's me, O Lawd, standing in the need of prayer,
Not my brother, not my sister, but me, O Lawd, standing in the need of prayer."

"Got a preacher locked up in your calaboose?" Vallery inquired.

"No sir. That's my bandit, the one you come to see." The Sheriff shouted greeting as they drew near the cell from which the singing had come. "You got need of prayer all right, Blake, but you need a good lawyer too. So I've brought him along with me. This is Judge Vallery, than whom there aint no better before a jury. Judge, meet yore client."

"Am I his client?" Forrest drawled.

"You two fix that up together." The Sheriff unlocked the cell door, and Vallery entered, after which Waggoner fastened the door again. "I got business in the office, but I'll be back in about fifteen minutes, say."

When the echo of the officer's footsteps had died away, the lawyer explained his presence. "I'm not trying to thrust my services on you. Fact is, a young lady to whom you did a kindness is—er—distressed about your plight."

"Sit down on that chair, Judge. Sorry I can't offer you refreshments." Forrest rolled a cigarette leisurely. "A young lady. Interesting. What's the name?"

Vallery stretched his arms and shot his cuffs in a characteristic gesture. "Suppose we leave her name out of this. You understand that, feeling under an obligation to you, she naturally—er—is unhappy because you were arrested on account of bringing her here."

"Are they sure this man is guilty?" Janet asked. "Maybe it was some one looked like him."

"I see," the prisoner said dryly. "But she would not like her name to get out. A good Samaritan by proxy. I'm sure obliged. Tell her with my compliments, Mr. Vallery, that when I want a lawyer I'll choose my own."

There was a cool scorn in the outlaw's voice that embarrassed the lawyer a little. Vallery cleared his throat. "I have not stated the situation clearly, young man. The young lady doesn't give a tinker's dam, by Judas Priest, whether her name is known or not. But *I* care. I'm not going to have her name mixed up in a business like this. You ought to know how the tabby-cats in a little town talk. Just give them something to start with and the finest woman's reputation can be talked away in a week."

"You're quite right, Judge," Forrest answered gently. "I didn't get it correct. Now this young lady doesn't owe me a thing. I told her so. It just happens I was lucky enough to be near when she was lost and petered out. I'm a bad *hombre,* Judge. She's a right fine young woman, and we don't want gossips fooling with her name. Tell her I'll take her advice about a lawyer. I've just met the one I want." He stopped, with a shamefaced grin. "At least I would take her advice if I had any money handy."

"That could be arranged, young man."

The keen blue eyes of Forrest rested on the attorney. "Did the nameless young lady say she would arrange it?"

Old Vallery floundered. "Well—er—in point of fact—what I meant was—er—"

"I asked a question, Judge."

"Yes sir, she did," blurted out Vallery. "She has money coming to her from her mother. That is why she is in town today to see me. But it wouldn't do. I told her so. If it got out that she had paid for your defense—"

"Of course it wouldn't do. You don't need to argue it with me. I wouldn't have it for a moment. But I want her to know I'm certainly grateful. I won't be seeing the young lady again, Judge. About your fee, I'll fix that myself. I know where to get money, if I can get out of jail for a day or two—and I can."

"How? Bail won't be allowed."

"A fellow can always find a way," the lawyer's client said with a bland smile.

"I don't know what you mean." Then, bluntly: "I judge from what I have read that you are guilty. Or are you?"

"Now you've met me, what would you think?" Forrest asked.

"I'll do my thinking after you have told me your story," Vallery said stiffly.

"I'm accused of *two* crimes, Judge, according to the reward poster I saw."

"Yes; if you have an alibi for either—"

"Maybe Jake Gildea will give me one," the prisoner answered with a hardy grin. "I was with him at the time his bank was robbed."

"You mean that you are guilty of these crimes?"

"Guilty and not guilty."

"I'm not good at riddles, sir." Vallery rose. "I don't think we are going to suit each other as client and attorney. I will say good day."

HOWEVER, Forrest differed. "We're going to get along fine. I want an honest man for my lawyer, and I have found one." Reckless mirth flickered in the blue eyes. "A criminal makes a mistake when he gets a crook to defend him. I want our firm to be fifty percent respectable. Sit down, and I'll tell you the sad story of how a poor young cowboy who was a preacher's son and brought up right went wrong through associating with a bank president."

"Very good," assented Vallery dubiously. "Let us be serious about this."

"Not if I can help it, Judge. I'm going to have twenty years to be serious after I'm locked up in the penitentiary. Got to keep my grin working while I can. Well, here's the yarn."

Forrest told his story and the lawyer listened, now and again interrupting with a question. When the outlaw had finished, the older man commented:

"There are one or two points to hang a defense on, but I must say you have managed to get yourself into a pretty bad jam."

"I don't need a high-priced lawyer to tell me that," Forrest said. "Point is, can you get me out of it?"

"I don't see how. Even your own story will convict you, and your reputation is unfortunately bad. But I'll do the best I can."

"That's straight talk, the kind I like. All right. I'll round up for you what evidence I can get."

"By letter?"

"Personally. Didn't I tell you I expected to be out of here in a day or two?"

BUZZ WAGGONER sauntered back and unlocked the door. "You fellows chewed the rag enough yet?" he asked.

"For the present," the lawyer said. "I'll be back tomorrow morning."

The Sheriff saw him out of the jail and returned.

"Everything in my hotel first class?" he inquired of his prisoner. "Grub all it should be?"

"Fine and dandy, Buzz. But I'm thinking of moving."

"Soon?" the Sheriff wanted to know, with a lift of quizzical eyebrows.

"Yes. I need to get some money that I have cached in the hills. That's one thing, and the least important. I'm going to put my cards on the table with you, Buzz. I didn't rob that Texas & Pacific train, and I can prove it if I have a chance to round up evidence. But I'll have to be busier than a candidate before election, or I'll be railroaded through on false testimony and on my record."

"I don't reckon you can get bail, Blake."

"I know I can't." The cool hard eyes of Forrest fastened on his jailer. "I'm depending on you for a little help, Buzz."

"Now looky here, fellow," Waggoner protested, instantly alarmed. "I'm sheriff of this here county. If you think I'm going to turn you loose—"

"I wouldn't expect that, Buzz. It had better be a jail break, don't you reckon?"

"No sir, I don't. Like I said, the people of this county elected me sheriff. I stand for the law. I'd look fine turn-

ing loose any old friend who happens to be in here. You-all got no right to expect any such thing."

Waggoner began to sputter excitedly. He knew his prisoner would not mention the time when he had supplied a horse for Buzz to get out of Tascosa and had at some risk turned aside Cape Willingham's posse from the pursuit. But Forrest was thinking of it, just as the Sheriff himself was.

"Do you think I would lie to you, Buzz?"

"What's that got to do with it? I'll loan you money. I'll do anything personal I can, but I don't aim to renege on my oath of office."

"When I tell you I didn't rob that train, do you believe me?"

"I reckon so. Sure. Anything you say."

"Haven't forgotten, have you, that some years ago I had to kill Buck Terrell, brother of this express messenger who swears he recognized me as one of the train robbers?"

"That's so." The Sheriff stared at him. "Meaning that this is a frame-up against you?"

"Meaning just that. I can prove where I was at the time of the train hold-up, if I can get out to find my witnesses."

"You'll have to send some other fellow to dig 'em up for you, Blake," Waggoner protested, little beads of sweat on his forehead.

"No other fellow could do it. There are reasons." The blue eyes held fast to the light gray ones of the officer. "If I promised to give myself up to you in two weeks, you know I'd do it, don't you?"

"MAYBE you would, and maybe you wouldn't," Waggoner answered angrily. "No use of you talking, Blake. I aint a-going to turn you loose. Might just as well save yore breath."

"Keep cool, Buzz," the outlaw advised. "You're too fat to get all het up thataway. When you boil up and turn red as a gobbler, I get scared of apoplexy. Take it easy, and you'll live longer. I asked you a question: Don't you know that if I promise to show up here at a certain date, hell and high water can't keep me from coming?"

"I expect you'd be here. What of it? Am I to tell the folks who elected me that I let out the most wanted man in Texas, and that he has promised to show up again in a couple of weeks? I'd look like a blamed fool!"

"Just slip me a file and forget all about it. By the way, where is my horse, Maverick?"

"At Daggett's wagon-yard." Waggoner exploded violently. "No, damn my buttons, I won't do it! What's more, I won't talk about it. That's what a fellow gets for trying to be nice to a guy in trouble."

The Sheriff turned and clumped noisily down the corridor. . . .

Forrest smiled. He had sown seed in fertile soil. An obligation to a friend was more important to Buzz than an abstract sense of official duty, especially when he knew that he was permitting only a temporary escape. If the Sheriff did not weaken, Forrest would be much surprised.

CHAPTER V

FORREST descended to the ground by means of a blanket from his bed. He had found it no trouble to file the flimsy bars of the window. Once outside, he crept around the back of the building into a grove of live-oaks. Buzz Waggoner had pointed out to him the house where Doan lived, to the right and just back of the trees. Three minutes after he had gained his freedom, he was knocking on the door of the merchant's house. The Sheriff had flatly refused to give him back his revolver, and he was going to need a weapon.

Doan came to the door in sock feet.

"What you want?" he asked of the man in the shadow of the porch vines.

"Want to buy a few things at the store."

"You'll have to wait till morning," Doan said irritably. "We've been closed an hour."

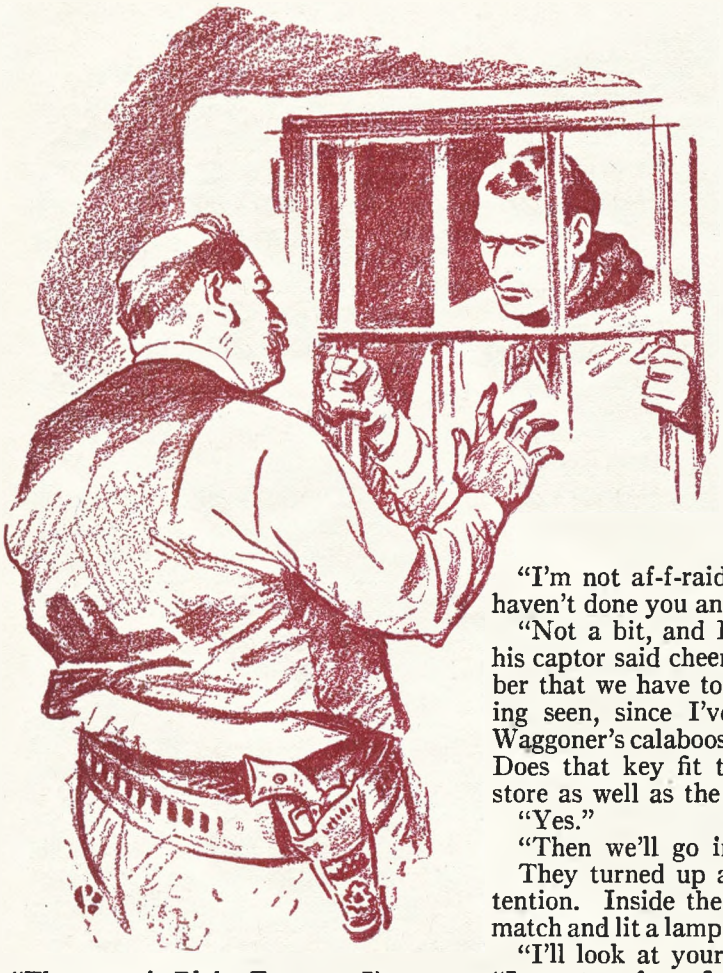
"Sorry, but I've got to get out of town tonight," Forrest said mildly. "I'd be obliged if you'd step over and sell me what I need."

"I suppose you've been sitting around a livery-stable or a saloon gabbing all day," Doan snapped. "Well, I'm not going over to the store this time of night. We'll be open at eight in the morning."

He started to close the door, but Forrest's foot was in the way. A strong brown hand reached out, caught him by the coat lapel, and dragged him forward with a jerk.

"You're going with me to the store, Mr. Doan," a quiet voice said, almost in a murmur.

"Who are you?" Doan asked, startled.



"Am I to tell the folks who elected me that I let out the most wanted man in Texas, and that he has promised to show up again? I'd look like a blamed fool!"

"The name is Blake Forrest. I'm sure if you think about it again, you'll be willing to accommodate me."

The storekeeper gasped. In the darkness he had not recognized the outlaw. "C-c-certainly," he stammered. "Anything you want, Mr. Forrest. I'll just get my shoes and be with you right away."

"Is the store key in your pocket?"

"Yes."

"Then we won't bother about your shoes. It's not far through the grove."

"May I t-tell my wife where I'm going?"

"Just call to her that you'll be over at the store a few minutes. Make it sound natural."

Though Doan did his best, there was a quaver in his voice.

His customer comforted him as they walked through the live-oaks. "I'm not going to hurt you, Mr. Doan. In ten minutes you'll be back with your family fit as a fiddle—if you behave reasonably and don't get panicky. Don't be afraid."

"I'm not af-f-raid," Doan replied. "I haven't done you any harm."

"Not a bit, and I won't do you any," his captor said cheerfully. "Just remember that we have to be careful about being seen, since I've moved from Buzz Waggoner's calaboose unbeknown to him. Does that key fit the back door of the store as well as the front one?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll go in that way."

They turned up an alley, to avoid attention. Inside the store Doan struck a match and lit a lamp with shaking fingers.

"I'll look at your guns," Forrest said. "I want a forty-five and some ammunition."

He selected a weapon and a belt. The latter he filled with cartridges after he had loaded the revolver.

"I'm a little short of money just now, Mr. Doan," he explained. "Have you any objection to letting the payment ride a couple of weeks?"

Doan assured him eagerly he had not.

"Good enough. I'll be back then and settle for the goods. I want you to walk down with me to Daggett's wagon-yard, where Buzz left my horse. Better pick a pair of boots out of stock and put them on. Get a pair that is comfortable."

They walked down the alley and across the live-oak grove. The escaped prisoner wanted to meet as few people as possible. Through the greasewood of a vacant lot they cut across to the wagon-yard. Inside the little office near the entrance two men sat in tilted chairs, one of them with his boots on the table.

The older man glanced at the newcomers and continued with the story he was

telling. Forrest waited until the narrator had got his laugh before he mentioned his business.

"Like to get a horse of mine that has been left with you, Mr. Daggett."

The big man stroked his goatee and looked at the outlaw out of keen light blue eyes. "I don't recollect your leaving a horse here, sir," he said.

"Buzz Waggoner brought it in for me," Forrest drawled. "A chestnut gelding with white stockings."

The gaze of Daggett remained fixed on this lithe lean stranger standing in the doorway. The owner of the corral had been brought to instant alert attention. The voice of his visitor was gentle, the eyes almost sleepy. The outlaw leaned lazily against the upright, a thumb hitched carelessly in the sagging belt. But Daggett knew that between two heart-beats this man could be wakened to violent and explosive action.

"You are Blake Forrest?" the proprietor of the place asked.

"Correct, sir."

Daggett played for time while he considered the situation. He stroked his goatee thoughtfully. "Fixed up yore little difficulty with Buzz, I take it?" he suggested.

"Or else I wouldn't be here, would I?" countered Forrest.

The keeper of the wagon-yard did not discuss the point. He suspected something was wrong, but he knew who was master of this exigency. Forrest had the drop on him just as surely as if he had him covered with the gun which rested so close to the indolent brown hand.

"Yore horse has been well taken care of, Mr. Forrest," he said, and lowered his boots from the table. "We'll find him in the fourth stall."

He led the way out of the office. Forrest motioned the other man and the storekeeper to follow. He brought up the rear.

"There's a bill for two dollars," Daggett mentioned. "Does the Sheriff pay that?"

"No, I'll settle it now," Forrest said, and did. "Mind saddling for me, Mr. Daggett? I mashed one of my hands the other day."

A FAINT satiric smile rested for a moment on Daggett's bronzed face. It might be true that one of the outlaw's hands was disabled, but he was quite sure the other was fit for swift business. He brought the horse from the stall and saddled it.

"The cinch not quite so tight, please," requested Maverick's owner courteously. "I'm a light rider and easy on my mount."

"Can I go now?" asked Doan, still uneasy in his mind.

"In just a minute, Mr. Doan," his customer said cheerfully. "You came down to see me off, and you wouldn't want to leave before I go."

Forrest swung to the saddle. "I've had a very pleasant time in your little town, gentlemen," he said with a grin. "It's sure a nice hospitable place, but I mustn't outwear my welcome. . . . Now if you'll kindly all step to the other end of the corral. . . . That's fine. *Hasta la vista, señores!*"

He swung his horse out of the gate and trotted down the street.

"The son-of-a-gun!" said Daggett's visitor vehemently. "If I'd only had a six-shooter with me!"

Out of opaque eyes Daggett took the measure of the man. "Sorry you didn't mention it earlier," he answered, contempt edging his voice. "I would have been glad to let you have mine, seeing I wasn't using it."

They went uptown to spread the news.

LEAVING Fair Play, Forrest rode over a land drenched in moonlight. More than once he stopped to listen for sounds of possible pursuit. None came to him. Buzz Waggoner would make a bluff, of course, to save his face; but it would be entirely a perfunctory one. . . . The town below him, with its lights strung out in a crescent like the jewels of a necklace, looked as peaceful as old age.

He departed from the road at the same point he had left it a few days before. Maverick plodded through the brush and came at last to the bluff where Forrest had left his supplies before going to town with Janet King. The saddlebags were still hanging from the tree-branch.

Clouds had come up, and moon and stars were under wraps. He sniffed rain in the air. After he had unsaddled and picketed the horse, he chopped some branches and built a fire. He had to find a certain cache he had left near here, and light was necessary to check the landmarks by which he could identify it. There was not a chance in ten thousand that a posse would stumble on him after he had picked his sinuous way through such a tangle of arroyos. His head had hardly found the softest spot in the saddle before he was asleep. . . .

With the morning light at his back, he wound deeper into the ribbed desert. He came at last to a sort of pass, wooded with mesquite on both sides of the trough, and here he swung to the left and pulled up at a thicket of wild plums. A fault ran across the terrain, a low rock ridge. Between two quartz outcroppings his gaze picked up the remains of a campfire. With his hatchet he slashed into the ashes and tossed aside the loose dirt. He dug out a sack. From it he took gold and bills to the amount of five hundred dollars. The rest he put back in the hole and heaped the loose dirt on it. Over the place he built a fire and cooked a late breakfast. When he had eaten, he emptied the coffee-grounds on a bare rock, evidence that somebody really had camped here. He even left part of an old newspaper pegged down by a stone.

He saddled, humming a negro song:

"What you gwine to do when the meat runs out, my baby?
What you gwine to do when the meat gives out, my honey?
What you gwine to do when the meat gives out?
Gwine to set roun' my do' with my mouf in a pout, for some time!"

Playfully Maverick pretended to bite at his arm. He dodged the lunge, tightening the cinch as he went on singing.

Mounting, he rode back to the pass through the mesquite and swung to the left. He traveled down a lane to the end of an alley from which he could look down on the shining plains stretching to the far horizon.

Maverick jogged down into a tangle of cactus clutching at him as he picked a careful way. A river of silver snaked through the valley, and along it ranches were dotted. From some of their checkerboard fields, on both sides of the river, the sun's rays were heliographed to Forrest when the blades of the windmills caught the light. Descending, he reached the first of the ranches as he followed the road to the town of Deer Trail.

He let Maverick choose his own pace. There was no hurry, since he did not want to get in until after dark. There were one or two men he wanted to see, but he did not care to have his presence advertised.

HE came into Deer Trail through Wingate's pasture. Since Maverick might be recognized, he picketed the horse in the field and walked to the lane which ran along its west side. He could hear a fiddle going in the Longhorn saloon, the stamp of shuffling feet at a dance-hall. Deer Trail woke up a little at night.

BY an alley he reached the rear of "Mother" Holloway's boarding-house. Through a window he could see her in the kitchen giving the cook instructions for the next day's meals. A maid was at the sink, washing dishes. Stepping back to the shadow of a cottonwood in the yard, he gave the hoot of an owl. He saw Mrs. Holloway glance out of the window, then continue with her directions to the cook. It was perhaps five minutes later that she opened the back door, stepped out, and closed it behind her.

Forrest whistled softly, and she moved forward to the cottonwood.

"The bad penny back again," said Forrest with a flash of teeth in a wide smile.

"Don't you know better than to come here, Blake Forrest?" answered the boarding-house keeper severely.

"I came back for one of yore custard pies," he drawled.

"I know why you came back—to get into more trouble, you crazy galoot!" she snapped.

"To get out of the trouble I'm already in," he corrected. "And honest, Mother, my mouth is watering for yore good home cooking."

He put an arm round her shoulders and gave them a hug. She was Irish on her father's side, a plump little woman with a plain homely face; but many a cowboy within a radius of fifty miles would have fought to a finish in her behalf. She had never refused a hungry man a meal, regardless of whether he could or could not pay for it. The sick she nursed; the wounded she gave food and shelter. A hundred rough young fellows called her mother, and if they owed her money, would have sold their saddles to see she was paid.

"Don't blarney me, you scamp," she told him, but with a smile that transformed her face. "Now what is it you're wanting?"

"Food—shelter—information."

"You ought to be in Mexico—or somewhere, instead of projecting around here. Don't you know every sheriff in west Texas is looking for you, let alone the rangers? You're not safe here, and well you know it."

"I want to make myself safer. That's why I came to see you. Have you a room you can let me have, Mother?"

She frowned, considering. "Wait out here half an hour. By that time Mattie and Juanita will be gone home. I'll come out and get you then."

Forrest would have liked to smoke, but a man in the yard with a lighted cigarette might cause investigation. He sat behind the trunk of the cottonwood with his back propped against it, and let his body relax.

The kitchen light went out, and two women came from the house. They disappeared around the corner of it toward the street, chatting as they went.

Mrs. Holloway appeared on the porch. He rose and joined her. In the dark kitchen she gave him instructions.

"Go up the back stairway to the little room above the dining-room. The third door on the right. I'll fix some food for you and be up in a jiffy."

"All I want is a sandwich," he explained. "Don't bother about cooking."

"Just let me be minding my own business," she ordered. "I'll slap a steak in the fry-pan soon as I can light up."

He tiptoed up the narrow stairway and felt his way along the hall. The narrow room in which he found himself had a faint light from the window. It was enough. He took off his boots and lay down on the bed. In two minutes he had dropped into a light nap.

THE sound of the door opening awoke him. Somebody, light-footed and swift, walked into the room. A match scratched just as Forrest spoke.

"Am I to come down for my steak?" he asked, swinging his stockinged feet to the floor.

The match went out. He knew something was wrong. This was not Mother Holloway.

"Who is it?" swiftly demanded a startled voice, the rich husky timbre of it young and feminine.

Forrest grinned wryly. This was a pretty how-do-you-do.

"Your servant, madam," Forrest said, and bowed to the slender form facing him in the darkness. "I have to apologize for being in the wrong room. I'll leave at once."

The woman was about to tell him to be quick about it, but a thought stopped her. She was a school-teacher, and before supper had put her month's salary for safekeeping in a rolled-up pair of stockings tucked away in the lower drawer of the bureau.

"No, you don't!" she warned. "You'll stay here till I've had a look at you, or I'll scream for help."

"Pleased to stay," he assured her. "If you'll allow me, I'll light the lamp."

He struck a match and put it to the wick of the little coal-oil lamp set in a wall bracket. While he did this and put the globe back in place, the eyes of the young woman swept over and appraised him. At the first sound of his voice she had been startled but not really frightened. There was a quality in it which gave complete reassurance as to her personal safety. Now she thought: "Why, he's handsome—not a ruffian at all, but quite genteel." She felt a queer exhilaration at this adventure, and because of it decided to be severe with him.

"Well, sir?" she asked crisply, and left him to make explanation.

FORREST took his time, making up his mind what manner of young woman this was. She was tall, slenderly full, erect and graceful as a fawn of the forest. Her abundant red hair was electric with life, and the tawny eyes that met his fearlessly were direct as those of a man.

"I'm a plumb idjit, miss," he said with an easy smile. "Mrs. Holloway told me how to get to my room, and I got mixed up somehow. Don't know my right hand from my left, I reckon, and drifted into the wrong room."

She did not like his manner of assurance, but it was not possible to look into his cool, amused eyes and treat him as a sneak-thief. Indignation rose in her.

"It's very funny, isn't it, for me to come into my room and find a strange man waiting there in the dark?" she said haughtily.

The heavy brows of the young woman met in a frown. He noticed tiny gold flecks in the pupils of the irate eyes.

"I can only regret my stupidity."

"I suppose you didn't notice it is a lady's room."

"I don't see right good in the dark."

"Didn't you light the lamp?"

"No ma'am, I didn't."

"That's queer," she said, and there was still accusation in her voice, challenge in the firm mouth and chin. "You come into a strange room in a boarding-house, one you have never been in before and don't know anything about and you go to bed without even lighting a lamp to see where things are."

"I didn't exactly go to bed," he corrected. "I lay down because I have been riding all day and was fagged."

"What's your name?"

There was the usual instant of searching hesitation before he found the one he wanted. "James Brown."

"You don't live at Deer Trail."

"Not here, but Mrs. Holloway will vouch for me. I haven't even a pair of yore earrings in my pocket." He dragged the last sentence, drolly.

He could hear Mrs. Holloway puffing up the winding stairway with a tray in her hands. She stopped outside the door and looked in, surprised at what she saw.

"What you doing in Miss Decker's room, Blake?" she asked.

"I got in the wrong room by mistake," he said. "Miss Decker thinks maybe I came to burgle the house."

"Blake what?" the girl asked her landlady. "I mean, what's his other name?"

"His name is—"

Mother Holloway stuck. She had just remembered that his name was not to be used, and she did not know under what one he was passing.

"Brown," volunteered the fugitive blandly. "James Blake Brown."

A light flashed on the mind of Helen Decker. She had been puzzled by some familiarity in the face of the man that evaded recognition. But now she had it definitely fixed: A picture of him on a poster was tacked on a wall at the post office. He was Blake Forrest, the outlaw for whom a reward of one thousand dollars was offered, the bad man who had killed her cousin Buck Terrell years ago.

"If you can vouch for him, Mother Holloway, of course it's all right," she said, her eyes fixed on the stranger. "Naturally, when I came up and found him here, I was frightened."

WATCHING her, Forrest was of opinion she was stalling for time while she decided what to do. Though she was trying to veil it, he read hostility in her eyes. He had seen that flare of astonished discovery. She meant to turn him over to the authorities and was trying to think out the best way to do it.

"A thousand dollars is a lot of money," he drawled. "More than a school-teacher earns in a whole year."

"So you *are* Blake Forrest," she cried. "You admit it."

"With a girl like you, Miss Decker, smart as a whip, there wouldn't be any use denying it, would there?" he said.

"Whether I'm smart or not," she retorted swiftly, "I don't intend to let a criminal and murderer escape if I can help it."

"That's fine. A school-marm should be an example to the community; and as I said, a thousand dollars—"

"Jeer all you please. It doesn't make any difference to me what you say. As soon as I get a chance I'll do my best to get you captured. You killed my cousin Buck Terrell."

"Was *he* your cousin?"

"Yes, he was." The color flamed in Helen's cheeks. Buck had been a bad lot, no credit to the family, but he was dead now, and oblivion softened his sins.

He made no explanation. He did not tell her that he had been forced to drop Buck to save his own life, nor that the man had been a scoundrel and a traitor. Since Terrell was kin to her, he would not blacken his name.

BUT Mother Holloway was held back by no such inhibition. "Blake wasn't to blame for that. You know that, Miss Helen, or you would if you'd study the facts fair. Buck hounded him till he had no choice."

"So *he* says. Naturally, he had to make out a case for himself with you. I suppose he has talked you into believing he isn't a bank- and train-robber, one of the worst outlaws in Texas."

"He doesn't have to talk me into believing that," Mrs. Holloway said simply. "I know him. He has been wild and foolish, but he isn't bad. If we can all sit down a minute and be reasonable, Miss Decker, I'll tell you a little story."

"I'm not going to sit down in the same room as that man," Helen answered, the color high in her cheeks. "I'll listen to you because I like you, as everybody does, but I'll hear it standing; and nothing you can say will change my mind about him."

"So why waste yore breath, Mother, since what the young lady thinks about me isn't important?" Forrest asked with light indifference.

"Be still, both of you," the stout little woman ordered. She pointed to the tray which she had put on the bed. "Better begin on that steak while it's still hot, young man. Keep busy eating, and don't interrupt me."

"Good advice," Blake said, and fell to work with knife and fork.

The landlady sat down on a home-made chair. She was so short that her

feet hardly reached the floor. "It's a kinda long story, but I'll cut the corners," she began. "When Mr. Holloway died, I was in a money jam. We had borrowed from Jake Gildea to keep the store going; and right soon after the funeral he began talking about foreclosing. My husband had paid him back seven hundred of the thousand borrowed, so I scraped the bottom of the barrel and finally got together the other three hundred and interest. But I couldn't find the receipt for the money paid back. Jake swore to me Sam never had paid him back a cent. I'd seen the receipt and knew better, but I couldn't prove it. The upshot was I gave him a mortgage on the house here for five hundred and turned that over to him on account. I've done right well with the boarding-house, but you know little Billy's lame leg has been a terrible expense. I had to take him two-three times to Kansas City to a hospital before it was finally fixed right. First Jake took over the store; and about six months ago he began pressing for the money on the house. I could see he meant to take it too. With times the way they are, I wasn't able to borrow anywhere else."

She stopped, her faded blue eyes pleading with the younger woman for a kindly consideration of the case.

"Jake Gildea always was a penny-pinching scoundrel," Helen said, with angry contempt.

"Yes," Mrs. Holloway agreed. "And one day a man came to me and dropped an envelope in my lap. It contained my note to Jake, and across the face of it was written *'Paid in full,'* with Jake's signature beneath it."

"You mean that Gildea sent it to you?" Helen asked, puzzled.

"I'm not asking any questions about that, but I've seen Jake since then, and he acknowledges the note as paid."

The tawny eyes traveled from Mrs. Holloway to Forrest. A light broke on her. "You're saying that the man who robbed the bank made Jake Gildea sign your note as paid."

"I'm not saying anything more than I have told you," the little woman replied doggedly. "I didn't owe Jake the money, and he has decided to let it go at that."

"I see," Helen replied, her gaze on Forrest. "I'm very glad for you. Did this Robin Hood leave with you as a gift, too, the seven or eight thousand in cash he took from the Valley Bank?"

Blake Forrest smiled, unabashed. "I've heard the sum was six thousand

Forrest descended by means of a blanket from his bed. He had found it no trouble to file the flimsy bars of the window.

four hundred and twenty-two dollars, Miss Decker."

She said, standing very straight: "I don't find crime amusing, sir."

"I'll laugh about it while I can," he answered hardily, his voice bitter. "You see, I happen to know the circumstances: Gildea robbed the mother of this fellow who visited him at the bank of just six thousand, four hundred and twenty-two dollars, regardless of the fact that she was a widow with a son who was only fifteen years old. She died soon after that."

Looking at him, his fearless eyes fastened on her, it was impossible to doubt that he was telling the truth. She did not like him, but he did not look like a liar.

"Did the Texas & Pacific Railroad owe him a lot of money too?" she asked scornfully.

"No. That job is being handed to him free gratis. He didn't do it."

"My cousin is an express messenger on the train. He recognized the leader."

"Your cousin named the wrong man."

"That's what *you* say."

"In the excitement he might easily make a mistake," the landlady suggested.

"He might even want to make one," Forrest said.

"I suppose you hate Ray because you killed his brother," Helen countered swiftly.

The outcast pushed away his tray and rose. "I'll be going, Mother. I'm obliged to you for a good supper. Tell Billy I'll be seeing him one of these days, and for him to be a good boy to his mother."

Mrs. Holloway fluttered in front of him. "Wait a minute, Blake. I don't want you to go before we know what Miss Decker means to do."

THE girl flushed. She was annoyed, at herself and at them.

"If you're so innocent, why don't you give yourself up and let them try you?" she demanded of the man.

"I'm not so innocent as that," he told her, and his smile was wise and crafty. "There are a lot of people in this part of the State would like to see penitentiary walls close on Blake Forrest. But it's not going to be that way if I can help it. When I stand trial, my witnesses will be ready as well as theirs."

"When will that be?" she asked.

"I'll send you an invite, Miss Decker," he said pleasantly. "I wouldn't know the exact date right now."

The girl picked up a school reader, riffled the pages, and laid it down again. "All right," she said impatiently, turning to Mrs. Holloway. "Get your friend out of my sight, please. I ought to let the Sheriff know he is here. But I won't. On your account. I'm doing wrong, and I know it. But presently he'll be caught and put away safely, so it doesn't matter much."

Forrest bowed, a gleam of mirth in his eyes. "Glad to have met you, Miss Decker. I can see you must be a right good teacher."

The tawny eyes blazed anger at him. "If you'll kindly leave my room, sir."

He left, smiling amiably.

Helen Decker stamped her foot. "He's the most insolent man I ever met."

Mother Holloway wiped out an embryonic smile. She had to admit that Blake certainly could be aggravating.

DEER TRAIL was an anemic town, gaunt as the country in which it was situated. A dispirited creek, yellow and shallow, wound through the village sluggishly, on its banks a number of Mexican *jacals*. In the doorway of one a lean native, wearing his shirt outside the trousers, strummed indolently on a guitar. Under a cottonwood, two burros laden with wood waited patiently for their master to come out of a *tendejon*.

Forrest crossed a frail bridge floored with rotting planks that spanned the stream at the lower end of the village. He moved leisurely toward the one lighted street. There was no sense of hurry in him. Close to the shadowed wall of the blacksmith shop, he waited, watching the figures drifting up and down the wooden sidewalk of the dusty street.

The saloon was the club of the old West. Here the life and light of the drab frontier towns gathered to refresh spirits oppressed by drought, blizzards, low cattle-prices, and the encroachments of sheep. So Forrest kept an eye on the Longhorn, satisfied that sooner or later somebody would come out of the front door who would be a safe source of information. He saw a dozen come and go before he selected his man.

A big rawboned fellow came down the street, headed for the Longhorn. By his garb he was a cattleman. He wore a shabby wide hat tilted on one side of his head, a wrinkled coat dusty with travel, a flannel shirt, salmon-colored striped trousers, and a pair of run-down-at-the-heel boots.

The outcast moved out of the shadow of the blacksmith shop and called to the big man. "'Lo, Craig!"

The cattleman stopped, looked around. "Some one call me?" he asked, a little warily.

Even a peaceable man had enemies in west Texas at that time.

"Come over here, you doggoned old sand-lapper," invited Forrest, "and shake the hand that shook the hand of John L. Sullivan."

"Have you done bust a leg that you can't come over here?"

Forrest moved a little farther forward into the light.

"By jinks," the big man yelped, and strode across the dusty road. "Thought you were in Chihuahua by this time, you old vinegarroon!"

He shook hands with the fugitive and grinned at him. Forrest drew him back into the shadows.

"I'm a little mite particular who I meet these days, Craig," he said.

Craig Shannon viewed him with reluctant admiration. He approved of this young man, without endorsing all his follies. Even when he did not approve, he found a difference between him and ruffians known generically as "bad men." When Blake Forrest stepped outside the law, he did it with a frankness that redeemed his action from meanness.

"WHAT in heck you doing here, Blake?" the cattleman wanted to know. "Don't you know there's a whole passel of sheriffs looking for you in west Texas, and a couple of companies of yore own old pals the rangers?"

"Some one mentioned it to me. I'm to be arrested for robbing a train when I was most a hundred miles from the spot."

"So I've heard tell. Bill Crabb gives you an alibi, if that's worth anything."

"I was with Bill and Stone Heath at the time."

"Yeah. Point is, *where* were you with them?"

"At a cow-camp of the Circle Three B. We spent the night with two line-riders of that outfit."

"Well, you better dig 'em up, young fellow, if you don't like to be surrounded by stone walls with guards on them."

"Do you know where either Bill or Stone are?"

"Saw Bill at a round-up Saturday a week ago. He was riding for old man Blevins. Likely he's still with him, though you never can tell about a wild coot like Bill. He may be in Arizona or New Mexico now."

"Like to meet up with Bill *muy pronto*. I'm aiming to build that alibi till it listens respectable to a jury. Could you get word to him I'll be hanging around the line shack at the southwest corner of the Nine R ranch—say Thursday or Friday?"

"Might. Is Jake Gildea going to be one of the alibi witnesses in the Valley Bank case when it comes to trial?"

"I CERTAINLY didn't run my boot-heels over side-steppin' trouble that time," Forrest drawled. "Fact is, Craig, I hadn't the slightest notion of pulling off that darned hold-up when I saw Jake's weasel face at the window of the bank. He looked so dad-gummed satisfied, I couldn't stand it, since I'd just been hearing from Mother Holloway how he was foreclosing on her house after he had beat her out of seven hundred dollars and made her pay usurer's interest for ten years. So I walked into his private office in the bank, figuring on asking him to lay off Mother Holloway. Still innocent as a pink-faced cherub, you understand. Well sir, he had a pile of gold and greenbacks in front of him, counting them."

"Must have been expecting you," grinned Shannon.

"First off, he barked at me: 'What you mean coming in here without permission?' I asked him if he was the angel Gabriel or Jay Gould that a man couldn't see him without a 'Please!' and his hat in his hand. That didn't go so well, and he wouldn't listen to a word I had to say about the five-hundred-dollar mortgage. Sat there hunched up over his money like a big spider, and told me to get out and mind my own business. I got to thinking about that damned scoundrel robbing Mother Holloway, the salt of the earth, and how hard she works for every dollar she gets, and all of a sudden I saw red. What started the fireworks was his saying he would surely bear down harder on her on account of my butting in."

"Jake would be like that," the cattleman agreed.

"I made him get the note and write '*Paid*' on it. He did it, and mentioned that he aimed to send me to the penitentiary. Figuring I might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, I collected from him the money he had stolen from my mother."

"You crazy high-handed galoot, don't you know better than that? Right then you bought yoreself a one-way ticket to the pen."

"Looks like."

"Unpopular as Jake is, you can't get away with holding up a bank."

Forrest smiled ruefully. "I explained to him I wasn't taking it from the bank, but from him."

"Hmph! A lot of good that will do you. It was bank money, and you know it."

"It's a private bank owned by Jake. I never claimed to be a lawyer. Seems to me it wouldn't matter whether it came out of his right- or left-hand pocket."

"If I was you, I'd light out for parts unknown."

"Can't do it. I'm under a sort of promise to go through to a finish."

Shannon shook his head. "Maybe a slick lawyer may do something for you, but I'd say you've done hog-tied yoreself so you can't wiggle loose."

OUT of the Longhorn came four men who stood for a minute talking on the sidewalk. The light from the saloon windows flooded the spot, and Forrest recognized three of them. One was Webb Lake, a small neat man whose hard flat pallid face did not belie his reputation as a tough citizen too handy with a gun. The bulky heavy-shouldered fellow standing next to him was Wes Terrell, brother of Ray and Buck. The third one known to the fugitive called himself Pres Walsh. He had once just missed serving a term in the State prison for shooting two Mexicans who had tried to recover stolen stock from him.

The party separated. Terrell crossed the road, and the rest started up the street. Shannon saw that recognition was unavoidable, and moved in front of Forrest to cover his identity.

"'Lo, Wes," he said. "How are tricks?"

"Betwixt and between. Stock some gaunted. Need rain out our way."

"We been having mighty heavy rains up Dry Valley and vicinity. Enough is plenty, I say. We don't need any more now for the grass."

"Expect the water is sure enough boiling down Funnel Creek, then."

"Wouldn't surprise me if it swept out the railroad bridge at Cranmer." He added, by way of comment: "It certainly's been a gully-washer. Funnel was bank-full when I crossed it an hour ago, and there's a lot more water to come down from tributaries higher up."

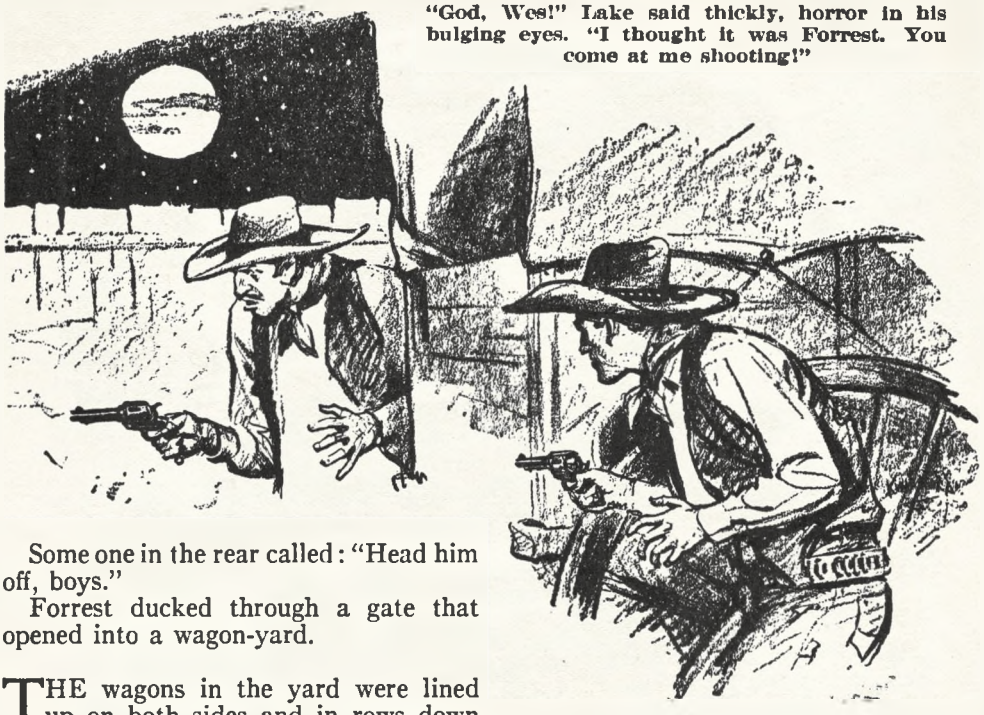
Terrell craned his neck to peer past the cattleman at the figure behind him. "Who's yore friend?" he asked.

The man in the shadows said quietly: "The name is Forrest."

A shout of astonishment broke from the throat of Terrell. "Come a-running, fellows! I've got Blake Forrest here. We'll settle his hash right now." He dragged a revolver from the scabbard under his arm.

Forrest had been backing to the corner of the building. He dodged back of it, turned and ran. He heard the roar of Terrell's forty-five as he vaulted a gate leading into a vacant lot. Shouts, oaths, the slap of running feet came to him. He raced through the knee-high fennel to the opposite fence and went over that lightly. More guns barked at him. Two or three men squirted out of the back door of a dance-hall like seeds from a pressed lemon, intent on finding out what all the shooting was about.

Straight through the dance-hall he went and out of the front door, leaving disorganized behind him a quadrille through which he had plunged. By this maneuver he had gained a dozen yards, since his pursuers had been forced to ask whether he had stopped in the hall. But as he scudded up the street, he knew they had followed him out of the front door. A bullet whined past him. In front of him three men had just come out of a building.



"God, Wes!" Lake said thickly, horror in his bulging eyes. "I thought it was Forrest. You come at me shooting!"

Some one in the rear called: "Head him off, boys."

Forrest ducked through a gate that opened into a wagon-yard.

THE wagons in the yard were lined up on both sides and in rows down the center. Some were loaded, some empty. Within the inclosure were two buckboards, an old buggy, a few ranch wagons, and eight or nine large ore-carriers. Deer Trail had two reasons for existence. One was to serve as a supply depot for the ranches of the neighborhood, the other because it was a halfway point between the mines at Oroville and the nearest railroad connection.

When Blake Forrest dodged into the yard, he turned sharply to the left where the shadows were deeper. Never in his gusty lifetime had he been in peril more imminent. Four men at least were racing at his heels. There might be two or three more, adherents of the Terrell crowd, lured by the lust of a man-hunt and by hope of sharing in the reward. They would not try to capture him. It was easier and safer to kill, besides being more satisfactory to his enemies. The story given out would be that he had been shot down while resisting arrest, and in due time the reward would be paid.

Crouching low, Forrest ran along the fence back of the ore-wagons.

A raucous voice came to him: "He ducked in here, boys. We've got him trapped. Hold the gate, Phil, while we comb the corral. No monkeying with this bird. Shoot first and order him to surrender afterward."

Wes Terrell talking, the cornered man thought grimly as he drew his revolver. He must fight; to give himself up to these ruffians would be suicide. They would shoot him down as he approached.

To him there came the rumor of men moving, faint whispers of sound hardly to be distinguished from the murmur of the night. He knew his foes were spreading to search the yard. They would not all come at him in a body, probably, though they would keep fairly close to one another. The reputation he had won as a fighting man would suggest caution. Since they had closed the way of escape, he would have to go out with his gun blazing. Hardy ruffians they were, but not one of them would want to be the victim of his own victory.

The stockade fence was more than ten feet high, made of whipsawed planks with the ends packed solidly in a trench and bound stoutly together. There was no chance to climb it, unless he could leap for the top from the rear of an ore-wagon backed close. Unfortunately none of the wagons were near enough for him to use one as an aid.

Yet he had to make an attempt to scale the fence. He picked one wagon not as far from the stockade as the others and clambered into it. A gun roared, halfway across the yard. Instinctively he ducked, though he knew it had not been aimed at him. No doubt one of his hunters, a bit goosy with the strain, had turned loose at a shadow.

Forrest leaped for the top of the fence. His fingers caught the edge of a thick plank but could not hold the grip above the drag of his weight. Again he climbed over the wheel into the wagon.

Soft footsteps sounded—drew closer. Very likely the noise of the impact of his body against the stockade had been heard. He crouched low, behind the high sloping sides of the wagon-bed.

A head was thrust forward cautiously around the tail of the wagon: Pres Walsh, taking as few chances as he could. The man crept forward, keenly alive to danger. Forrest waited until Walsh was just below him, then sailed out of his hiding-place and landed like a hod of brick on top of his foe. The hinges of the man's knees gave way and he went to the ground, his body jammed against the wheel. Swiftly, before Walsh could let out a cry, Forrest smashed his head hard against the iron tire. The revolver slipped from the lax fingers of the man. He slumped down.

The outlaw tossed the weapon over the stockade. He had lost his hat while vaulting the fence during his escape from Terrell. Now he borrowed the dusty old sombrero of his unconscious enemy. The brim flopped down over his face, partly concealing it. In the darkness he might be mistaken for Walsh and get near enough to the gate before discovery to make his escape.

ABRUPTLY he stopped. A shout lifted, not twenty feet from him—two guns sounded, almost simultaneously. Some one groaned. Forrest edged noiselessly around another wagon and saw two men facing each other. One of them had caught hold of a spoke to keep himself from falling. It was Wes Terrell. He stood there, knees bent, head sunk forward, glaring at Webb Lake. From the barrels of both their guns flowed thin trickles of smoke.

"God, Wes!" Lake said thickly, horror in his bulging eyes. "I thought it was Forrest. You came at me shooting!"

Terrell's body began to slide along the tire. Lake moved forward to support him, but stopped abruptly. His gaze had fastened to the face of the man they were hunting. His right arm swept up, but too late. Forrest was waiting, ready for the play.

The crash of the two revolvers sounded almost as one. But the split second of time difference spoiled Lake's aim. A puzzled surprise showed in the flat pallid face of the man. He caught at his arm as the weapon dropped from his paralyzed fingers. The bullet from his gun had passed through the brim of the hat Forrest was wearing.

"I ought to finish the job while I'm doing it," the outlaw said, his eyes drilling into those of the man he had just wounded.

"Don't do that," Lake begged. "You've done enough to me."

FORREST turned away, without answer. A possible way out of this trap had flashed into his mind. He had been lucky so far. Lake was too busy being sorry for himself to have any fight left in him, and too glad at being left alive to interfere with his enemy's flight. Walsh and Terrell were out of the battle. Now was the time to be gone. He pulled the rim of the hat farther down over his face and swaggered into the open, revolver in hand.

A name stuck in his mind. Terrell had called the man he had left at the gate Phil.

"It's all over, Phil," the hunted man called. "I got him. He's dead as a stuck shote. Webb plugged him one too. But he done wounded both Webb and Wes before I finished him."

He walked fast, almost at a run, as if excitement were surging up in him. The man at the gate was puzzled but not suspicious. Pres Walsh looked somehow different even in the darkness. That was probably because he was agitated.

Not until the man with the floppy hat was actually at his side did Phil Decker know that he had been fooled. He let out a startled cry and started to raise his gun. Again Forrest had the advantage of understanding the situation while his enemy did not. He pistol-whipped Decker above the temple with the long barrel of his forty-five, and the young man staggered back against the gate.

Half a dozen men were gathered in the street. Apparently they had come to watch the finish of Blake Forrest rather than to take an active part in it. The barrel of the fugitive's six-shooter made a sweeping half circle in front of them.

"Don't try to stop me!" he ordered.

A moment later he had crossed the street and was diving into the shadowy darkness between two adobe buildings. Behind him he left a Babel of shouts, excited explanations, curses, and shuffling feet; as he rounded the rear of the adobe building to the right, he saw over his

shoulder that nobody had as yet started in pursuit. He reckoned on plenty of time. With four of his foes wounded, there would not be many to take up the chase, even if the casualty list had not been enough to daunt enthusiasm.

Through a barb-wire fence he went into Wingate's pasture. He found the saddle and blanket under the mesquite bush where he had left them. His picketed horse he saddled swiftly. Maverick cantered across the field. There was a gate at the east end, and through this Forrest led his mount.

From the main street came on the breeze a murmur of excitement. There would be plenty of it. The town would buzz for hours about what had taken place. Talk of it would last a long time, not because of its intrinsic importance but because a small town keeps alive its dramatic memories. Thirty years from now some old-timer sitting in the sun would say to a neighboring loafer: "Remember that night Blake Forrest made his get-away from the Terrell crowd." And the other old gaffer, who very likely had been home in bed during the shooting, would boast he had been an eye-witness of the battle.

Forrest struck the street outside of the business section. In some of the scattered houses there were lights, but he did not meet a soul on the deserted road. Unmolested and unnoticed, he drew out from Deer Trail at a jog trot. He knew that his luck had been amazingly good. Against all probability he had come out alive and unhurt without having been forced to kill any of his assailants. He had pistol-whipped one and hammered the head of another against a wagon-wheel; but a broken head meant only an unpleasant surface wound and a headache. Webb Lake he had left with an arm which might be stiff for life; but Webb was too poison mean to die of a bullet not in a vital spot.

NONE the less Forrest knew he had not improved his position by this shooting scrape. Though his enemies were worthless scamps, they were in home terrain. He would be blamed for starting this trouble, and it would add to his reputation as a notorious criminal. He was a dog with a bad name. Nothing he could do would be right. Probably the story would be given out that he had come to town looking for Wes Terrell.

He was traveling through low country, thick with brush. A cold rain began to fall, and he put on his slicker. As he rode, he brushed against the plumed huisache and scattered showers of moisture. In places the ground was soggy from the heavy pounding rains that must have beaten down.

A small branch running high cut across the road. The water in it was pouring turbulently down to Funnel Creek. Forrest knew he must be close to the main stream. When he reached it a few minutes later he saw that the bridge across Funnel had been swept away. This was a nuisance. He would have to ride miles out of his way to cross the railroad bridge five miles lower. Moreover, he would have to leave the road and pick a way through the thorny chaparral.

THE foliage was so laden with raindrops that when he pushed into the shrubbery he would have been wet to the skin had it not been for his slicker.

Whenever he came in sight of Funnel he saw that it was now a raging torrent. White-crested waves tumbled over one another in a rush to get down to the Rio Grande. There must have been a cloudburst in the country back of him.

The rain had thinned, but it was still chill. Travel was slow, and the cruel thorns clutched fiercely at the flanks of the horse and the legs of the rider.

Forrest made the best of it. He had not lived for years in the brush country without having become inured to discomfort. It was a harsh land, one in which both vegetation and animal life had to fight for existence. A rattlesnake sounded its warning, and the rider clutched at the saddle-horn when Maverick leaped sideways.

After a long detour he came back to the Funnel. The stream had widened, and the force of the deep rushing current was terrific. Here the scrub was less thick, but the ground was still boggy. Though horse and man were both tired, Forrest decided to keep going. This was too inhospitable a spot for a night camp.

He rode out into the clearing made for the railroad track and came upon a startling discovery. The bridge across Funnel Creek was gone. A moment later he heard the shriek of an engine's whistle. A train was rushing to destruction. He was on the wrong side of the creek to give warning.

The next installment of this vivid novel, in our forthcoming February issue, amply fulfills the promise of the foregoing pages.

The Man

Drawings by
Frederic Anderson

This story of Raud the Unchristened, the warlock Norseman who could sail against the wind, is one of the most dramatic in all this Ships and Men series.

A SMALL, chunky, roly-poly man was descending the rope-and-wood ladder from the side of the factory ship, the "mother" whaler, to the deck of the "killer" ship below. He carried a bundle of clothes under his arm. No one else was in sight. Fog, drifting in from the Pacific, cloaked the harbor and eddied about the whalers.

I watched the man until he was close, then addressed him:

"Any objection if I look this killer over, Skipper?"

He turned—an apple-cheeked Norwegian, blue eyes shrewd and appraising.

"Why, no. I'm not skipper here, nor in the big one either. But as one old shellback to another, make yourself at home."

I strolled about the deck. It was the man who attracted me, not the ship. There's not much to see in these small

Who Ruled the Wind

By H. BEDFORD-JONES and CAPTAIN L. B. WILLIAMS

craft, stripped as they are to the bare essentials of their smelly trade. After inspecting the ponderous mechanical harpoons secured alongside the fiddley bulkhead, I found my man again by the galley. He was seated on an upturned bucket with a tub of steaming clothes before him.

WE smoked and fell into talk of ships and men. He was gunner on this ship; after a bit he mentioned that he had once been owner and master of a similar craft. I had guessed as much by the cut of his jib: scarred hands and an old-young face, an eye that could leap to decision in the flash of an instant.

"You're not the only master to have lost your ship," said I.

He laughed harshly.

"Lost her? She was burned from under me. And not by accident, matey."

"How so?"

"My wife's old man owned a fleet o' trawlers out of Kirkwall. I sailed master in the flagship until one day I shanghaied his daughter and married her. He came aboard and sacked me. I sailed into him and laid him out for inspection. . . . He could never forgive that. Later, when I had my own tub, he came aboard one night with his gang, and gave us a mainsail haul. Stripped the cabin, laid me out proper, and burned her. My wife's in Bergen now with the kids. Aint seen them in eleven months."

There in a few pithy sentences was an entire saga of the sea, the gist of a man's whole life. About the man, as he spoke, the fog swirled and thickened, while he sudsed the clothes around in the tub.

"Norwegian, aren't you?" I said. "Met quite a few in my time. I'd bet a weeviled hardtack that you're from the north, up around the Salten fiord district."

He stopped short and gave me a queer look from those blue eyes of his, and grunted.

"I guess you win, matey. Don't see how you knew it, though."

"I was thinking of an old story," I replied. The fog had put it into my mind, the gray vapor curling around him and weaving up the high side of the factory ship behind him. "And to make you fit into it rightly, your name should be Raud. Ever hear of him?"

He dropped the clothes in the tub and gave me another look and a nod.

"An unlucky name, where I come from," he said slowly. "Aye. You'd be thinking about Raud the Unchristened, no doubt. Funny thing, how those old stories get handed down by the fire, of winter nights, century after century! You got it out of books, I guess, but I got it out of the old folks. I mind my grandmother spinning, and gabbling away as the wheel went around, telling me the story just like she got it from her own old folks, years back."

We talked it over, one of us putting in a snatch, and the other amplifying it—that old story of Raud the wizard, who could sail against the wind and command the fog and storm to do his bidding.

Between us, we made the yarn come pretty much alive, for this chap had a gift of putting flesh on dead bones, as though these people had lived only yesterday. The tub of clothes was forgotten. The two of us went back to a night far gone, close to a thousand years in the past, when fog curled around through the streets of Trondhjem and eddied about the hall of the King of Norway.

INTO the King's hall that night there wandered a short man with blue eyes and red cheeks; he warmed himself at the fire and drank the King's ale. He wore a bearskin for a cloak and kept to himself and held his peace, but his bright eyes roved about the place continually, and dwelt most often on the King, at the high end of the hall.

Back in those days, kings won their right by the strong hand. Olaf, Triggvi's son, was the noblest man in all the north: Viking and rover, adventurer, soldier of fortune; a romantic and splendid figure with his ruddy flashing hair and beard, his stark eyes like ice. At his feet sat his great wolfhound Vig, growling and eying the steaming men in the hall with fierce eyes. At his right hand sat black-browed Bishop Sigurd, who was more warrior than cleric.

OF a sudden, King Olaf noticed the new figure by the huge fireplace, and asked the man who he was. The stranger hitched up the bearskin about his shoulders, looked up at the King and the bishop, and spoke humbly enough.

"Biorn is my name, and I am a merchant," said he. Biorn means *bear*, and King Olaf was quick to suspect mockery here. He spoke out swift and sharply.

"Strange bears don't come into city halls, fellow."

"True, Lord," said the little man. "But to outland men like me, it is always interesting to see new things. And here I find the saying true, that good luck and good looks are brethren."

Olaf, despite the flattery, was somewhat angry.

"Are you minded to match wise sayings with me, Biorn?" he demanded.

"Not I, Lord," was the reply. "It is ill luck to match wits with the wisdom of the ancients," went on Biorn, "and a wandering man sets no store by himself in a king's hall."

Bishop Sigurd burst into hearty laughter.

"Ha, Olaf! The man has brains. What are you doing in this place, Biorn?"

The little man saluted the bishop reverently.

"I came to look upon the face of King Olaf. He has made all Norway into a Christian land, except one spot in the north. I was in that place not long ago, and came from curiosity to see what sort of man was this king, of whom such great tales are spread."

Now King Olaf bent his brows on the speaker, perceiving that this stranger was a sharp and cunning fellow.

"There is but one man in all Norway who flouts me," said he slowly, "and that is Raud the Unchristened, Raud the wizard, who sits north in the Salten fiord and prays to his heathen gods. Behind him are gathered the men of Halogaland under his foster-brother Thorir Hart; they have ships and men enough. Is this your meaning, Biorn?"

The little man in the bearskin cloak nodded.

"True, Lord. They say strange things of this Raud; that he can command the wind and fog and storms, that he can sail with or against the wind at will—"

"God save all here from such talk!" exclaimed Bishop Sigurd violently.

"Bah! It's no more than everybody says," put in the King. "When I catch this fellow Raud, I'll christen him with the sword-edge! Have you seen him, Biorn?"

"Yes, Lord. I wintered with him."

"Good! Tell me about him. What sort of man is he? How does he look?"

"He is ill-favored and huge, with a shaggy beard, and has a cast in one eye," said the little man. "He trades each year with the Orkneys, has gone there now with his great ship, and is very lucky in all he does."

"I'll change that," said the King with an oath. "What did he say about me?"

The bright eyes of the little man probed up at the high seat of Olaf.

"I heard him say only one thing of you, Lord. That an ill deed ever brought ill luck."

Olaf flushed, for he had done ill deeds enough, and was a ruthless man.

"Says he so? Then I'll give him a better rede, and this is it: Sword's edge saves much talk. To the Orkneys, eh? And my ships are boun and ready for sea —hm! What about the ship you mentioned? Is it a fine one?"

"Finer and greater than any ever seen in Norway," the little man said. "She has a dragon prow, a sail all blue and white, and an altar to Thor on her afterdeck."

"Then before hay harvest I'll put Thor into the sea and replace him with an altar to Christ!" sword Olaf the King. "And Raud the Unchristened will go with his false god."

"Ale words are ill words," said the little man impudently.

IT was true that Olaf had been drinking deeply. At this open taunt, he let out a roar of anger, and shouted to his men down the hall to fetch this insolent stranger before him.

But even as he gave the order, came a terrific gust of wind down the chimney. It blew a cloud of ashes from the fireplace out into the room. And when men ran up to seize Biorn, there was only a

bearskin in a huddle. The little man himself was gone.

"After him!" shouted Olaf in hot passion. "Find him, bring him back!"

Men seized weapons and ran out, but it was useless to seek the stranger, thick fog filling the streets. After a time a man came to the hall; he was a watchman from one of the ships in harbor. He said that a huge strange vessel had been seen; she had come and gone again, despite the fog and ill wind. King Olaf told him to describe that ship.

"We saw her close," said the man. "She had only four oars out and was all hung with shields. Her size was immense, and she was deeply stained and discolored, as though by long voyaging. Also, her mast was gone; she seemed to be storm-crippled."

Olaf started up out of his high seat.

"That was the ship of Raud the Unchristened!" he declared wrathfully. "The man who sat here in the hall and taunted me, was Raud himself. He's back from the Orkneys and is heading north. Sound horn! Up with you, Bishop Sigurd—out, every man, to the ships! I'll feed this wizard cross or sword before he gets home again!"

There was mustering and running, blowing of horns and a lift of voices; but men recalled that gusty wind down the chimney and the blowing of ashes, and when they came to the ships there was fog and wind together, which was unnatural. Here was evident sorcery, but Olaf was so eager to catch Raud that none dared gainsay him.

In half an hour his own ship, the *Crane,* followed by four other longships, headed out to sea. Barely was the harbor cleared, when the fog thinned and vanished and the stars glimmered overhead. Olaf, at the helm of the *Crane,* laughed deeply and spoke to Bishop Sigurd beside him.

"There's guile for you! The man slips into Trondhjem, taunts me to my face, and slips out again with a crippled ship —why? To draw us after him. He takes desperate chances—why? Because a trap is set and waiting. A sharp fellow, this Raud!"

The black-browed bishop scowled. "A trap, you say? How's that?"

"Thorir Hart of Halogaland is foster brother to this Raud, and has been gathering men and ships. D'ye see the light now?"

"I do not," said Bishop Sigurd. Olaf chuckled, and stooped to caress the ears

"They say Raud can sail with or against the wind at will."

of his hound Vig, who had come aboard with him.

"Raud thinks to lead us out to sea in chase of him. Then he'll bring us in among the northern islands, where Thorir Hart's ships will be waiting to catch us. Good! Instead, we'll take the inside passage, get ahead of him, and when he reaches the islands he'll be the one to be nipped."

"Hm!" grunted the bishop uneasily. "What was it the little man said—ill luck to match wits with the wisdom of the ancients? Have a care, Olaf. We're dealing with wizards and warlocks, men who hold to the ancient gods."

"That's their ill luck," said Olaf, and cast his eye proudly along the deck.

The oars were stowed now. The sail, with its blood-red cross, bellied out in the wind. Starlight glittered on steel, as the eighty picked men of the crew furbished arms or stretched canvas storm-aprons against the salt sea spume. So the *Crane* drove north on a course of Olaf's setting, the other four ships trailing him.

MEANTIME, Raud the Unchristened headed out to sea, with a two-day sail before him.

By morning, this little roly-poly man with sharp blue eyes realized that he had lost his wager, that the ships of Olaf the King had not come after him. Yet he held his course, for he could do nothing else now. Nor was he deceived in the matter.

This dragon-ship of his was a noble thing, a ship of thirty rowing-benches,

Viking Dragon-ship, from an etching by Yngve E. Soderberg

with a gilded dragon's head at the prow, upcurving dragon's tail for stern-post, and a fair blue-striped sail. Yet the ship was not so fair or noble to the eye as was Gudrun, the wife of Raud. She was a tall, stately woman whose flaxen hair streamed in rich profusion. Raud had stolen her when he was on a raid in England and she was no more than a girl; it was said that she was a king's daughter.

Now she sailed with Raud, fought with him, guided him with wise counsel, but the men whispered there was no great love between them. . . .

On the sunrise of the third day, they were coming in to the land again. Raud himself was at the helm when Gudrun

brought him hot broth and fresh boiled herring.

"So they have not followed us," she said, while he ate. "What does that mean?"

Raud grinned at her. He was very cunning at guessing other men's minds.

"It means that Olaf was too sharp for me. He has headed north along the inner course and means to cut me off yonder, at the islands."

"Then we're heading into a trap," she said sharply.

"I can do nothing else," said Raud. "I must join Thorir Hart yonder. Therefore I must risk being caught by Olaf. If he is waiting, it is among the islands to the south of the cape, but Thorir Hart is waiting close under the cape. Thus, if I can pass Olaf, he may still come into our net."

The men were enjoying the warmth of the new-risen sun. The ship drew closer to the shore, savage and forbidding with its misty mountains, glittering glaciers and rocky headlands. Off to starboard lay the lesser isles where danger might lurk.

"Olaf is a bad enemy," Gudrun said slowly.

"So am I," said Raud the Unchristened, and laughed softly. "And all the worse, because men think me a wizard."

A sharp yelp from forward interrupted them.

"Sail ho! Off the starboard bow, putting out from the isles and the inner passage!"

Up leaped Raud, squinting into the sunrise light. A land mist half veiled the islands there, but above the mist glinted a speck of ruddy gold.

"The beak of a ship, gilded," said Raud. "A king's ship, beating out from the islands—here, Gudrun! Take the helm. If that is Olaf's ship, we're lost, for he's too sharp a man to be fooled. If it's one of his other ships, we may yet win."

He ran forward, his voice barking at the men.

"Douse sail, all hands! Douse sail, strike the mast. Break out the shipwreck canvas; arms ready!"

THERE was a rush and scurry, with every man knowing his post and his work. The vane and sail were lowered, the mast was struck and stowed in its chocks. The long pins were knocked out that held the gilded dragon's head and tail; they disappeared inboard. The glittering shields along the bulwarks vanished.

The ship was draped with clinging, lead-hued canvas. A few men were stationed here and there along the benches. A few oars were run out. They pulled raggedly, as fishermen weary after long night's labor. So it would seem at a distance.

At the helm stood Gudrun, gazing off to where the warship with its gilded prow and high sail was now emerging from the mist of the islands. Raud came back aft and took the helm from her, laughing a little.

"Olaf's ship carries a red cross on her sail. That's not his ship."

"He may be too smart for you yet," said Gudrun darkly.

"The game's not won till the board's cleared," Raud replied.

PERHAPS it was well that Raud the Unchristened was too absorbed in the enemy at this moment to pay his wife heed, for he was skilled at reading faces. And a strange look dwelt in her deep eyes as she, too, watched the other ship. Olaf and Raud, Christian and pagan, seeking each to entrap the other to death and doom; the one quite ignorant of her existence, the other paying her little heed. Yet it might come to pass that a woman could entrap them both, if time and tide brought them into her net—

"Ha! By Odin, we win!" cried out Raud sharply.

True. The warship was wasting no time on that gray, awkward hulk so soggily forging through the water. She swung around; the sail was topped, the yard trimmed, and the longship turned in again among the islands. The men cheered and echoed Raud's laughter, but Gudrun eyed her husband, unsmiling.

"Perhaps Olaf is smarter than you deem him," she said.

Some of the men heard this, and lost their mirth. For all her glorious youth and beauty, they muttered that there was no great good in her. Tales were told of her doings in the Orkneys, and it was said that more than one man had come to his bane because of her. If Raud heard such things, he cared little. He was all for wealth and shrewd profit.

Now the dragon became itself again. The golden head and stern-post were restored, the canvas was pulled off, the benches were manned; under full swinging oar-stroke she stood in for the more northward islands, under the cape. Here

should be lurking Thorir Hart with eight or ten stout ships of Halogaland.

Raud cocked an eye at the sky and sea. The wind was refreshing, a wrack of cloud was bearing down. This was the weather Raud liked. Ere night a wild gale would be blowing; but things would happen before darkness fell. A king would die in Norway, muttered Raud the Unchristened, and he himself would be scudding home again, laden with loot, to the boiling currents of the Salten fiord.

"A smoke!" went up a yell. "A smoke from the cape, Raud! The signal!"

All was well, then; more than well! Thorir Hart was here as promised, had descried him, must have descried Olaf's ships also, bearing north straight into the trap. With savage joy, Raud headed in between the outer isles, bare skerries of rock all around. Ahead and merging with the land lay the inner islands, as Raud steered for the inner sound.

Then, suddenly, he caught another yell from forward, a yell of dismay and warning; and from Gudrun beside him, a swift sharp laugh.

"Caught, Raud, caught! I told you he was no fool!"

THE islands had opened, and Raud's blue eyes glittered on the revelation. Here was Olaf's great ship, the *Crane*, standing out from an inlet to cut him off, her square sail with its blood-red cross bellying in the wind. Far behind her, but also coming into sight between the islands, were other longships.

Raud might have turned to sea and fled, but this would have lost every hope of entrapping the King. And Raud was no man to shirk a fight, especially when he had a trick or two up his sleeve. His voice barked out eagerly:

"By Odin, he'll get his bellyful this trip—all hands alive! Break out the short mast. Oars! Stand by to bring inboard and secure—

A splendid, hard-bitten crew; small wonder that Raud the Unchristened was termed wizard and warlock. The oars were stowed. Up went a new mast, shorter than the former spar, with an odd triangular canvas furled about it. This was shaken out and peaked. With the wind dead abeam to starboard, the ship stood off on the starboard tack while the *Crane* came foaming down with a bone in her teeth, under both sail and oars.

Gudrun, steel-clad like a man, brought Raud his helm and mailcoat, and took the tiller while he donned them. The men were arming. Spears and arrows were being placed in readiness; now the King's men were to witness some wizardry that had teeth wherewith to bite.

"Stand by to tack!" Raud's voice blared out. "Man the sheets. Ready about!"

The dragon was leaping ahead close-hauled, at astounding speed. Raud gave her a good full, waited for the exact moment, and eased down the tiller.

"Boom amidships," came his order. "—Yarily, men! Smart with it!"

Keeping the sail drawing as long as possible, the men handling the boom hauled it amidships. The ship's head came through the wind. The men slacked off the weather sheet, cleated home the leeward sheet. The sail filled. Raud, his eyes gleaming, ordered the sheet hauled flatter aft. The dragon was now close-hauled on the port tack, sailing within four points of the wind's eye—sailing against the wind by sheer magic, it seemed to all who watched.

Gudrun stood with shield ready. Raud eyed the *Crane*. Again he had the dragon put on the starboard tack, then back to port. And with this, he was rushing straight for the king's ship as though intent on the one simple tactic known to these seamen—to lay the enemy ship aboard, grapple her, and come to sword-strokes.

Olaf altered his course a bit to starboard. This was precisely as Raud had figured. He laughed, and pressed the king's ship farther to leeward, as though intent upon ramming the *Crane*. The latter ship wore farther to starboard, and farther—and suddenly caught the wind dead abeam.

Then the *Crane* was rolling in the trough; Olaf was roaring furiously at his crew. The oars fell into confusion. The huge square sail was lifted by the wind and blown out to leeward. And here came Raud's dragon, close-hauled, flashing under the very stern of the proud King's ship. War-horns blared, bows twanged, spears flashed in the sunlight. They twanged and flashed again as the dragon fell off to starboard, hailing death on the decks of the *Crane* along the starboard quarter.

IN the mad confusion and crisis, scarcely a shaft had made response. Now, suddenly, the massive bow of King Olaf hummed deeply. Through Gudrun's shield, through it and slapping into the

tiller betwixt her and Raud, drove the King's arrow. Raud cackled a laugh, waved his hand, and sent the dragon off to windward in a smother of foam.

Off he went, straight in among the skerries and islands, with the wounded *Crane* frothing after her, with the other ships of the King dashing through the channels. They had Raud now, had cut off his escape, would drive him ashore and finish him! Long and loud laughed Raud as he watched them come.

Suddenly, dead ahead, the inner sound opened up. Raud's men vented a blare of exultation. Here came into sight the array of Thorir Hart—a dozen longships spurting forward, the trap laid and sprung!

This was the last laugh of Raud the Unchristened for many a day.

Olaf could have turned and run for it, but pride forbade. Besides, here was what he and his men knew best; cold steel against long odds. He had not warred over half the world to turn tail now to a few ships crammed with farmers. His war-horns blared, and the other four longships followed him, straight for the enemy.

There befell a fight which was short and sharp and terrible. Arrows and spears went fast to work; ships smashed in, axe and sword began to clang. The King and his picked fighting-men swept all before them. Three of the Halogalanders' vessels were cleared, and the others turned and made for the beach. A smother of mist came down in a wild howling squall of wind and cloud.

Out of the smother ran the dragon-ship of Raud, beating against the wind, evading those who tried to follow, slipping among the islands and then vanishing out to sea. Rank sorcery, said Bishop Sigurd!

But no others got away. They were beached, one by one, and Olaf's men came after them with hot steel. The king himself, with his wolfhound Vig, followed the blowing scarlet cloak of Thorir Hart up from the shore among the trees. No man in Norway could outrun Olaf, and at last Thorir Hart came to desperate stand.

The hound leaped for his throat. His sword sent Vig wounded and staggering, but the stroke left himself open. Olaf drove spear through and through the chieftain, and there died Thorir Hart with most of his followers.

Olaf called his men together swiftly, and with two of his ships following the

"My oath for yours, Olaf!" said Gudrun. Olaf swore the oath; and they kissed.

Crane, drove northward despite wind and wrack. If the wind was good for Raud, it was bad for Olaf, but turn from his determination he would not. He kept Bishop Sigurd hard at work exorcising warlocks and witchcraft, and at last he came to the Salten fiord. Far inside the long fiord, on Godo Isle, lived Raud the Unchristened.

GETTING at Raud, however, was another matter.

Long and narrow was the fiord, very large inside but with a narrow throat. At ebb tide and at flood, but especially at the ebb, the water made a wild millrace for miles out in the ocean, so that no ship could live in it. This wild rush of water could only be crossed during a few moments between the tides. The fiord could only be entered at the same time.

No man with Olaf knew the waters or the way of entry to the fiord. All this coast was empty and barren, and no pilot

could be found. To make matters worse, Olaf arrived with a fine brisk wind, and clear sunlight, but in the fiord was a wild wrath of mist and fog and tempest. This endured day after day, and all Bishop Sigurd's exorcising did no good whatever. It was clear that Raud, as long as he had a mind to conjure up this weather, could hold them at bay.

King Olaf swore a great oath, beached his ships under the headland, and settled down to wait.

THE third day they were there, a woman came riding down the shore on a horse. She was finely dressed, and so wondrous fair that men stood in awe of her. Now the *Crane* lay a little out from the beach, where King Olaf was swimming and playing games with Bishop Sigurd and certain of his forecastle men. The woman watched them for a while. Then the oars were put out and the players began to walk the long oars as the men rowed. But one of them, a tall naked golden man, juggled three knives in the air as he walked.

"It is in my mind," said the woman, "that no one in the world can do that play but Olaf Triggvi's son; and never has a lordlier man been seen in the world."

"That is true," said the men around her. "King Olaf is yonder, and with wits or sword or muscle, no man in Norway can equal him."

The woman smiled and said nothing. After a while the *Crane* came in. King Olaf, now dressed and wearing a scarlet mantle he had won in Constantinople, leaped ashore and saw the woman, and came up to her. He asked her who she was, and she smiled at him.

"My name is Gudrun. My thralls said they had seen ships here. I came to see whether we had to do with honest men or Vikings or traders."

"You seem to have no fear," said Olaf, his eye lingering upon her.

"Appearances are true," she said, laughing a little.

"Have you anyone who can take my ships into the fiord?" he demanded.

"I have not," said she. "But I might do it myself, if I had a mind thereto. I will come back tomorrow and bring a horse, and see if you can ride as well as you can swim."

With this she rode away, and King Olaf looked after her right joyfully.

As she promised, she returned on the morrow with a spare horse. King Olaf mounted and called Vig to ride with them, but the hound showed his teeth and would not. Men said this was a bad omen, but the King laughed and rode away with Gudrun.

"Tell me," said Olaf, as they rode. "Do you know where Raud the Wizard bides?"

"I do," she assented. "On Godo Isle, far up the fiord. A ship must row all day and night to reach there. His great dragon is hauled up and he has few men, for many were hurt in the south. Raud himself, I hear, lies abed with a sickness."

"If we get through into the fiord, could you guide me to Godo Isle?"

"I might, if I had a mind thereto," she said, and smiled at him. "But not for gold or silver would I do it."

ON the next day and the next, Gudrun returned, and Olaf rode with her, though each day the hound Vig curled his lips and sulked. Each day the King returned joyous to camp. It was clear to all men that she had cast a spell over him, but he would let no one speak ill of her, not even Bishop Sigurd. Each day the fog and tempest hung blacker over Salten fiord, and when men watched that wild race of the waters at the change of tide, they crossed themselves and said it was well that the ships were safely beached.

King Olaf thought that never had he seen so goodly or fair a woman as Gudrun. He was not strong in patience, and one day he would have had his will of her, but she struck him so stoutly that he loosed her and went staggering.

She laughed heartily.

"What! Olaf calls himself King of all Norway, yet cannot enter the Salten fiord? It seems to me that Raud the Unchristened must be the better man. And it does not like me to ride alone with one who does not seek me in marriage."

"By God, I will do that!" said Olaf, his eyes flashing. "If you will first accept christening at my hand, and lead me to where Raud bides."

"So said, so accepted," she made answer. "My oath for yours, Olaf!"

Olaf swore the oath, and they kissed and were very gladsome.

"Have your ships ready ere the morning tide," said she. "I will come then."

When the ebb tide was rushing out in the morning, the three ships were ready. Gudrun came riding, and was set aboard

the *Crane,* and the hound Vig let out a dismal howl. Gudrun took the helm herself, with Olaf beside her, and let steer straight for the fiord entry, in the few moments between the tides. In the bow stood Bishop Sigurd, beside a Cross he had set up there, with all his Mass-array. He burned incense and said prayers, and the oars gave way full force, and the *Crane* drove straight for the heart of the fog and black storm.

As they advanced, it lessened before them, and the walls of the fiord appeared on either hand, and the other ships followed safely where Gudrun steered. On they went and on. Before the full force of the rushing flood was felt behind them, they were through the narrowest place and bearing for the open fiord ahead, though there was still some wind and fog against them. So, being through, they halted a while to give thanks, and then took to the oars again.

All that day and into the night they rowed, and so came to Godo Isle.

It was very late in the night when they came ashore, where the dragon-ship was drawn up under cover, and the stead of Raud the Unchristened lay beyond, all lightless. Gudrun showed the way to everything. The men landed, and Olaf spread them out around the stead so that none might escape.

Then he went to the doors and burst them in. A man who slept there was killed, and Olaf led his men into the hall, killing all they came upon. Raud was found in his bed, and was fast bound; then lights were brought, and Raud was haled forth before the King. Olaf had a spear in his hand, and he pricked Raud with it, and offered him life if he would accept baptism.

"Life is nothing to me," said Raud, looking at Gudrun and then at Olaf. After that he would say no word, and the King had him put to the torment.

"Tell me how you sail your ship against the wind, and with what magic," Olaf said, "and still I will spare your life."

RAUD looked at him, and looked at Gudrun, and laughed shortly and would not speak. So he was put to death with little enough mercy.

Now Gudrun spoke to Olaf and reminded him of his oath. Just then two of the men came in from outside, dragging with them a thrall they had found hiding in the pigsty. The thrall howled for mercy, and flung himself at the feet of Gudrun, calling her by name.

Thus it came out that Gudrun was the wife of Raud the Unchristened. Olaf looked at her with an icy glare in his eyes. But she smiled.

"Your oath, Olaf!" said she.

"That was given to Gudrun the maid," said Olaf, "and not to the wife of Raud. It is in my mind that she who betrays one husband will betray two."

A wild scream broke from her as she met his eyes, but Olaf lifted his spear and drove it through her, so that she fell dead. With this, a foaming madness seized upon him, and in his fury he ordered the thrall slain, and sent out his followers to kill every man of Raud's force they might find alive in the island.

This was done; and meantime Olaf laid fire to the house and burned it down.

The dragon ship was run out into the water and saved, but all her gear was burned with the buildings. None the less, Olaf took her home to Trondhjem and fitted her out afresh. She was the fairest and greatest ship in all Norway, and he named her the *Short Dragon,* later building the *Long Dragon* that carried him to his death.

SUCH was the story that we built up together, as I sat talking with the whaling man while the mist curled around his blue eyes and red cheeks. We had lighted our pipes, and smoked as we talked. Whether the King or the rover or the woman in that story was the most to blame, I could not determine.

"And it doesn't matter," said my friend shrewdly. "The odd thing is how King Olaf cheated himself! He had the ship but not the ship's gear, and he killed everyone who might have told him the truth about it. For this Raud, of course, was no wizard. He had simply learned the art of tacking, of beating to windward—the greatest single step forward that ever happened in the history of the sea!"

"A queer tale and a bloody one," I commented. "Seafaring men were hard men in those days, eh?"

The whaler grunted. He looked at me and his eyes darkened. I knew he was thinking about his wife's old man out of Kirkwall, who had set him on his beam ends.

"Aye," he said. "Aye. And they still are, matey."

Another fine story of this Ships and Men series will be a feature of our forthcoming February issue.

The Murder Club of

He lives dangerously indeed, this Anglo-American Intelligence officer known as the Red Wolf of Arabia.

By WILLIAM J. MAKIN

Illustrated by John Clymer

CAMEL bells tinkled softly. The scraggy beasts nosed across the Maude Bridge leading into Bagdad. Dust arose from the pads of the caravan. It descended again upon the shuffling throng of Arabs on the bridge and the swirling, muddy waters of the Euphrates beneath.

"*Illa ya!*" cried the indigo-skirted Arab tugging at the leading camel.

The beasts were unresponsive. They continued their slow, swaying, supercilious progress. Bulging sacks were tied to their scraggy flanks.

"Another cargo of frankincense for Afiz," yawned the Iraki official to his half-asleep assistant. Both men squatted at the Bagdad end of the bridge. Imposing in their new khaki uniforms with red shoulder-tabs, they checked all arrivals from the desert and made copious entries on thumb-marked papers.

"Afiz must be a rich man, blessed by the Prophet," blinked the assistant.

"One of the richest merchants in Bagdad," said the Iraki official, reluctantly leaving the shade of his box to confront the camel caravan in the blinding sunshine.

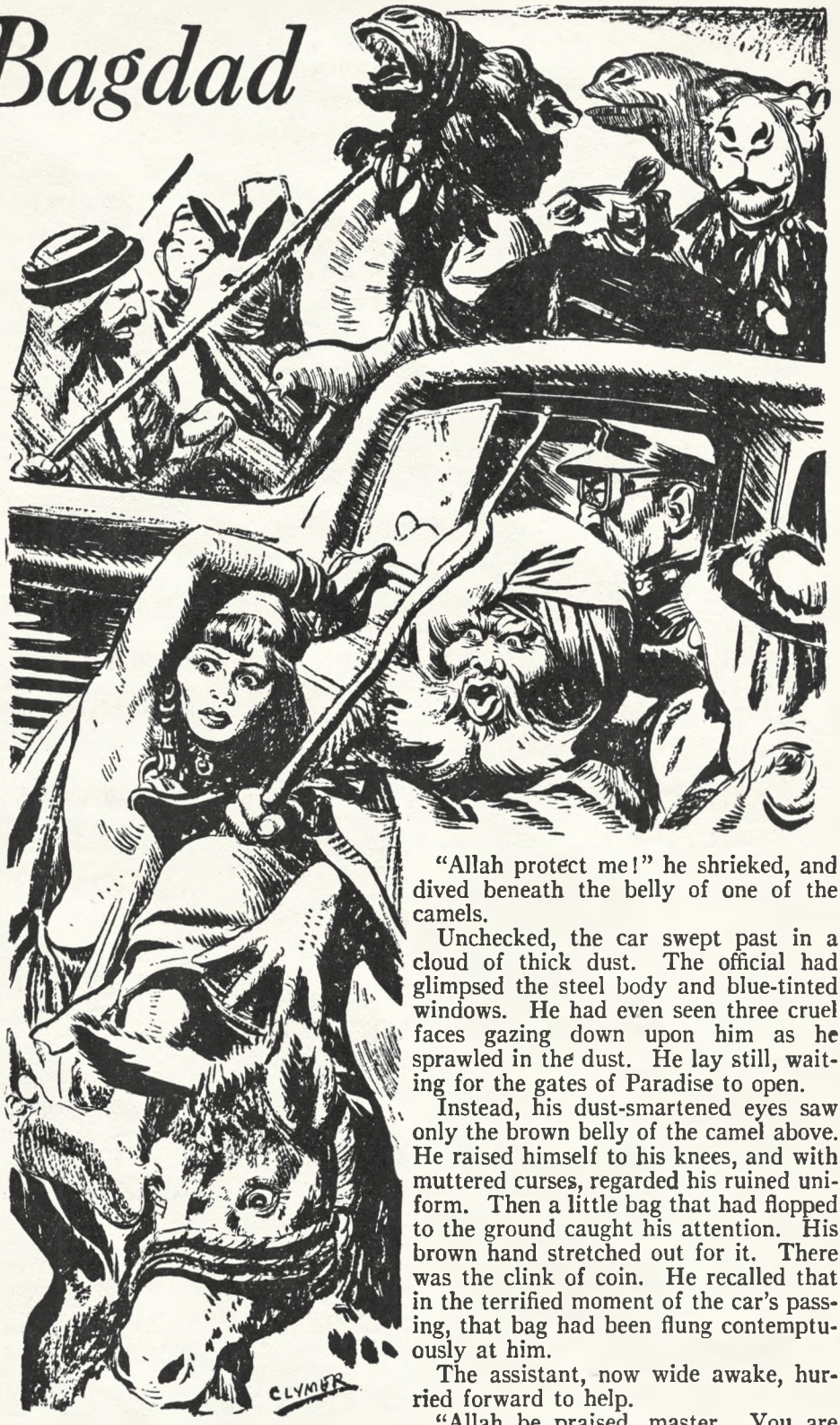
Standing amidst the snuffling, saliva-dripping beasts, he was dutifully counting the sacks of frankincense, when an incessant loud hooting caused him to turn. Charging juggernaut-fashion across the crowded bridge, came an American sedan motorcar, smeared in the gray dust of the desert. It was driven with a blind ferocity. Arabs of all sorts and conditions scattered before its progress. A water-carrier with goatskin bags was whisked to the ground, while a wheel bumped over his bloated bag, and water spurted in all directions.

A donkey, bearing a bearded, dignified priest, took fright and stampeded. The venerable rider clung desperately to the neck of the beast, and howled. A pariah dog nosing for offal was left staining the dust with its blood. As the crowds parted like seas before the prow of a destroyer, the Iraki official glimpsed through the windshield of the advancing horror the determined driver.

He was an Arab, masked with goggles. One brown fist was pressed relentlessly against the sounding horn. There was a suggestion of a slippered brown foot pressed with equal relentlessness upon the accelerator. The cloud of dust behind hid the trail of disaster on the bridge.

With his heart in his mouth, the Iraki official shuffled away from the camel caravan of frankincense, and straddled with arms outstretched at the end of the bridge. It was his supreme effort at duty. But behind the goggles of that crouched figure in the driver's seat he read his doom.

Bagdad



Charging juggernaut-fashion across the crowded bridge came an American motor-car smeared in the gray dust of the desert . . . . driven with blind ferocity.

"Allah protect me!" he shrieked, and dived beneath the belly of one of the camels.

Unchecked, the car swept past in a cloud of thick dust. The official had glimpsed the steel body and blue-tinted windows. He had even seen three cruel faces gazing down upon him as he sprawled in the dust. He lay still, waiting for the gates of Paradise to open.

Instead, his dust-smartened eyes saw only the brown belly of the camel above. He raised himself to his knees, and with muttered curses, regarded his ruined uniform. Then a little bag that had flopped to the ground caught his attention. His brown hand stretched out for it. There was the clink of coin. He recalled that in the terrified moment of the car's passing, that bag had been flung contemptuously at him.

The assistant, now wide awake, hurried forward to help.

"Allah be praised, master. You are still alive."

"*Aiee,* I am alive," grumbled the official scrambling to his feet.

"Surely I may stay, even though my husband has been murdered by Arabs."

"There must be madmen in that motorcar, master. They drove like djinn from the desert. They have gone into the bazaar. Shall we order a patrol to search them out?"

Deep in his pocket, the Iraki official clutched the bag of money. He drew himself to his full height and regarded his assistant sternly.

"You talk of a motorcar! What is this foolishness? You are bewitched with visions. I saw no motorcar. I did but stumble as the wind blew dust upon us."

Open-mouthed, the assistant gazed at him.

"But master—"

"By Allah, am I to be cursed with fools all my life? Get this caravan moving. Clear the bridge, and kick that dead dog into the river."

He spat contemptuously into the dust, and moved back to the grateful shade of the sentry-box. . . .

In the meantime, without slackening its furious pace, the sedan had plunged into the congested byways of the Bagdad bazaar. With men and beasts scuttling to safety, with horn still snarling and foot still pressed on the accelerator, the goggled driver twisted the car along the crooked lanes.

He swerved through a gateway leading into a dusty courtyard. There he backed the sedan expertly into an open shed. Then, with a gesture of finality, he switched off the engine and scrambled from his seat.

"So you have come at long last! We have been waiting these many moons for you."

The words wheezed forth from a fat and prosperous Arab merchant who stood there regarding the car. The driver bowed deeply before him.

"Greetings, Master Afiz. May the light ever shine upon you! The cargo I know was long delayed. But after many trials we have brought it, from the shores of the Red Sea, across the desert, and even into your house in Bagdad."

The fat merchant nodded and chuckled.

"So the cargo is safe, eh? That is good. Allah be praised, we can now get to our business. "

With the air of demonstrating the latest model, the driver of the sedan swung open the door of the car. The fat merchant peered inside, a little fearfully. The three men with evil faces still sat there, like puppets awaiting the strings to be pulled. One of them nursed a British army rifle of modern pattern. Another held a portable machine-gun across his knees. The third gripped an automatic pistol. And ranged about the floor of the car were boxes of ammunition, carefully placed for instant use.

Afiz, the merchant of frankincense, took all this in at one glance. He stroked the steel walls of the car, and purred at the sight of the blue-tinted windows.

"*Aiee!* But this is a real murder-car."

"It has come all the way from America," declared the driver proudly. "And it is I who have driven it across the desert to Bagdad, as I once drove through the streets of Chicago."

The fat Arab nodded his appreciation.

"And tomorrow you will drive it once again through the streets of Bagdad. From this car we shall deal death to all the enemies of the Brethren of the Black Tents."

"It shall be so," nodded the goggled driver.

He fumbled in his pocket for a cigarette and lit it. The three murderous mutes still sat there, the evil expressions unchanged, the deadly arsenal surrounding them.

"NO, there is nothing more to be said. Except that I thank you for saving my life."

It seemed characteristic of her to stroll across the room of the hotel and quietly

close the shutters. The glare of the noonday sun, and the strident shuffle of life in the Bagdad bazaar, were obliterated. In the semi-gloom that she had provoked, Laura Wilton looked inhumanly cool and detached.

"But surely I can be of some help to you, particularly if you are returning to London?"

PAUL RODGERS, known in the native quarter as the Red Wolf of Arabia, spoke with hesitation, and inwardly cursed himself for that hesitation. He stood in the doorway of her room. No longer the Arab chief of a roving Bedouin tribe, he was now a typical European, dressed in white suit fashionably creased.

Laura Wilton seemed to have an irritating capacity for not noticing him.

"I shall not be returning to London—at least, for some time," she murmured. "Surely I may choose to stay here, even though my husband has been murdered by Arabs?"

"I should not have thought Bagdad an ideal place for you at this moment," said Rodgers. "I respect your feelings, but I must insist that your husband was not murdered. He shot a man, and was shot in turn. It is the law of the desert."

"We were given to understand that you were the law, in that particular part of the desert," she said pointedly. Then, lest he should see the expression in her eyes, she busied herself with a parcel of clothes that she had bought since her arrival in Bagdad.

"I was the law," admitted Rodgers, quietly, "until you chose to arrive in my camp. Then your husband decided to interpret the law in his own hasty fashion. He was killed, alas, for his presumption. I tried to save him, but failed. It only remained for me to save you."

"And in that moment, you were no longer a chief," she nodded. "I appreciate the sacrifice, Mr. Rodgers. I have since realized that isolating yourself from the world and playing the Bedouin in the desert meant more to you than all the officialdom that exists. Well, women expect sacrifices. I can only repeat, I'm grateful."

Her slim hands buried themselves practically in the bundle of garments and Rodgers was given to understand that the conversation was ended. He stood there for a moment regarding this woman whom he had brought by camel to Bagdad. Why did he bother about her? Women, he had always regarded as more than a distraction in a man's life. They demanded too much, they exacted everything.

"I would have liked to help," he said.

She turned and faced him.

"You have helped immeasurably," she said quietly, and turned again to that absurd bundle. . . .

Ten minutes later he was trying to dispel these distracting thoughts. There was only one method. He had seated himself at a piano in the lounge of the hotel, and his slim fingers strayed caressingly over the keys. It was twelve months since he had touched a piano. There seemed a cramp in his fingers. But stray, magical pieces of music were coming to life again in his mind.

Eventually it was the Allegro in F Minor by Bach that came forth from that sun-cracked piano—a test of memory and concentration. Rodgers did not falter. There was in his bent body and vibrating fingers the exultation of a man who had discovered his real joy. In that mathematical world of Bach, no woman entered, none could enter.

BUT there came sudden conflict as he reached the finale. From beyond the hotel, in the street, came the report of three shots in rapid succession. For a moment the sound halted life, as it also halted the fingers of the Intelligence officer at the piano. There followed shouts, loud murmurs, and then five other shots were fired.

Rodgers swiveled round on his stool. The murmur was invading the hotel. A distracted Greek manager, dress shirt awry, came rushing into the lounge. His fear-stricken eyes gazed at a Victorian couch.

"In here! Lay him there!" he gasped aloud.

A huddled group of men staggered into the lounge. There were the Assyrian doorkeeper, jerseyed attendants, an Iraki soldier, and a trail of dirty-robed Arabs. They seemed to be holding and hiding something in their midst. Only when they had laid their burden on the couch and fell apart fearfully, did Red Rodgers realize what had happened.

He bent over a portly, khaki-clad figure. Blood was trickling down a *café-au-lait* cheek and staining the medal ribbons across the chest. The lips were pursed and the eyes closed, as in agony.

"Jalta Pasha!" cried Rodgers, recognizing the Commander-in-Chief of the Iraki Army.

The eyes of the supine figure fluttered open at the call. They stared at the sunburnt face with its flaming crop of hair. Blood-smeared lips twisted into a smile.

"Paul Rodger'—my friend," he murmured. "I came to talk with you. . . . I was told—today—you had returned from the desert. I—I needed your help. . . . Now—now I'm dying."

"Who has done this, Jalta?" demanded the Intelligence officer.

So quickly was life ebbing that the dying man could only whisper.

"The assassins—murder-club of Bagdad. They have sworn to kill—all who will not join in—the holy war against—the whites. I—I am the first to die. The King is next. . . . Rodger', as—as an old friend, I implore your—help." A spasm of pain twisted his features. The body doubled itself, and rose to a sitting posture. Jalta Pasha feebly raised his head. *"Allah O Akbar!"* he cried aloud, and fell back dead.

The steely gray eyes of Paul Rodgers were dimmed with tears as he gazed upon the now still form of a comrade and great fighter of the desert. He and Jalta Pasha had ridden in many a fierce foray. Jalta had proved himself a great fighter. It was inevitable, when Irak became a great state, that it was to Jalta that King Feisal turned for the building-up of an army worthy of the kingdom. As commander-in-chief, Jalta Pasha had created a well-drilled, modern fighting-machine, the most powerful in the Middle East. He had continued his work after the death of Feisal. Now he lay dead, and his last, gasped words were a warning that the boy, King Asef, was in danger.

A murder-club in Bagdad! It existed. It had struck. And Jalta Pasha had come to Paul Rodgers to plead for its annihilation. Jalta Pasha had himself been annihilated. Somewhere in the desert, a keen controlling brain was deciding these murderous matters: Kula Kastamuni, the Turkish soldier of fortune, and now would-be dictator of the Middle East.

"Old friend, I am at your service!" murmured Rodgers, touching the hand of the dead man.

Then, squaring his shoulders, he walked out of the room.

"WELL, I must say, Browne, that when you crash a plane, you fall into plenty of adventure."

Air Marshal Ffoulkes, Chief of the R.A.F. in the Middle East, leaned back in his chair until his close-cropped gray head almost touched the large-scale map behind him. He spoke sternly to the young man at attention before him.

"If it hadn't been for Paul Rodgers, sir, I wouldn't be here alive to tell the tale," responded Wing-Commander Browne.

"Nevertheless," went on the air marshal severely, "you have to report the total loss of a new Hawker Fury, and the murder by Arabs of a distinguished member of the Foreign Office staff, Mr. Michael Wilton."

Wing-Commander Browne swallowed hard.

"All of which, sir, are the result of General Kula Kastamuni and the revolt he has raised in the desert," he said bravely. "The odds, sir, were against us. I repeat, if it had not been for Paul Rodgers—"

"Yes—yes," intervened the air marshal testily. "I keep hearing this fellow's name at every turn. And not all of them good reports, I might add. I had the sad business of discussing the murder of Wilton with his widow earlier in the day."

"Mrs. Wilton has behaved splendidly throughout," enthused Browne.

"Which is more than she'll say for your hero fellow—Rodgers," said the air marshal pointedly.

"Surely, sir—" began Browne.

"Oh, naturally, the lady has made no charges against Rodgers. In fact, she asserts that he behaved—er—well, like a gentleman throughout. But I gathered that she has a feeling her husband could have been saved if Rodgers had sincerely desired it."

BROWNE drew himself up stiffly. "Rodgers did all that a man could do, in the circumstances, sir. Wilton, if I may say so, behaved insanely. He tried to kill Kastamuni. He failed, and was killed himself."

Air Marshal Ffoulkes tightened his mouth.

"I would have given a year's pay for some one to come back from the desert telling me that he had shot and killed that damned Turkish general. Why didn't that hero of yours, Paul Rodgers, do the job, eh?"

"He happened to be host to Kula Kastamuni on this particular occasion," retorted Browne.

"I only wish Kastamuni would let me play host to him," snapped Ffoulkes.

"I'd shoot the fellow over the first mouthful of soup. He's a mad-dog, running amok in the desert. There'll be blood soaking the sands before we've finished with him. Now, listen to me, Browne. You'll—"

THE air marshal got no further. An excited khaki-clad figure came into the room without any preliminaries. He hesitated a second, seeing Browne standing there, and then began quickly:

"Beg pardon, sir, if I'm interrupting. Have you heard the news?"

The air marshal regarded him closely.

"What is it now, Sanderson? Has the pipe-line in the north been raided again, or do you merely want to give me a tip for the Grand National?"

"Jalta Pasha has been assassinated, sir."

"Good heavens!" Ffoulkes rose from his chair. "Dead?"

"Two minutes after the shooting, sir."

"Where did it happen?"

"Outside the Hotel Zobeideh."

Ffoulkes thumped his desk.

"What the devil was Jalta doing at that cheap place?"

"He was about to make a call on Paul Rodgers, sir."

"Rodgers—Rodgers!"

"Yes sir. Red Rodgers, sir."

The name seemed to hit the air marshal across the face, but the importance of the news made him persist.

"Had Jalta a bodyguard with him?"

"Yes sir. Three men only."

"Pah!"

"They killed one of the assassins, sir. Probably wounded a second."

"Well, that's something," snorted Ffoulkes. "Did all the assassins escape?"

"Afraid so, sir. They did the job in American gangster style. Fired from a car with the engine running outside the hotel. Got away with their wounded fellow, and the dead man."

"And Jalta?"

"He staggered into the hotel, sir, and had a few words with Rodgers before he died. I imagine he must have wanted to see Rodgers badly, to take the risk of going into that quarter of Bagdad."

The air marshal was decisive.

"Bring this fellow Rodgers"—he swallowed hard at the name—"to report to me at once. It's time he made a call on me. He's been in Bagdad for forty-eight hours, and I've not set eyes on him."

"Yes sir. Of course, sir—" The khaki-clad Sanderson was hesitating. "I'll get Rodgers to come along at once, sir—that is, as soon as I can find him."

Despite his watchfulness, his eyes had seen nothing of the reputed murder-club.

Air Marshal Ffoulkes withered the man with a glance.

"I'm given to understand, Captain Sanderson, that you are in charge of Intelligence Department in Bagdad?"

"Yes sir."

"And this fellow Paul Rodgers is one of your paid spies?"

"Was, sir. We all imagined him dead. I only heard today that he had been living as chief of a tribe in the desert, and had returned to Bagdad in company with Wing-Commander Browne."

"Even so," went on the air marshal with forced patience, "why not request the fellow's presence at once?"

Captain Sanderson replied with evident reluctance.

"Because when I reached his room at the Hotel Zobeideh," he muttered, "Paul Rodgers had gone."

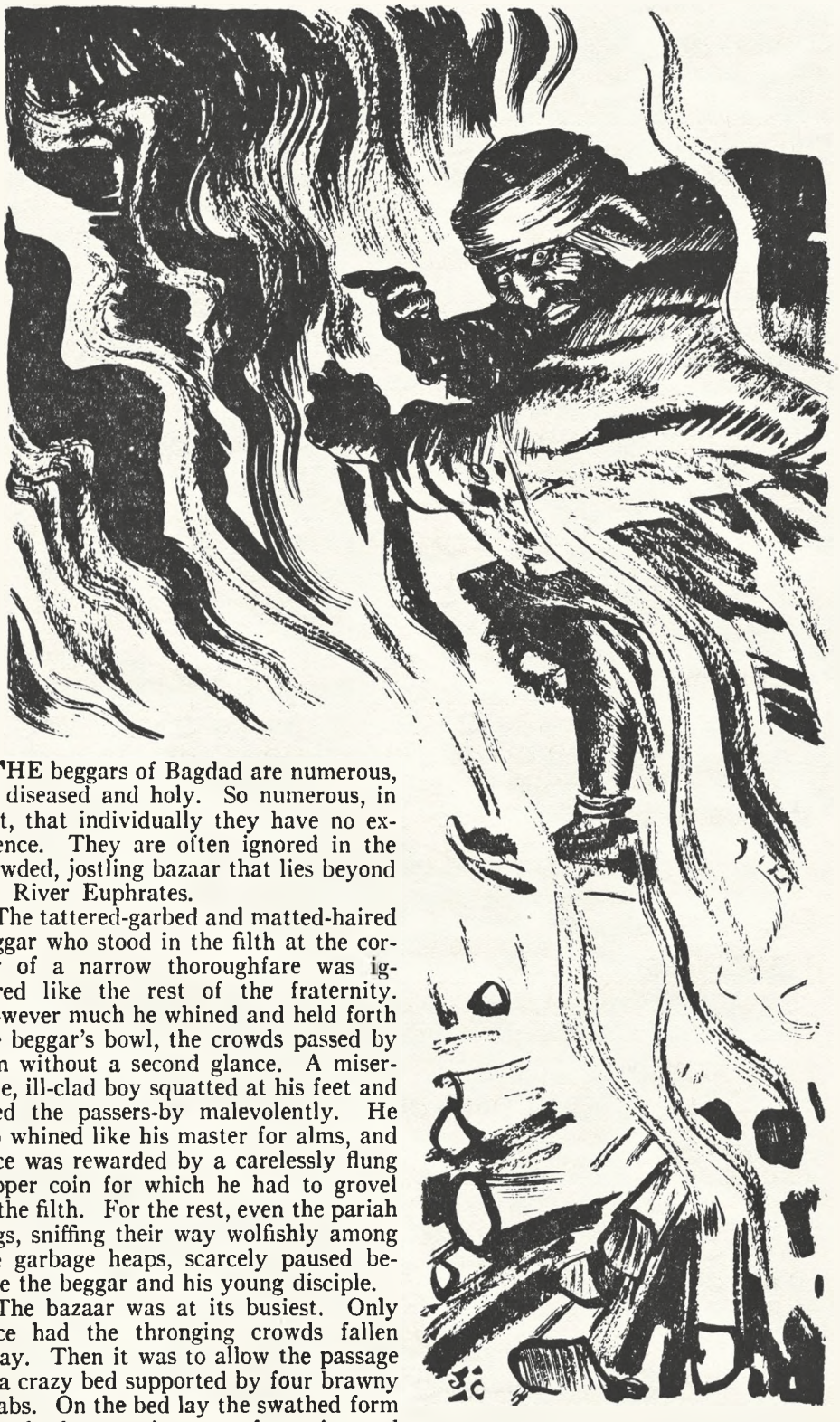
"Gone?"

"Disappeared, sir."

"Well, I'm damned!"

And Air Marshal Ffoulkes flopped back into his chair.

The two officers clicked their heels and hurriedly took their departure.



THE beggars of Bagdad are numerous, diseased and holy. So numerous, in fact, that individually they have no existence. They are often ignored in the crowded, jostling bazaar that lies beyond the River Euphrates.

The tattered-garbed and matted-haired beggar who stood in the filth at the corner of a narrow thoroughfare was ignored like the rest of the fraternity. However much he whined and held forth the beggar's bowl, the crowds passed by him without a second glance. A miserable, ill-clad boy squatted at his feet and eyed the passers-by malevolently. He too whined like his master for alms, and once was rewarded by a carelessly flung copper coin for which he had to grovel in the filth. For the rest, even the pariah dogs, sniffing their way wolfishly among the garbage heaps, scarcely paused before the beggar and his young disciple.

The bazaar was at its busiest. Only once had the thronging crowds fallen away. Then it was to allow the passage of a crazy bed supported by four brawny Arabs. On the bed lay the swathed form of a dead man. A group of weeping and wailing relatives trailed behind. And when it had passed, the beggar boy joined

He took a flying leap toward that smoke. The Arabs drew knives and

in the cavalcade, following close behind the grim burden borne by the four Arabs.

Later in the afternoon he returned, and silently squatted again at the feet of the whining beggar with the bowl.

"Well, Abdul?" demanded the beggar quietly in Arabic.

"It was the body of an old man, master. He had died of the sickness."

"So," the beggar nodded, and thrust his bowl toward a portly grain-merchant, only to be refused. "That is the fourth dead man we have seen pass out of the Arab town, and each one of them has died of the sickness—not one from the bite of lead bullets."

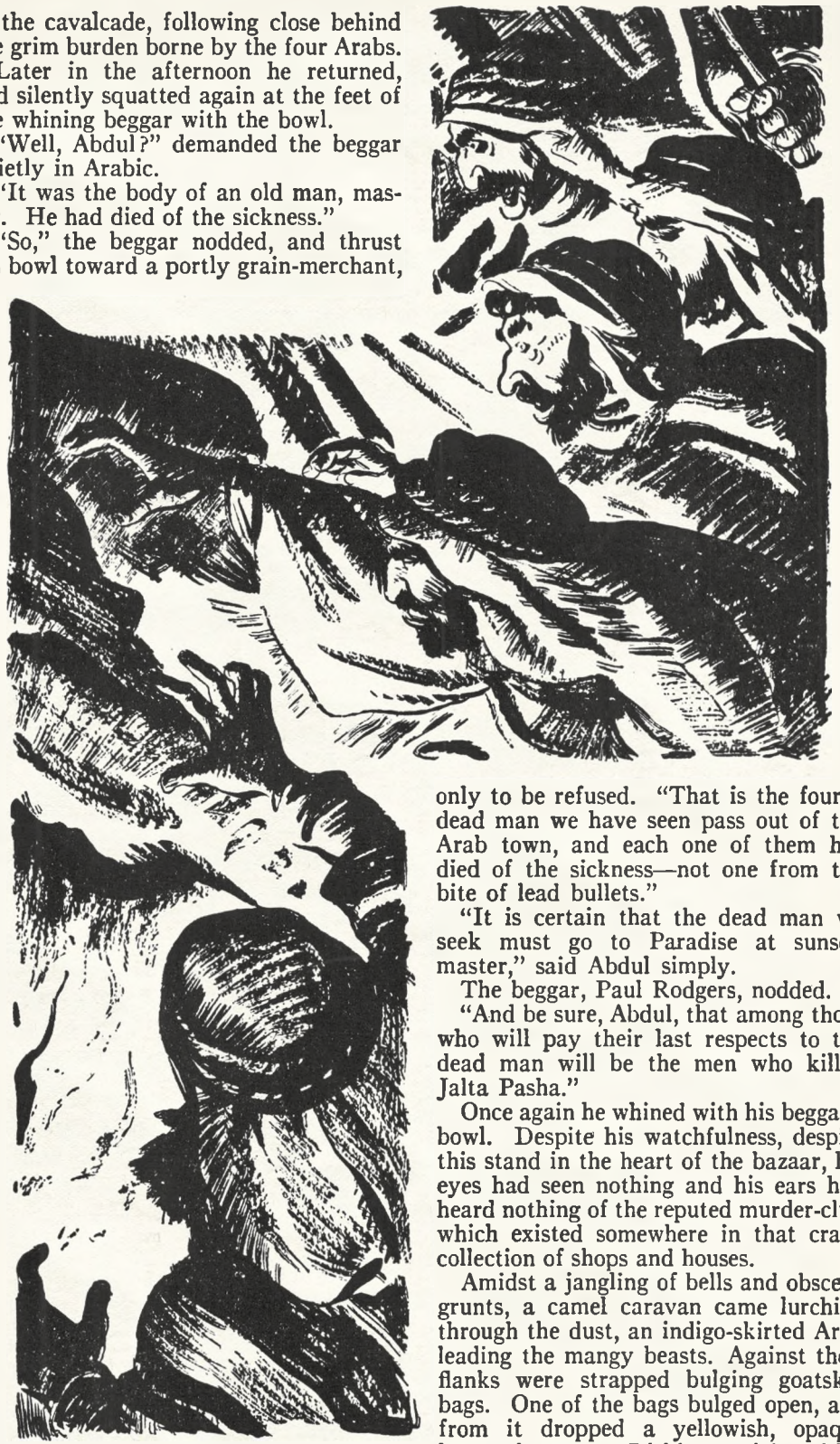
"It is certain that the dead man we seek must go to Paradise at sunset, master," said Abdul simply.

The beggar, Paul Rodgers, nodded.

"And be sure, Abdul, that among those who will pay their last respects to the dead man will be the men who killed Jalta Pasha."

Once again he whined with his beggar's bowl. Despite his watchfulness, despite this stand in the heart of the bazaar, his eyes had seen nothing and his ears had heard nothing of the reputed murder-club which existed somewhere in that crazy collection of shops and houses.

Amidst a jangling of bells and obscene grunts, a camel caravan came lurching through the dust, an indigo-skirted Arab leading the mangy beasts. Against their flanks were strapped bulging goatskin bags. One of the bags bulged open, and from it dropped a yellowish, opaque lump of matter. Risking a vicious kick from the camel, Abdul scrambled for it, and showed it to his master.



blazing pyre, and disappeared in the rushed toward that smoke-screen.

"Frankincense," nodded Rodgers. "That caravan has come a long way, Abdul. From the Hadramaut, beyond Aden. I know the country well."

"There is no sweet smell," sniffed Abdul disappointedly, holding the lump of frankincense in his hands.

"The perfume comes only when it is burned," said Rodgers, idly eying the caravan, which had come to a halt outside an insignificant-looking house in the bazaar. Then he himself sniffed the air. "But some one *is* burning frankincense. I can smell it."

Abdul nodded.

"It is in the house of Afiz, the merchant of frankincense. That is where the caravan has halted, master. And see, the wisps of smoke behind the house."

Rodgers gazed in the direction indicated by the boy.

"A great deal of frankincense is being burnt," he nodded. "The merchant Afiz is reckless with his purchases. Frankincense is not cheap, though it is often burned as a lavish offering by Arabs to the honored dead."

"To the honored dead, master?" repeated Abdul.

BUT Rodgers had echoed the phrase in his own mind. A gleam came into those gray eyes almost hidden by the matted hair that covered his brows. Supposing some honored dead man was being cremated within the ashes of frankincense? Supposing that dead man was one who had fired upon Jalta Pasha?

He decided, quickly.

"Abdul, I am going into the house of Afiz, the merchant of frankincense."

"Yes, master."

"And if I do not come forth within the hour, you must run to the Captain Sanderson, and ask him to come with his men and seek me out. You understand?"

"I would rather go into the house with you, master. There may be danger."

Rodgers patted the boy affectionately.

"If there is danger, Abdul, it is for you to save me. Remember, when the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer, the hour of waiting is ended. It is for you to find the Captain Sanderson and bring him to that house."

Abdul sighed, and nodded.

"Allah be with you, master."

But the Red Wolf of Arabia was already along the street and nearing the unpretentious house. The camels had knelt in the offal and rubbish that lay outside. For a moment Rodgers hesitated. Then, seizing one of the goatskin bags of frankincense, he shouldered it and marched boldly into the house.

HE followed his nose. The sickly, sweetish burning smell pervaded the whole house. He went along a dark, narrow passage and boldly emerged with his goatskin bag into a high-walled area which lay at the back of the house.

A crowd of Arabs blocked his way. Their backs were toward him, and their heads were bent in reverential attitudes. A strange quietude was upon this assembly. In the hush into which he had staggered, Rodgers could hear the crackling of something burning.

He insinuated his way into the crowd. Arab faces glanced at him with lowered eyes. Some twitched their flowing garments away from this disreputable beggar who so presumed to mix with them at what was a religious rite. Rodgers had left the goatskin bag on the outskirts of the crowd. He was eager to see what lay beyond.

At last he emerged into the front rank of Arabs. Clouds of smoke made his eyes smart. The overwhelming sweetness of the burning frankincense made him feel sick. But as a breath of wind wafted the smoke away, the sight that met his eyes was even more shocking.

On a huge glowing pile of burning frankincense lay the body of an Arab. There was blood upon the brown skin, now being charred by the burning pile. Rogers saw at a glance that this was the member of the murder-club who had been shot by Jalta Pasha's bodyguard. And the men who genuflected and murmured before the cremating body were members of that Bagdad murder-club who had sworn to kill the King.

"He was a martyr to the great cause," wailed a voice from the smoke. "He died that Arabs might be free and join in the great holy war that will sweep the cursed whites from this land of ours. Praise him, brothers. His soul is now with the one and only Prophet, and dwells in Paradise."

"Aiee—aiee!" wailed some of the group.

"Allah is great. Blessed be the name of Allah and his Prophet Mahomet!" cried others.

The master of the ceremonies emerged from the smoke. Rodgers expected to see a gaunt fanatic. Instead, there came forth a fat, richly garbed Arab. Tears trickled down his fat cheeks, although it

seemed that the tears were caused by smoke rather than deep sorrow. He was the merchant of frankincense, Afiz.

At the moment he seemed drunk with his own eloquence and the overwhelming sweetness of the atmosphere.

"We shall avenge our brother who has been slaughtered," he went on. "Jalta Pasha is dead. We killed him like a dog. His soul has gone to damnation. But he is only the first to be killed, brothers. The next on our list is the King himself. I call for volunteers, men who are prepared to die like our comrade, for the cause in which death leads straight to Paradise."

There were shouts of approval. Arabs stepped forward eagerly. Among them was Rodgers. He was determined to learn the innermost secrets of this murder-club, and the details of the plot to kill the King.

Wiping his eyes with his fat brown fingers, Afiz surveyed his group of volunteers. They ranged themselves in a line. Slowly the merchant of frankincense passed along, touching those with his finger whom he judged worthy of the great plot.

He came to the disguised Rodgers. This most wretched of all who stood before him attracted his notice.

"Who are you?" he demanded, eying the beggar with contempt.

"One who, by Allah, is proud to kill," said Red Rodgers.

Afiz smiled.

"You who believe in the killing do not seem able to keep yourself alive," he said. "On this occasion, we shall not need your help, brother."

"It is as Allah wills," muttered Paul Rodgers humbly.

AFIZ passed on. Then he stopped. He turned and came toward the beggar again. His shrewd eyes had become slits in his fat face.

"One moment, creature of the offal," he said slowly. "My eyes have not seen you before. By Allah, I am certain that you are not one of us."

Rodgers realized that all in that crowd were eying him. He cringed humbly, but spoke smoothly.

"I have killed many men, O mighty Afiz. If I have not yet taken the oath to the brotherhood, I am ready to do so, now. And by Allah I will prove myself a man among men."

The smile on the fat face of Afiz widened.

"So! You speak bravely for one who would know the secrets of this powerful and mighty brotherhood. Come, my friend, I would put you to the test."

His pudgy fingers clutched Rodgers' arm. He nodded slightly to another Arab, who took his place by the other arm. The Intelligence officer found himself being urged toward that glistening, glowing pile of frankincense and its charred body now half consumed. The heat was almost blinding.

"It is our practice to test those who would join our brotherhood," purred Afiz. "We even demand that those who would fight for us be prepared to die for us." The voice of the merchant rose to a scream. "We thank Allah for delivering police spies to us. They, most assuredly, shall die."

Rodgers realized that they were about to fling him upon that blazing heap of frankincense. The arms that were holding him urged him relentlessly forward. They knew him to be a spy, and would burn him alive with callous indifference. He straightened his back to struggle. The merciless grip tightened.

It was then Rodgers resorted to an old wrestling trick. He suddenly hooked his leg in those belonging to Afiz, and sent the pudgy merchant staggering toward the fire. There was a piercing scream. At the same moment, Rodgers brought his free hand round in a thwacking blow that caught the other Arab full on the jaw. The man crumpled to the ground with a grunt.

The crowd of Arabs behind lurched forward to seize the intruder. He did not hesitate, but took a flying leap toward that blazing funeral pyre, and disappeared in the smoke. Hands stretched out to rescue Afiz, who lay prone in the red embers. Other Arabs drew knives and rushed toward that smoke-screen.

EXCEPT for smoldering rags, Paul Rodgers had landed safely on the other side of the burning frankincense. In those few seconds of surprise, he was able to dash to the farther end of the walled area. He saw before him an unclimbable wall. But there was also a shed let into the wall, which promised a hiding-place. He dived into it.

The pursuing Arabs had already glimpsed him. With yells, they raced toward him. But Rodgers had blundered upon a strange discovery. This shed served as a garage to the merchant of frankincense. And the whole of the

dark interior was taken up with a sedan type of motor car.

One swift glance decided the Intelligence officer. He opened the door of the sedan and leaped into the back seat. Then he calmly closed the door and waited for the onrush of Arabs.

Three powerful men with naked knives leaped forward. The next moment there was a crash of rifle-fire from the sedan. The three Arabs pitched dead to the ground. They had been mown down by the same merciless machine-gun used against Jalta Pasha.

The other Arabs hesitated. Then some one ran into the house and came forth with rifles. These were handed round. Rodgers realized that they would pour a hail of lead into the car, and that within the next five minutes he would be as dead as the poor devil who lay on the heap of burning frankincense.

He discovered the British army rifle at the back of the car. It was fully loaded, and a belt of cartridges lay handy. He determined to fight it out to the end. He nestled his cheek against the rifle, sighted on one Arab who seemed to have become the leading spirit in this battle, and fired. The Arab crumpled to the ground.

"This won't last long, but it will be exciting," decided Rodgers to himself. He sighted at another sharpshooter, and shot the man cleanly through the head.

It was murder among the murder-club. In a few seconds the Arabs opened fire. Bullets began to thwack against the steel sides of the car. Glass was shattered. Rodgers winced as a bullet grazed his arm.

He continued firing with deliberation and without undue haste. He realized that time and numbers were against him. Only now was the sun setting. The muezzin would be climbing to the tower of the mosque to call the faithful to prayer, and Abdul would obediently set forth in search of Sanderson.

NINE Arabs now lay prone in that yard. The others were closing in upon the desperate fighter in the sedan.

Rodgers brought forth the automatic gun again. He knew that there would be a final rush, and then all would be over. The sickening smell of frankincense was in his nostrils. He hated to die in that funereal atmosphere. . . .

The Arabs were creeping forward for the final rush. It was then there came a burst of firing from the house itself. The Arabs turned in astonishment. The next moment khaki-clad figures were entering the area and deploying in military fashion. Some one was bellowing through a megaphone in Arabic:

"Throw down your rifles and surrender, or you'll all be blown to hell!"

The voice was that of Captain Sanderson. Rodgers heaved a sigh of relief. But his gaze did not leave the Arabs.

One of them gave a fatalistic shrug and dropped his rifle. Two others followed. In a few moments they all stood disarmed. And Captain Sanderson himself, preceded by an anxious, trotting Abdul, entered upon the battlefield.

WITH the automatic rifle beneath his arm, Red Rodgers came forth to meet them. At sight of him, Abdul gave a loud shout of delight and sped toward him. Rodgers gripped him warmly by the hand. The boy was laughing and crying in turn.

"Abdul, you've saved my life. Bless the instinct that caused you to run along and tell the Captain Sanderson immediately I entered this house."

"But master," sobbed the boy, "I did not disobey you. I stayed, waiting for the muezzin, as you commanded."

"Then who brought the soldiers?" asked Rodgers in astonishment.

Abdul had tears of contrition in his eyes.

"It was the white lady, whom we brought across the desert to Bagdad," he explained. "She passed toward the bazaar just as you entered the house of Afiz. She recognized me, and asked where you had gone. Master, I had to tell her. As soon as I had told my story, she turned and went back to the town. Then I saw the Captain Sanderson come with his soldiers, and I led them to the house."

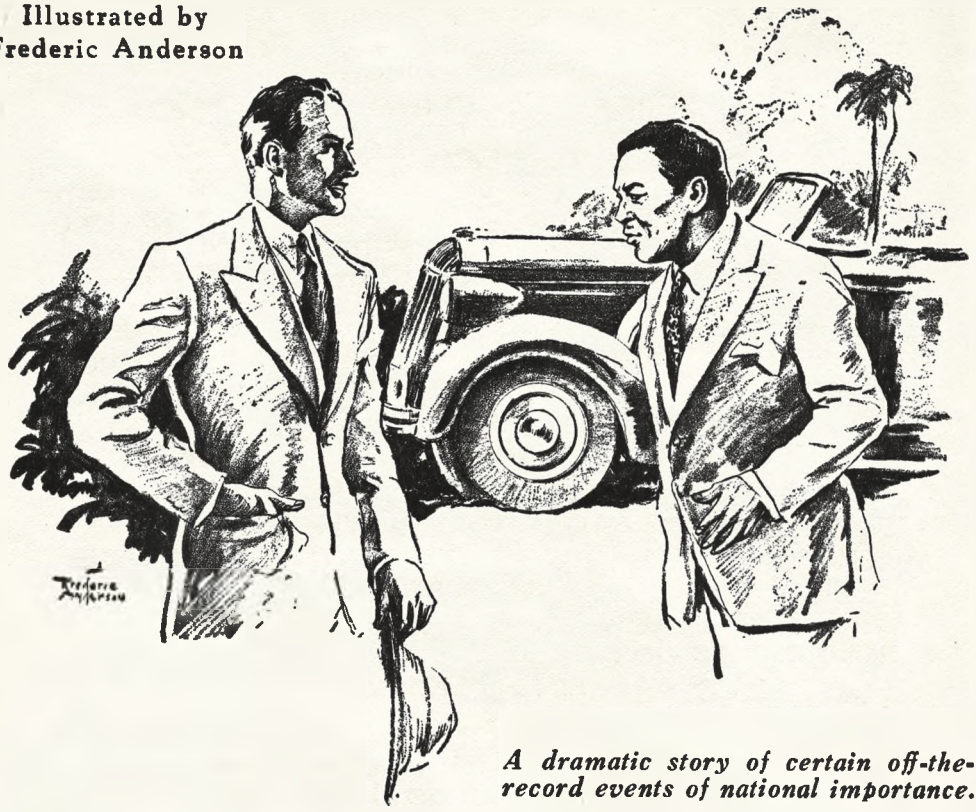
Rodgers was silent. So he owed his life to Laura Wilton! What possessed that strange woman to enter upon his adventures? Why should she bother herself with him, when she had so pointedly shown her indifference to him? A feminine mystery. He shook himself out of a dream as Captain Sanderson with outstretched hand came to meet him.

"Glad we arrived in time, Rodgers," he said. "If it hadn't been for Mrs. Wilton—"

"I know," said Rodgers with a touch of bitterness. "I think I had better come along with you and report for service."

Another colorful story by William Makin will appear in an early issue.

Illustrated by
Frederic Anderson



A dramatic story of certain off-the-record events of national importance.

Caribbean Crisis

By ROBERT R. MILL

HAITI! Riotous beauty and unbelievable squalor. Fiendish cruelty and kindly simplicity. Unholy superstition and smart sophistication. Abysmal ignorance and cosmopolitan learning. Paradise and pest-hole. Every man must write Haiti's ticket for himself, and what he writes depends entirely upon what he brought to Haiti. . . .

Mr. Yoshi, bland and polite as the Orient itself, and very much the business man, brought the Success Trading Company to Jacmel: tin-covered buildings, shaded by palms, nestling on the shore of the Caribbean; huge storage-tanks, obviously for oil and gasoline; large bunkers, well stocked with coal. Dredges that deepened a channel which enabled large ships to approach substantial piers; surrounding marshes that had been drained, filled in and graded,—this was for malaria control,—so that now they needed only markers and control-towers to constitute excellent aviation-fields.

Mr. Yoshi was pleased with his work. So too were his superiors, who were many thousands of miles from Haiti. Even before Mr. Yoshi had begun his task, they bent over a map of that section of the world, drew a line from Jacmel to the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal, measured the line and worked out that distance in their equivalent of miles. They rechecked that measurement when Mr. Yoshi's data was received, and the result was highly gratifying.

At a later date, the same data, somewhat less complete, was received in a rather unimposing building not far from the State Department in Washington, where certain men consulted maps and drew the same line that had been drawn

by other men on another side of the world. Their data was not received from Mr. Yoshi, but came from an alert member of the United States Legation in Port-au-Prince, who had visited Jacmel on quite another matter. The men who received it, unlike their fellow-workers, were not pleased with Mr. Yoshi or his accomplishments.

They had been expecting this, or something like it. Impartially weighing the work of fellow-craftsmen, they admitted that Haiti was the logical choice for this sort of thing, and not alone from the standpoint of geography. Smaller and uninhabited islands might offer greater temporary safety; but when the news got about,—and it would,—the presence of a concern of this size and type would lack the plausible explanation for its presence. Larger or more favorably located sites all had greater drawbacks.

The same discernment had prompted Mr. Yoshi to choose Jacmel. Its size spared him from the curiosity and attention a like venture would draw in Port-au-Prince, or one of the larger-sized ports. Jacmel, however, was large enough to warrant an establishment of this type, providing its owner was an optimist; and Haitian officials, who are among the world's leading optimists, would welcome foreign capital controlled by a fellow-believer.

That was why Gordon Helm, young, handsome in white linen, and very much the tourist, stood in the hot afternoon sun of Haiti, looking down on the Caribbean and the Success Trading Company, and doing just what a tourist might be expected to do.

His linen suit was white and spotless. His sun-helmet was new, and so heavy that the protection it afforded from the sun was more than offset by its weight and heat. His camera was in the original factory package, and he made frequent use of an exposure-meter as he squinted at a cloud-formation.

He neither sought attention nor avoided it. All in all, it was a performance so obvious, so exaggerated, that it was convincing. Only a tourist, new to a strange country, would stage it; for almost anyone merely playing the part would have toned it down somewhat, fearful of entering the realm of burlesque.

HELM hoped it was a good show, even though discounting the chance that it, or any other like performance, would fool Mr. Yoshi. Men in his line of business expected trouble. They developed an extra sense in detecting it; and in Haiti any man with a skin neither black nor brown was conspicuous. That was why Helm was registered at the Caribbean Hotel, where Mr. Yoshi was the only other guest. There are times when the obvious remains hidden longer than the carefully concealed.

THIS game, and many others like it, with outcomes that directly affect the fates of millions in two nations, work their way toward conclusion as a struggle between two men, working strictly as private citizens. Both men are in a foreign land, bound to obey the laws of that country, or take the consequences, and powerless to appeal to that country for official aid. Success means a notation in a report. Failure means oblivion. And exposure brings a public hand-washing on the part of the government served. It is a heady business, and at times a terrifying one.

Helm's expression of wonder remained unchanged as he apparently took a picture of a stand of palm trees, and thereby obtained a photograph of the piers and the storage-tanks. He noted a large car parked outside what appeared to be an office building. Sooner or later he would have to meet Mr. Yoshi. Better make that meeting open and obvious. The car would be useful.

The American seated himself beneath a palm and mopped his forehead. Filing past him was a constant procession of Haitian peasants, mostly women, bound to market, with heavy burdens balanced on their heads. Helm had a pleasant greeting for each peasant—in English, of which they understood not a word. A few, who sensed from his tongue that this was a salutation, responded politely in "Creole." Helm beamed upon them.

This pleasantry continued for a good half-hour, until a black chauffeur took his place behind the wheel of the car, keeping a watchful eye on the door of the office. When a man walked through that doorway and headed for the car, Helm apparently decided he was sufficiently rested, and stood up. He made his way toward the city. His heart pumped a little faster as he realized this was the first test. If he passed it successfully, it would mean precious hours of work before the enemy was on guard, and also working.

Helm walked along in open-eyed wonder, drinking in the sights, sounds and

Congo Pellé surveyed his work with satisfaction. The figure carved in wax was the image of a white man; the face was not unlike that of Gordon Helm.

smells. He used the sidewalk, while the passing Haitians, ranging in tints from coffee-and-cream to blue-black, and wise in the ways of Haiti, used the street. He repeated to himself a Creole proverb that Haiti applies to roads and sidewalks:

"Bon Dieu, gâté li; bon Dieu, parí li!"

—which means, "God spoiled them; God will mend them."

The Haitian faith in this proverb was demonstrated when Helm encountered a section that looked like solid walk, and found himself ankle-deep in muck of doubtful origin, much to the detriment of his white attire, and much to the amusement of the surrounding Haitians.

"Oh-oh!" cried a black girl, who was selling lengths of sugar-cane. *"Chique pas jaimain respecté piè grand mouché!"*

—which might mean: "Jiggers never respect the feet of the gentry."

Amid the resulting laugh, Mr. Helm made rather ineffectual efforts to rescue himself, thereby sinking deeper. The

Madame's nostrils quivered with rage; all her racial pride was affronted. More poppycock about Haitians eating babies!

crowd remained neutral. There was no ridicule; neither was there any assistance. Helm floundered on.

This state of affairs continued until the automobile, which had been approaching, drew abreast of the American. The occupant of the rear seat spoke to the driver in Creole, and when the car halted, stepped out and bowed to Helm.

"Pleese. I help."

The American looked up and saw a little yellow man. His expression was bland, but his narrow eyes twinkled with poorly concealed amusement. His linen suit was clean, but worn.

Helm bowed, as well as it is possible to bow while standing in muck.

"You are most kind. I am on my way to the Caribbean Hotel." He repeated the name of the hotel, raising his voice, as one will sometimes do when conversing with a person unfamiliar with his language.

The smaller man bowed again, and drew in his breath noisily.

"Calibbean Hotel. I lif. You come. Pleese."

He opened the door, and Helm climbed in. The crowd dispersed as they drove away.

"My name is Helm," said the American.

Again the Oriental bowed. "Meester Yoshi. Pleese."

There were more bows, and then the car entered the grounds of the hotel, and the session ended.

Architecturally, the Caribbean Hotel was not an imposing structure, but nature more than made up for the deficiencies of man. Graceful palms shielded the building. Riotous bougainvillea covered the archways. The cool green fronds of banana trees framed the entranceway. And off in the distance was the Caribbean, a blue jewel of a sea.

They entered the building, and separated as they went to their rooms. Helm locked the door, threw off some clothes, and stretched out on the bed beneath the netting. The bewildered expression was gone from his face. He was stripped to the waist, and his arms were lean, muscular and capable-looking.

He smiled at the thought that the stage was almost set. Only one thing was lacking:

There was a Haitian boy, who was to be known as Leon. He had another name, a proud name in Haiti. Here, however, he would be Leon, a simple peasant. Somehow—this must be done openly and plausibly—he must glide into the picture. Then the game would go on.

Helm whistled softly as he pushed the mosquito-netting aside and began to dress for dinner.

Three doors away, Mr. Yoshi was engaged in the same task, and his yellow face wore a worried frown. Mr. Yoshi had expected a visit. He had made elaborate plans to learn of it. The fact that the visit was made openly puzzled him, but only for a moment. That was clever. Mr. Yoshi admired cleverness. His lips moved as he soundlessly repeated a proverb to the effect that when mere man is baffled, it is well to consult the gods.

Mr. Yoshi decided to do just that—but not his own gods, and certainly not the Christian Gods. This was Haiti, where even the Blessed Virgin shares Her place of honor on the wall of almost every peasant hut with Damballa, the snake-god. Mr. Yoshi would go to headquarters. Even now the drums from the distant hills were beginning to boom out their nightly tribute to Damballa.

THEY dined on the open porch at separate tables, with Madame the proprietress flitting between them impartially, using Creole to order the boys about, addressing Helm in English, and conversing with Mr. Yoshi in Parisian French. Madame was in top form. Jacmel was about to achieve its place in the sun, thereby justifying her sagacity in choosing it in preference to Port-au-Prince. . . . Clear turtle soup, well laced with sherry, gave way to red snapper baked with white wine, as Madame pointed out

that industry, represented by Mr. Yoshi, and the tourist trade, personified by Mr. Helm, had indeed found Jacmel.

Mr. Yoshi bowed.

There was a roast duck, which would have been the making of any number of places in New York; and after it had been followed by a salad and a cooling ice, Helm was aware that a man standing in the shadows just off the porch was trying to attract his attention.

"Please, I would see you, Mister."

"Yes. What's that?"

Helm walked to the end of the porch, and was confronted by a Haitian peasant in his late teens, or early twenties.

"Who are you?" the American demanded.

"I am your boy, Mister."

"My boy? Who hired you?"

"I see you get off boat, Mister. I think I work for you."

Helm appeared to be doubtful. "How much am I paying you?"

"What you say, Mister."

Still Helm wavered, and Madame stepped into the breach. This was local color, unsolicited, but valuable; and Madame recognized its value.

"They are like that, the peasants, Mr. Helm. They employ you. You will need a boy if you go about. You speak French, boy? And how good is your English?"

"I speak English, French, Creole and Spanish, madame." He turned to Helm. "And I have a car. You go for ride now, Mister? I take you nice cool ride."

Helm shrugged. "Why not?"

He saw Madame beam her approval; shot a quick glance at Mr. Yoshi, and noted that his yellow face was impassive. The final prop was in place. The play would go on.

WHEN they were half a mile from the hotel, the Haitian spoke:

"We can talk now, Mr. Helm." His English was perfect.

Helm smiled. "This is your country. What do you suggest?"

The Haitian halted the car in the shadows along the side of the road.

"The peasants have a proverb to the effect that one must work with the tools at hand." He paused. "This is Haiti, Mr. Helm."

Helm glanced up at the sky, a backdrop of black velvet, studded with stars so large they appeared to be within reach. Just at the moment, the quiet was almost oppressive. Then the muffled beat of the voodoo drums came from the neighboring hills. . . .

Mr. Yoshi was very pleased with himself the following afternoon when he returned to his office after a visit in the hills. The journey had been hot and tiresome, but worth while. It had been costly, but the article purchased was worth the expense. Mr. Yoshi's part in the game was as good as ended. He was dealing with an American, and so he tried to think in the language of that person. He had just hired somebody to transact his share of the business. It had been a wise and happy choice. Mr. Yoshi came as near to smiling as he ever did, as he recalled that in the United States they called that executive ability. . . .

It was the next morning when Helm and Leon departed for Cape Haitien, and the Citadel, the Mecca of all visitors in Haiti. Madame's sorrow at their departure was tempered by the knowledge that they would return, and also by the fact that Helm had held his room, giving as his excuse that he did not care to remove all his baggage. They departed amid the good wishes of all concerned, including Mr. Yoshi, who went so far as to bow and wish Mr. Helm a pleasant journey and a safe return.

CONGO PELLÉ sat in a *houmfort,* or voodoo temple, in the hills above Jacmel, engaged in carving a crude figure in wax. The figure was the image of a white man. The face, when completed, was not unlike that of Gordon Helm.

Congo surveyed his work with satisfaction. He paused to mutter a few words of praise to Damballa, whose image occupied an altar shared by pictures representing the Christian faith. For in Haiti, the peasants are descendants of tribes in Africa which always embraced the faith of their captors, but also retained their own faith. It has been said that the best place to find all the voodoo *papaloi,* or voodoo priests, is at early mass. Congo always attended, and he was the leading *papoli* in the Jacmel section.

Voodoo is more than a faith; it is a business. It had brought Congo the three houses surrounding the *houmfort,* in each of which lived a favored wife, and each of these wives belonged to Congo. He also owned the sugar mill near by, powered by a crude treadmill, which was set in motion by three horses. The same unholy religion solved his labor problems; for peasants, fearing his power,

worked for less than even the starvation wages of Haiti.

The wax image, however, was a special commission. The fee paid by the generous Mr. Yoshi had been large enough to cause Congo to accept it without the usual bargaining that delights the heart of the Haitian peasant. Furthermore, the original of the image was a white man. When this became known,—as it would become known, in the right quarters,—Congo's reputation would gain accordingly.

For when that image was completed, the drums would sound. Faithful followers would answer the call. First paying proper homage to Damballa, Congo would drive a spike into the wax image. That ceremony would be repeated every night. Before the tenth spike was driven into place, the original of the image, even though he be miles away, would be dead.

This has happened in Haiti since the time of the French Revolution. It is happening today. White men scoff at it; but the wise man, if he knows his image has been carved in wax, flees from Haiti.

Black magic? Not exactly. In addition to the ceremonies with the image and the spikes, the crafty *papoli* makes certain arrangements which are not conducted in public for the benefit of his followers. There are poisons in Haiti not known to the white man's world of science. The *papaloi* know them well.

Congo had complete faith in the image. He knew it couldn't fail. Mr. Yoshi had absolute faith in Congo. This unwelcome visitor was as good as eliminated. True, after him there would be other visitors. But when you have dedicated your life to the service of your country, you worry about only one thing at a time.

MADAME stood in the kitchen, arms akimbo, and concentrated on the problem at hand. There was no trace of the superficial suavity that marked her dealings with her guests. Madame was dealing with a peasant; and she was an adaptable lady, capable of meeting almost any situation. Most of the upper class affect ignorance of the Creole patois, but Madame spoke it with the fluency of a market-woman.

"Claircine, for five years you have been with me. Now you say that you must go. Why?"

A great mountain of a black woman stood before the stove, facing Madame in defiance, shame and fear.

"My—my husband is sick."

"Oh-oh!" Madame used the stock expression of Haiti, which can express any emotion, to register derision and disbelief. "Your man is sick. Which man? And since when has any man meant enough to you to cause you to walk out on a good job?"

"My husband is sick," Claircine repeated stubbornly. She commenced a rambling and lengthy explanation.

"Mange chien!" Madame halted it with a Creole insult. *"Bouche li pas gagné dimanche."* She followed it with a proverb, which means: "Your mouth has no day of rest."

Claircine gathered up her few belongings and fled.

Madame stood in the kitchen, taking stock. This was no puzzle to her. She dismissed it all with one word:

"Voodun!"

She, in common with most educated Haitians, had as much use for voodoo, as such, as the average American woman has for the workings of Father Divine. Unlike the American woman, however, the Haitian woman has practical knowledge of voodoo; for voodoo, in Haiti, knows no limits.

THE sensible thing to do, Madame reflected, would be to discharge all the servants; for the *wanga,* or voodoo charm, that was circulating would not affect Claircine alone. But that would mean trouble and work. The replacing of one good cook was problem enough.

That problem appeared to solve itself, however, for almost immediately there appeared at the door a black woman, eager for work, crying her virtues, and calling off the names of the American, French and German families she had worked for.

"What is your name?"

"Roséide, madame." The recital of virtues continued.

Madame shrugged. *"Gé ouâit, bouche pé."* Literally translated, this means, "The eyes see, the mouth speaks." And like most Creole proverbs, it might mean almost anything.

But Madame was mollified. This was good. Mr. Helm had returned from the Cape, after an absence of nine days. Mr. Yoshi, also, would be home for dinner in a few hours. There would be dinner for them. Madame gave thanks. . . .

Mr. Yoshi, returning to the Caribbean Hotel after a more or less hard day at the office, rode with his chauffeur to the garage in the rear. As he passed the

kitchen on the way to his room, he noted the presence of the new cook. He stifled the impulse to smile. Congo Pellé and his magic were at work. It was high time. Tonight the ninth spike would be driven into the wax image.

Mr. Yoshi, as he dressed for dinner, toyed with the thought that it might be well to dine out. Presumably the cook knew her business. The fact that Congo had selected her was a guarantee of that. Mr. Yoshi trusted Congo, but had little faith in the average Haitian peasant.

He put the impulse aside, deciding it might cause comment in the event of what was about to happen. He would dine here. This was just one of the risks of his calling. . . .

Gordon Helm had been swimming, and it was late when he returned to his room to dress for dinner. The room had been prepared for the night, with the bed-covers turned down and the netting lowered into place over the bed. The Haitian boy called Leon, who acted as his personal servant, extended his hand as Helm entered the room.

Helm leaned over and peered at two ordinary match-sticks, which had been bound together with a bit of hide. Also attached to the matches was a tiny muslin sack. The Haitian tore it open. A stream of yellow cornmeal poured out.

"*Wanga,*" said Helm quietly. "Where did you find it?"

"Under your pillow."

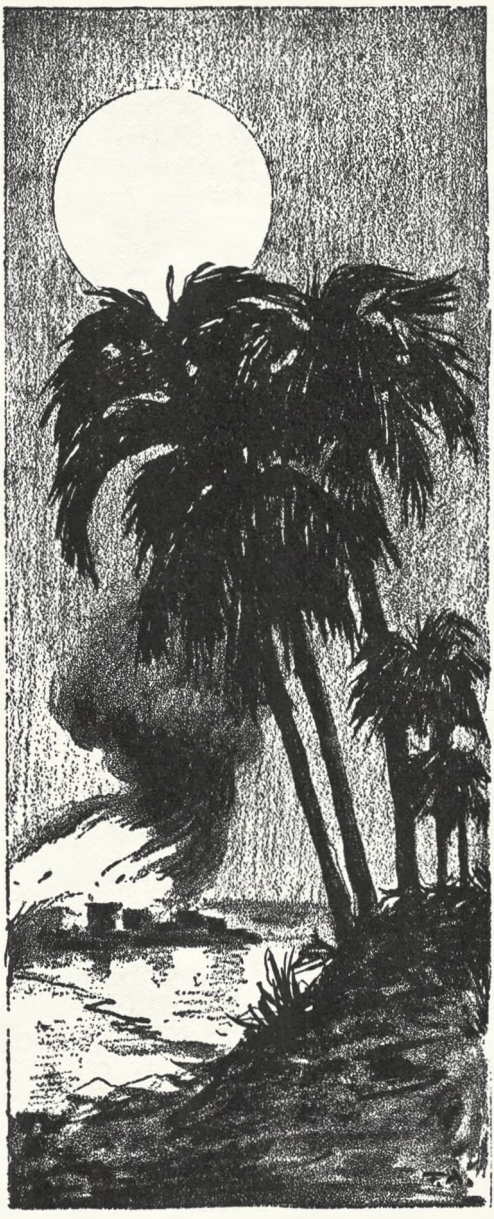
"Have any idea what this particular *wanga* means?"

Leon smiled. "Perhaps it is intended to make you tip liberally." Then his smile faded. "Perhaps not." A note of anxiety crept into his voice. "They have a new cook."

Helm paused in adjusting his tie.

"We'd better make it tonight, Leon." His face was grim. "We'd better make it just as quick as we possibly can."

The Haitian nodded.



The roar of burning oil blended with the savage cries of the mob.

IN the kitchen Roséide bustled about in a capable manner. Her sharp tongue took toll from Floréal Apollon, the boy who would serve the dinner.

Roséide was in a state of deadly fear. She was a simple peasant, only a few generations removed from the savage jungles of Africa, and her life had been passed in sections of Haiti almost as primitive as the land of her forebears. She dreaded what she had been ordered to do. But she also feared Congo Pellé; and the fear of the *papoli* outweighed the other terror. Roséide had only one thought: to do her work, to do it well, and to get away from this place just as fast as she could. Her hand strayed to a patch on her dress, the outward sign of a penance ordered by Congo. Beneath that patch—she could feel it with her fingers—was a package. . . .

Helm bowed to Madame as he took his place at a table a short distance from where Mr. Yoshi was sitting. He turned and bowed to the yellow man. Mr. Yoshi smiled and bowed.

The dinner started, with Floréal serving. Mr. Yoshi accepted a fruit-cup. A duplicate was placed before Helm. Madame, switching her language to suit the person addressed, discoursed upon the weather.

Outwardly, it was a conventional and peaceful scene, such as could have been duplicated a score of places in Haiti. The welcome cool of night had settled over the parched earth. The tropical evening was flawless. The only jarring note was the weird cry of a screech-owl from a tree on the grounds. Then a dog barked. A chicken cackled shrilly. A parrakeet muttered a throaty protest. The drums up in the hills reached a crescendo. Then all was quiet again.

Floréal removed the glass dishes that had held the fruit, and started for the kitchen. From the second floor came the sound of a commotion, and words of Creole spoke by a thick tongue. Madame wheeled about, listened intently, and then headed for the trouble. . . .

Roséide indicated a plate of soup on the kitchen table.

"That is for the yellow man," she said.

Floréal nodded, and departed.

MADAME, as she reached the second floor on the run, was confronted by Leon, apparently very drunk, and apparently very much confused.

"What is this?" she demanded.

Leon hesitated. The door of Mr. Yoshi's room was open.

"You have been in there," she charged.

Leon made no answer. His confusion was enough. Madame sailed into the room, obviously to see what had been disturbed, and to put things to rights before the return of Mr. Yoshi. Leon ran down the stairs.

Floréal was back in the kitchen. A second plate of soup was on the table. The package no longer reposed beneath the patch on Roséide's dress.

"That is for the white," she said.

"Oakey-doke," said Floréal, who had profited from his association with American tourists.

Madame stood just inside Mr. Yoshi's room, and snapped on the light. The desk, which was in sad disarray, caught her attention at once. She walked toward it. On the top of the litter was a typewritten letter. No harm to take a look at it, she decided.

The letter bore the name of an American magazine, and it was addressed to Mr. Yoshi.

"While we cannot give you a definite order," Madame read, "we shall be pleased to look over the material you described. If, as you claim, the photographs actually were taken at the scene of a genuine voodoo sacrifice, we shall be glad to make use of them. This, however, should not be construed as a definite order."

Madame stood erect, her nostrils quivering with rage. All her national and racial pride was affronted. More poppycock about Haitians eating babies! More misleading stuff, giving the impression all Haitians, regardless of class, were snake-worshipers. Just the sort of thing that made Haiti the laughingstock of the world, and kept tourists away.

Madame threw the letter aside. Beneath it were a number of enlarged photographs. A girl, nude to the waist, knelt before a voodoo altar. Beside her stood a goat, with lighted candles on its horns. Before the girl, a machete held in his upraised hand, stood a *papoli*.

Madame flounced from the room, muttering a stream of oaths in French, Creole and English. She knew how to deal with this. Here was a case for her good friend Captain Guerrier François, of the Garde d' Haiti.

Mr. Yoshi politely waited until Helm was served before noisily attacking his soup. Helm filled his spoon, paused in amusement, and was about to move the spoon to his mouth when there was an interruption.

Leon stood beside him. Now there was no sign he had been drinking. He said: "Please, Mister. . . . The telephone, please."

Helm followed him through the archway, pausing to bow his apologies to Mr. Yoshi. As they passed along the hall, they had a glimpse of Madame's back. She was at the telephone. They heard her scream a command to the operator that she be connected with the gendarmes. The two men smiled as they made their way to the rear, entered Leon's car, and drove away.

THE car came to a halt before the Success Trading Company, and Helm leaped to the ground. The two men shook hands.

"Good luck!" said the American.

"Thank you. Same to you."

The car moved on, heading toward the poorer section of the city. . . .

Helm sat in the shadows of a palm tree near the gasoline tanks, which stood

out in bold relief in the moonlight. His heart was racing, but there was no visible sign of his excitement. This was the climax of the game. There must be split-second timing. He glanced toward the city.

POSSIBLY thirty minutes—though it seemed like hours—had ticked away, when Helm rose. From the city came a confused roar, and the sound of running feet. Helm reached in his pocket, produced oil-soaked rags and matches, and placed the rags near the outlet of an oil-tank, where leaks formed dark pools.

The approaching mob was nearer now, and he could hear the shouts in Creole. Their gods had been desecrated. More than a hundred black peasants howled their rage. Just as they charged through the gates, Helm applied the match to the rags. Then he stepped back into the shadows.

At the head of the mob was Leon, roaring out accusations and urging the peasants on. And they needed little urging. Years had rolled away; now they were swayed by passions as primitive as those which had governed their savage ancestors in the bloody years of Haiti's struggle for freedom. They moved along like a destroying wave, sweeping all before them. It was a mob such as this that a Haitian leader in years past had turned loose in Port-au-Prince with the ironical admonition:

"Mes enfans, pillez en bon ordre!" ("My children, loot in good order.")

Here, however, looting was not the main object—only blind destruction. A spurt of flame came from the tank where Helm had applied the match. That was a suggestion and a signal. Similar flares came to life in various sections of the plant. The roar of burning oil, and the crackling of burning wood, blended with the savage cries of the mob.

Helm, keeping in the shadows, made his way toward the city. Soon he came upon Leon's car, parked along the road. He climbed in the rear, and threw himself flat upon the floor. This would not be a healthy neighborhood for a man with a white skin.

Stretched out on the dirty floorboards, he reviewed it all. Mr. Yoshi, by this time would be sputtering his innocence to police officers who acted upon the often convenient premise that all accused persons are guilty. But there would be Madame's testimony, and that would outweigh the word of any mere foreigner. Mr. Yoshi, despite anything his government could do, was headed for speedy deportation.

The Success Trading Company was gone. There would be what might jokingly be called an investigation. But the result was obvious: mob violence! There would be no arrests. In a so-called black republic, which in reality consists of a horde of black men ruled by a handful of mulattoes, those mulattoes, being clever men, would not tamper overmuch with a religion that truly is, and always has been, the opium of the black masses.

So the game was over. A few men in a building in Washington would sigh with relief. A few men, thousands of miles away, would regret this failure of a patriotic adventurer who was, however, wholly without official sanction. But after all, they were preoccupied with more vital matters far nearer home.

HELM sat up as he heard the sound of running feet. Then Leon appeared beside the car. He was smiling.

"Take the car, and head for Port-au-Prince," he directed. "You can make it by morning. There is a plane out at noon. I will stay here to take care of loose ends."

The tropical moon shone on the faces of the two, one white, the other black.

The American spoke first:

"There is so much to say, but what are words? Tell your parents and your sister how much I enjoyed my stay at their home." He smiled. "Much nicer than Cape Haitien and the Citadel." The smile vanished before his sincerity. "Tell them how much I appreciate what they did for their country, and my country, when they posed for those pictures. And as for you—" His voice faltered.

The Haitian said simply:

"As for me, it was an honor. I was glad of the chance to show your country that not all of us are savages." His hands gripped the shoulders of the American in his intensity. "Most of the nations of the world have gone mad. The United States stays sane. Please God, I have done my part toward keeping Haiti sane also."

His mood changed, and white teeth flashed in his dark face.

"They will be coming back soon, and the police will be here. You must be off." The light of success was dancing in his eyes. "We did the best we could with the tools at hand."

TARZAN and the

By EDGAR RICE

The Story Thus Far:

ABOUT a year ago, it was, that a newspaper dispatch announced the success of the Wood and Van Eyk African Expedition in solving the mystery of the disappearance of Lord and Lady Mountford more than twenty years before, and of the rescue of their daughter Gonfala, queen of the warrior-women of Kaji.

The article also touched, lightly and rather skeptically, upon the reported size and value of the Gonfal, the great diamond of the Kaji, and the enormous emerald of the Zuli, which the expedition brought out of the Kaji country with them, only to have them stolen by Spike and Troll, the two white hunters who had accompanied the party. It closed by stating that Gonfala, Wood and Van Eyk had reached the African estate of Lord Greystoke in safety.

It did not remind us that Lord Greystoke is Tarzan of the Apes.

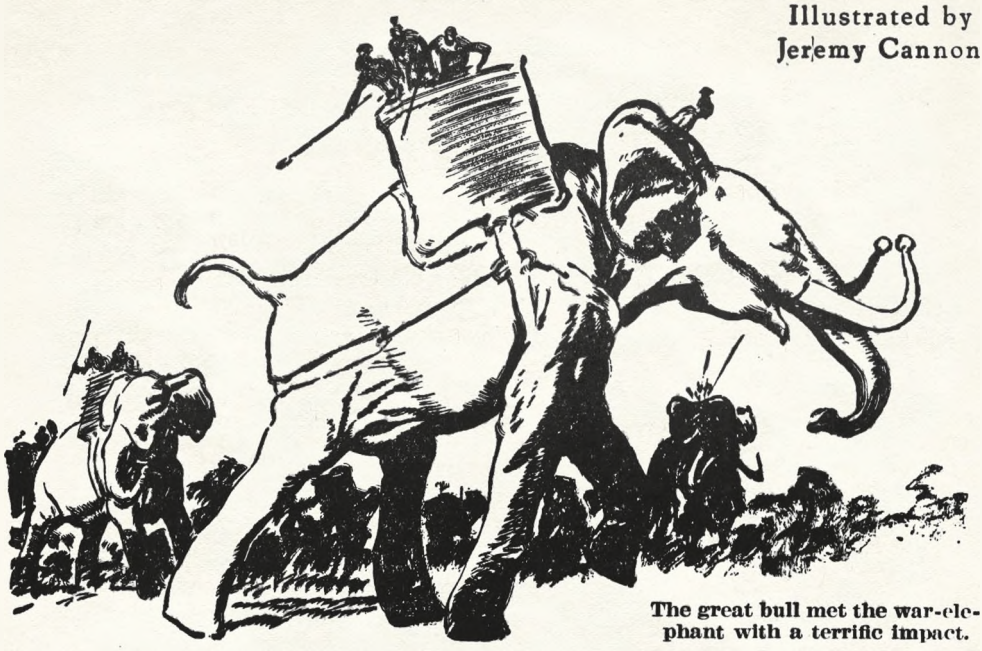
What Reuter's could not know, it remains for us to tell: the amazing aftermath of the theft of the two great stones, the combined value of which has been estimated at between twenty-five and thirty million dollars—in addition to which there is the inexplicable hypnotic power they confer upon their possessors.

For after the theft Spike and Troll contrived to abduct the girl Gonfala and carry her off in the hope that she could teach them to make use of those strange hypnotic powers exerted by the great gems. And then all three were made captive by the warrior Elephant Men.

Meanwhile Tarzan and Stanley Wood, working separately, ranged the jungle in an unremitting search for the trail of the missing girl.

Wood, who had dismissed his Waziri warrior guard, was upon his arrival at the city of Athne—capital of the Elephant Men—thrown into the slave-pen, where he found Spike and Troll, and learned that Gonfala was being held in the castle. Wood made friends with a deposed noble of a former régime, Valthor by name; and one day when the slaves were sent with the warriors to capture a wild elephant on a rampage, he was able to render great assistance to Valthor. Indeed, Wood's courage and daring attracted the attention of King Phoros, who summoned

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon



The great bull met the war-elephant with a terrific impact.

Elephant Men

BURROUGHS

him to the palace; but when his joyous surprise at meeting Gonfala betrayed the fact that they were lovers, the covetous Phoros had him bound and thrown, with the girl, into a locked room.

Here Tarzan—who had all but lost his life in Cathne, city of the Lion Men, and having heard rumors that Gonfala was being held in Athne, had alone braved the savage hunting lions to travel there—entered the palace by stealth and discovered the luckless lovers as Phoros was about to kill Wood and seize Gonfala for himself. Tarzan overcame Phoros and trussed him up just as the infuriated queen Menofra burst in, bleeding from a murderous slash by Phoros. Quickly she retreated and locked the door; then the imprisoned group heard her crying loudly for the guard.

"We seem to be nicely trapped," said Wood. *(The story continues in detail:)*

"BUT we have a hostage," Tarzan reminded him.

"What a horrible sight!" said Gonfala, shuddering and nodding in the direction of the corridor. "How do you suppose it happened?"

The ape-man jerked a thumb in the direction of Phoros. "He could tell you. I imagine that he's rather glad we were here with him."

"What a sweet couple!" said Wood. "But I imagine there are a lot of married couples who would like to do that to one another if they thought they could get away with it."

"What a terrible thing to say, Stanlee!" cried Gonfala. "Do you think that we would be like that?"

"Oh, we're different," Wood assured her; "these people are beasts."

"Not beasts," Tarzan corrected. "They are human beings, and they act like human beings."

"Here comes the guard," said Wood.

They could hear men approaching at a run along the corridor; they heard the warriors' exclamations when they saw Menofra's wound, and their excited questioning.

"There is a wild man in there," Menofra told them. "He has set the two prisoners free, and they have bound and gagged the King. They may kill him. I don't want them to; I want him for

myself. Go in and capture the strangers and bring the King to me."

Tarzan stood close to the door. "If you come in without my permission," he shouted, "I will kill the King."

"It looks as if you were on a spot, Phoros," said Wood, "no matter what happens. If Menofra gets you, she'll hand you plenty." But Phoros could make no reply, because of the gag.

The warriors and the Queen began arguing in the corridor.

TARZAN was puzzled. He told Wood as much.

"I knew an Athnean noble well," Tarzan said; "and through him I was led to believe that these people were rather noble and chivalrous, not at all like those I have seen here. There was a rumor in Cathne that there had been some change in government here; but the natural assumption was that another faction of the nobility had come into power. If these people are of the nobility, our friend Spike must be at least an archbishop."

"They are not of the nobility," said Wood. "They are from the lowest dregs of society. They overthrew the King and the nobility a few months ago. I guess they are pretty well ruining the country."

"That accounts for it," said Tarzan. "Then I suppose my friend Valthor can't be of much help to me."

"Valthor!" exclaimed Wood. "Do you know him? Why, say, he's the only friend I have here."

"Where is he? He'll help us," said Tarzan.

"Not where he is, he won't. He and I were fellow-slaves at the elephant-stables."

"Valthor a slave!"

"Yes, and lucky to be that," Wood assured him. "They killed off all the other members of the nobility they caught—except a few that joined 'em. The rest escaped into the mountains. Everyone liked Valthor so much that they didn't kill him."

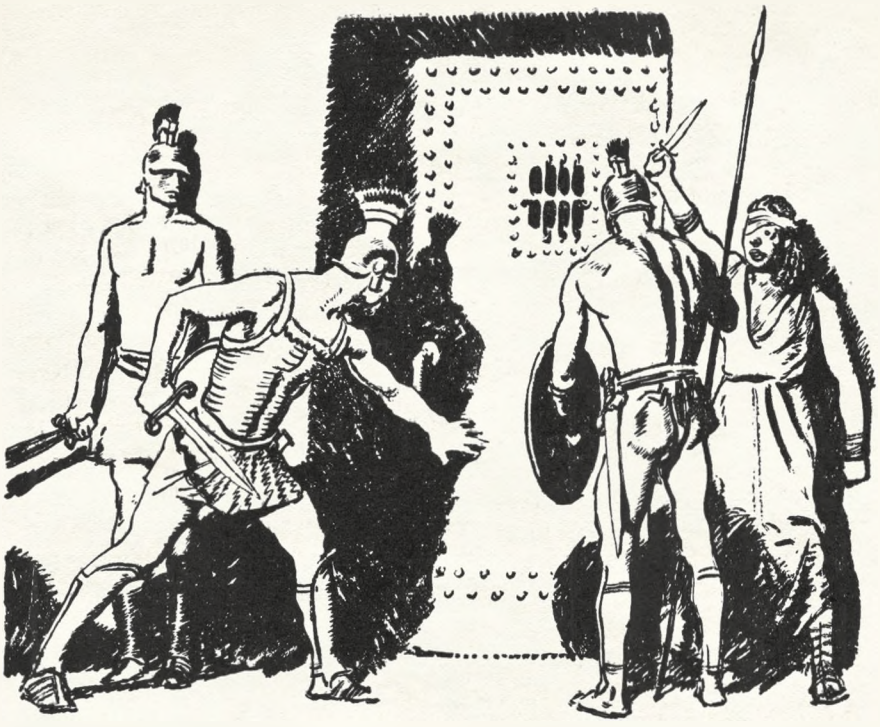
"It is a good thing that I didn't take any chances when I came here," remarked the ape-man. "They'd heard these rumors in Cathne; so I came in after dark to investigate before I tried to find Valthor, or made myself known."

There was a rap on the door. "What do you want?" asked Tarzan.

"Turn the King over to the Queen, and we won't harm you," said a voice.

Phoros commenced to wriggle and squirm on the floor, shaking his head vigorously.

Tarzan grinned.



"I tell you to go in and rescue the King," yelled Menofra. "I'm all right," shouted Phoros. "I don't want to be rescued!"

"Wait until we talk it over," he said. Then to Wood: "Take the gag out of his mouth."

When the gag was removed, Phoros choked and spluttered before he could articulate an understandable word, so frightened and excited was he. "Don't let her have me," he finally managed to say. "She'll kill me."

"Maybe we can reach a bargain," suggested Tarzan.

"Anything you want!" cried Phoros.

"Our freedom and a safe escort to the Pass of the Warriors," demanded Tarzan.

"It is yours," promised Phoros.

"And the big diamond," added Wood.

"And the big diamond," agreed Phoros.

"How do we know you'll do as you agree?" asked the ape-man.

"You have my word for it," Phoros assured him.

"I don't think it's worth much. I'd have to have something more."

"Well, what?"

"We'd want to take you with us and keep you close to me where I could kill you if the bargain were not kept."

"That too. I agree to everything—only, don't let her get her hands on me."

"There is one more thing," added Tarzan. "Valthor's freedom."

"Granted."

"And now that you've got all that arranged," said Wood, "how in blazes are we going to get out of here with that old virago holding the fort with the guard out there?"

Tarzan crossed to Phoros and removed his bonds. "Come to the door," he directed, "and explain my proposition to your wife."

Phoros approached the door. "Listen, dear," he said ingratiatingly.

"*Listen* nothing, you beast, you murderer!" she screamed back at him. "Just let me get my hands on you, you—"

"But darling, I was drunk. I didn't mean to do it. Listen to reason. Let me take these people out of the country with an escort of warriors, and they won't kill me."

"Don't 'darling' me, you, you—"

"But, my own little Menofra, listen to reason. Send for Kandos, and let us all talk it over."

"Go in there, you cowards, and drag them out," Menofra ordered the guards.

"Stay out there!" screamed Phoros. "I am the King. Those are the King's commands."

"I'm the Queen," yelled Menofra. "I tell you to go in and rescue the King."

"I'm all right," shouted Phoros. "I don't want to be rescued!"

"I think," said the officer of the guard, "that the best thing to do is summon Kandos. This is no matter for a simple officer of the guard to decide."

"That's right," encouraged the King; "send for Kandos."

They heard the officer dispatch a warrior to summon Kandos.

Wood stepped to the door. "Menofra!" he called. "I have an idea that perhaps you hadn't thought of. Let Phoros accompany us to the border; then when he comes back, you'll have him. That will save a lot of trouble for all concerned."

Phoros looked troubled. He hadn't thought of that, either. Menofra did not answer immediately; then she said: "He might trick me in some way."

"How can he trick you?" demanded Wood.

"I don't know, but he'd find a way. He has been tricking people all his life."

"He couldn't. You'd have the army. What could he do?"

"Well, perhaps it's worth thinking about," admitted the Queen; "but I don't know that I could wait. I'd like to get my hands on him right now. Did you see what he did to me?"

"Yes. It was terrible," sympathized Wood.

It was not long before the warrior returned with Kandos. Menofra greeted him with a volley of vituperation as soon as he came in sight, and it was some time before he could quiet her and get the story. Then he led her away where none could overhear, and they whispered together for some time. When they had finished, Kandos approached the door.

"It is all arranged," he announced. "The Queen has given her permission. The party will start shortly after sunrise. It is still dark, and the trail is not safe by night. Just as soon as you and the escort have had your breakfasts, you may go in peace. Have we your promise that you will not harm the King?"

"You have," said Tarzan.

"Very well," said Kandos. "I am going now to arrange for the escort."

"And don't forget our breakfasts!" called Wood.

CHAPTER XII

Treachery

Stanley Wood was in high spirits. "It commences to look as though our troubles were about over," he said. He laid a hand on Gonfala's arm tenderly. "You've been through a lot, but I can promise you that when we get to civilization, you'll be able to understand for the first time in your life what perfect peace and security mean."

"Yes," said Tarzan, "the perfect peace and security of automobile accidents, railroad wrecks, airplane crashes, robbers, kidnapers, war and pestilence."

Wood laughed. "But no lions, leopards, buffaloes, wild elephants, snakes nor tsetse flies, not to mention *shiftas* and cannibals."

"I THINK," said Gonfala, "that neither of you paints a very pretty picture. You make one almost afraid of life. But after all, it is not so much peace and security that I want, as freedom. You know, all my life I have been a prisoner, except for the few short weeks after you took me away from the Kaji, and before Spike and Troll got me. Perhaps you can imagine, then, how much I want freedom, no matter how many dangers I have to take along with it. It seems the most wonderful thing in the world to me."

"It is," said Tarzan.

"Well, love has its points too," suggested Wood.

"Yes," agreed Gonfala, "but not without freedom."

"You're going to have them both," Wood promised.

"With limitations, you'll find, Gonfala," warned Tarzan with a smile.

"Just now I'm interested in food," said Gonfala.

"And I think it's coming." Wood nodded toward the door. Some one was fumbling with the key. Presently the door opened far enough to permit two pots to be shoved inside the room; then it was closed with a bang.

"They are taking no chances," commented Wood as he crossed the room and carried the two vessels back to his companions. One contained a thick stew; the other, water.

"What, no hardware?" inquired Wood.

"Hardware? What is that?" asked Gonfala. "Something to eat?"

"Something to eat with—forks, spoons. No forks, no spoons, no Emily Post—how embarrassing!"

"Here," said Tarzan, and handed his hunting-knife to Gonfala. They took turns spearing morsels of meat with it, and drinking the juice and the water directly from the pots, sharing the food with Phoros.

"Not half bad," commented Wood. "What is it, Phoros?"

"Young wether. There is nothing tastier. I am surprised that Menofra did not send us old elephant-hide to chew on. Perhaps she is relenting." Then he shook his head. "No, Menofra never relents—at least, not where I am concerned. That woman is so ornery she thinks indigestion is an indulgence."

"Why!" said Gonfala drowsily. "I am so sleepy, I can't keep my eyes open."

"Same here," said Wood.

Phoros looked at them and yawned. Tarzan stood up and shook himself.

"You too?" asked Phoros.

The ape-man nodded. Phoros' lids drooped. "The old she-devil!" he muttered. "We've all been drugged—maybe poisoned."

Tarzan watched his companions fall into a stupor one by one. He tried to fight off the effects of the drug. He wondered if any of them would awaken again; then he sagged to one knee and rolled over on the floor, unconscious.

THE room was decorated with barbaric splendor. Mounted heads of animals and men adorned the walls. There were crude murals done in colors that had faded into softness, refined by age. Skins of animals and rugs of wool covered the floor, the benches, and a couch on which Menofra lay, her body raised on one elbow, her bandaged head supported by one huge palm. Four warriors stood by the only door; at Menofra's feet lay Gonfala and Wood, still unconscious; at her side stood Kandos; at the foot of the couch, bound and unconscious, lay Phoros.

"You sent the wild-man to the slave-pen as I directed?" asked Menofra.

Kandos nodded. "Yes, Queen; and because he seemed so strong, I had him chained to a stanchion."

"That is well," said Menofra. "Even a fool does the right thing occasionally."

"Thank you, Queen," said Kandos.

"Don't thank me; you make me sick. You are a liar and a cheat and a traitor. Phoros befriended you; yet you turned against him. How much more quickly would you turn against me, who has never befriended you and whom you hate! But you won't, because you are a coward; and don't even think of it—if I ever get the idea that you might be thinking of turning against me, I'll have your head hanging on this wall in no time. . . . The man is coming to."

They looked down at Wood, whose eyes were opening slowly, and whose arms and legs were moving a little as though experimenting with the possibilities of self-control. He was the first to regain consciousness. He opened his eyes and looked about him. He saw Gonfala lying beside him. Her rising and falling bosom assured him that she lived. He looked up at Kandos and the Queen.

"So this is the way you keep your word!" he accused; then he looked about for Tarzan. "Where is the other?"

"He is quite safe," said Kandos. "The Queen in her mercy has not killed any of you."

"What are you going to do with us?" demanded Wood.

"The wild-man goes to the arena," replied Menofra. "You and the girl will not be killed immediately—not until you have served my purpose."

"And what is that?"

"You shall know presently. Kandos, send now for a priest; Phoros will soon awaken."

Gonfala opened her eyes and sat up. "What has happened?" she questioned. "Where are we?"

"We are still prisoners," Wood told her. "These people have double-crossed us."

"Civilization seems very far away," she said, and tears came to her eyes.

He took her hand. "You must be brave, dear."

"I am tired of being brave; I have been brave for so long. I should like so much to cry, Stanlee."

NOW Phoros regained consciousness, and looked first at one and then at another. When his eyes fell on Menofra, he winced.

"Ah, the rat has awakened," said the Queen.

"You have rescued me, my dear!" said Phoros.

"You may call it that, if you wish," said Menofra coldly; "but I should call it by another name, as you will later."

"Now, my darling, let us forget the past—let bygones be bygones. Kandos, remove my bonds. How does it look to see the King trussed up like this?"

"It looks all right to me," Menofra assured him; "how would you prefer to be trussed up? It could be done with red-hot chains, you know. In fact, it has been done. It's not a bad idea; I am glad you suggested it."

"But Menofra, my dear wife, you wouldn't do that to me?"

"Oh, you think not? But you would try to kill me with your sword, so that you could take this wench here to wife. Well, I'm not going to have you trussed up with red-hot chains—not yet. First I am going to remove temptation from your path without removing the object of your temptation. I am going to let you see what you might have enjoyed."

There was a rap on the door, and one of the warriors said: "The priest is here."

"Let him in," ordered Menofra.

Wood had helped Gonfala to her feet, and the two were seated on a bench, mystified listeners to Menofra's cryptic speech. When the priest had entered the room and bowed before the Queen, she pointed to them.

"Marry these two," she commanded.

Wood and Gonfala looked at one another in astonishment. "There's a catch in this somewhere," said the former. "The old termagant's not doing this because she loves us—but I'm not looking any gift horse in the mouth."

"It's what we've been waiting and hoping for," said Gonfala, "but I wish it could have happened under different conditions. There is something sinister in this; I don't believe any good thought could come out of that woman's mind."

The marriage ceremony was extremely simple, but very impressive. It laid upon the couple the strictest obligations of fidelity, and condemned to death and damnation through eternity whoever might cause either to be unfaithful to the other.

During the ceremony Menofra wore a sardonic smile, while Phoros had difficulty in hiding his chagrin and anger. When it was concluded, the Queen turned to her mate. "You know the laws of our people," she said. "King or commoner, whoever comes between these two must die. You know that, don't you, Phoros? You know you've lost her, don't you—forever? You would try to kill me, would you? Well, I'm going to let you live—I'm going to let you live with this wench; but watch your step, Phoros; for I'll be watching you." She turned to the guard. "Now take them away. Take this man to the slave-pen; and see that nothing happens to him; and take Phoros and the wench to the room next to mine, and lock them in."

WHEN Tarzan regained consciousness, he found himself chained to a stanchion in a stockade compound, an iron collar around his neck. He was quite alone; but pellets of musty grass, odd bits of dirty clothing, cooking-utensils, and the remains of cooking-fires, still smoldering, disclosed the fact that the shed and the yard was the abode of others; and he conjectured correctly that he had been imprisoned in a slave-pen.

The position of the sun told him that he had been under the influence of the drug for about an hour. The effects were passing off rapidly, leaving only a dull headache, and a feeling of chagrin that he had been so easily duped. He was concerned about the fate of Wood and Gonfala, and was at a loss to understand why he had been separated from them. . . . His active mind was occupied with this problem and that of escape, when the gate of the compound opened, and Wood was brought in by an escort of warriors, who merely shoved the American through the gateway and departed after relocking the gate.

Wood crossed the compound to Tarzan. "I wondered what they had done with you," he said. "I was afraid they might have killed you." Then he told the ape-man what Menofra had decreed for Gonfala. "It is monstrous, Tarzan; the woman is a beast. What are we to do?"

Tarzan tapped the iron collar that encircled his neck. "There is not much that I can do," he said ruefully.

"Why do you suppose they've chained you up and not me?" asked Wood.

"They must have some special form of entertainment in view for me," suggested the ape-man with a faint smile.

THE remainder of the day passed in desultory conversation, principally a monologue; for Tarzan was not given to garrulity. Wood talked to keep from thinking about Gonfala's situation, but he was not very successful. Late in the afternoon the slaves were returned to the compound, and immediately crowded around Tarzan. One of them pushed his way to the front.

"Tarzan!" he exclaimed. "It is really you?"

"I am afraid it is, Valthor," replied the ape-man.

"And you are back, I see," said Valthor to Wood. "I did not expect to see you again. What happened?"

Wood told him the whole story of their misadventure, and Valthor looked grave. "Your friend Gonfala may be safe as long as Menofra lives; but she may not live long. Kandos will see to

that, if he is not too big a coward; then, with Menofra out of the way, Phoros will again come to power. When he does, he will destroy you. After that, there would not be much hope for Gonfala. The situation is serious, and I can see no way out unless the King and his party were to return and recapture the city. I believe they could do it now, for practically all of the citizens and most of the warriors are sick of Phoros and the rest of the Erythra."

A TALL black came close to Tarzan. "You do not remember me, master?"

"Why, yes; of course I do," replied the ape-man. "You're Gemba. You were a slave in the house of Thudos at Cathne. How long have you been here?"

"Many moons, master. I was taken in a raid. The work is hard, and often these new masters are cruel. I wish that I were back in Cathne."

"You would fare well there now, Gemba. Your old master is king of Cathne. I think that if he knew Tarzan was a prisoner here, he would come and make war on Athne."

"And I think that if he did," said Valthor, "an army from Cathne would be welcome here for the first time in history; but there is no chance that he will come, for there is no way in which he may learn that Tarzan is here."

"If I could get this collar off my neck," said the ape-man, "I could soon get out of this slave-pen and the city, and bring Thudos with his army. He would come for me to save my friends."

"But you can't get it off," said Wood.

"You are right," agreed Tarzan; "it is idle talk."

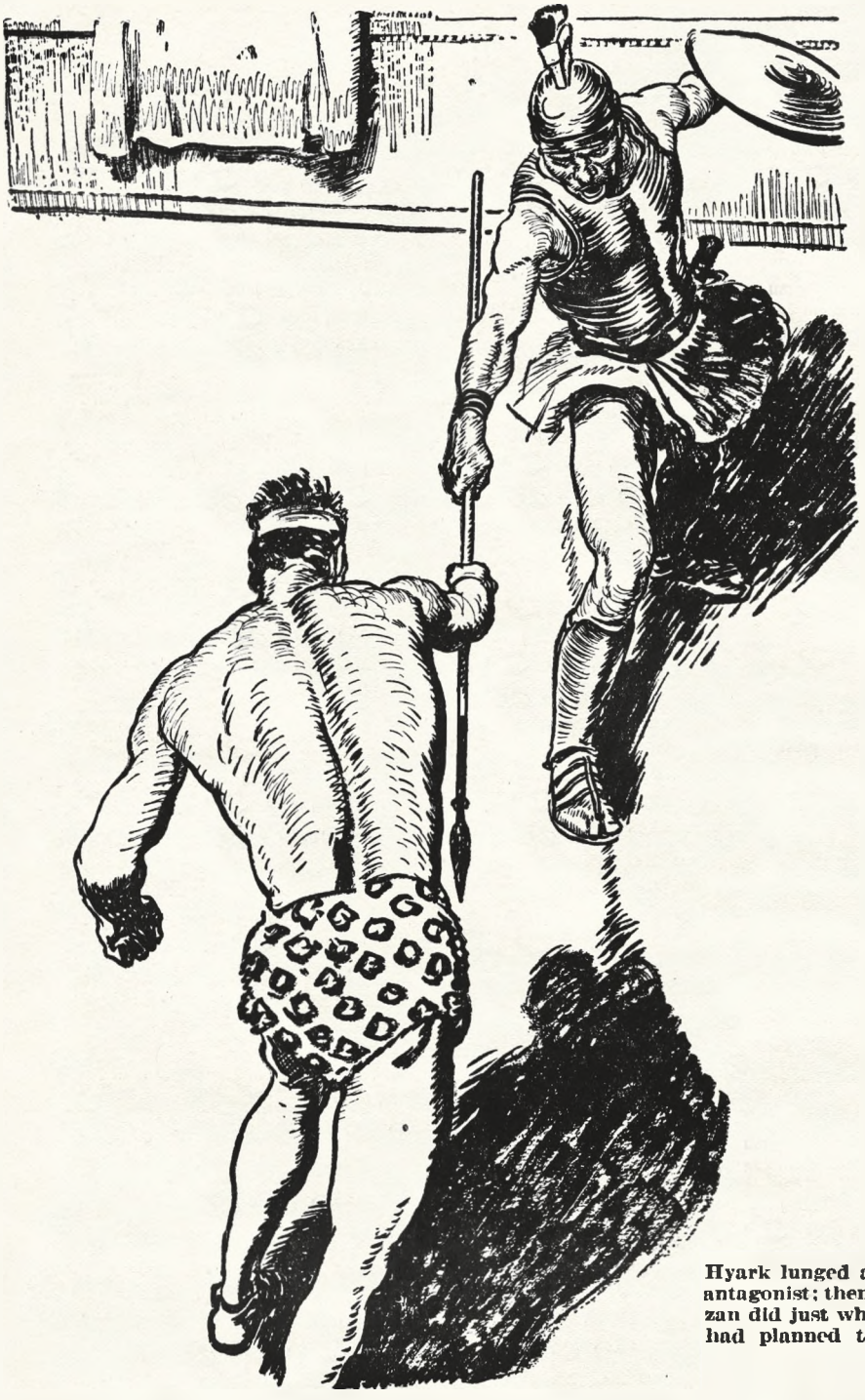
For several days nothing occurred to break the monotony of existence in the slave-pen of the King of Athne. No word reached them from the palace of what was transpiring there; no inkling came of the fate that was in store for them. Valthor had told Tarzan that the latter was probably being saved for the arena on account of his appearance of great strength; but when there would be games again he did not know. The new masters of Athne had changed everything, deriding all that had been sacred to custom and the old regime. There was even talk of changing the name of Athne to the City of Phoros. All that prevented was the insistence of the queen that it be renamed the City of Menofra.

Every morning the slaves were taken to work; and all day long Tarzan remained alone, chained like a wild animal. Imprisonment of any nature galled the Lord of the Jungle; to be chained, was torture. Yet he gave no sign of the mental suffering he was enduring. To watch him, one might have thought he was content; but seething beneath that calm exterior was a raging sea of anger.

All day Tarzan remained alone, chained like a wild animal.

ONE afternoon the slaves were returned to the pen earlier than usual. The guards who herded them in were unusually rough with them, and there were several officers not ordinarily present. They followed the slaves into the pen and counted them, checking off their names on a scroll carried by one of the officers; then they questioned them; and from the questions, Tarzan gathered that there had been a concerted attempt on the part of a number of slaves to escape, during which a guard had been killed. During the excitement of the mêlée several slaves had escaped into the bamboo forest close upon the eastern boundary of the cultivated fields of Athne.

The officers and warriors were extremely brutal in their handling of the slaves as they questioned them, trying to force confessions from them that they



Hyark lunged at his antagonist; then Tarzan did just what he had planned to do.

might ascertain just how far-reaching the plot had been, and which slaves were the ringleaders. After they left the pen, the slaves were in a turmoil of restlessness and discontent. The air was surcharged with a static electricity of repressed rebellion that the slightest spark would have ignited; but Valthor counseled them to patience.

"You will only subject yourselves to torture and death," he told them. "We are only a handful of unarmed slaves. What can we do against the armed warriors of the Erythra? A change must come. There is as much discontent outside the slave-pen as within it; and one day Zygo our King will come out of the mountains and set us free."

"But some of us are slaves, no matter who is king," said one. "I am. It would make no difference whether Zygo or Phoros were king—I should still be a slave."

"No," said Valthor. "I can promise you all that when Zygo comes into power again, you will all be set free. I give you my word that it will be done."

"Well," said one, "I might not believe another, but all know that what the noble Valthor says he will do he will do."

It was almost dark now, and the cooking-fires were alight, and the slaves were cooking their poor meals in little pots. Jerked elephant-meat constituted the larger part of their diet; to this was added a very coarse variety of turnip. From the two the men made a stew. Sometimes those who worked in the fields varied this diet with other vegetables they had been able to steal from the fields and smuggle into the pen.

"This stew," remarked Wood, "should be full of vitamins; it has everything else, including elephant-hair and pebbles. The elephant-hair and the pebbles might be forgiven, but turnips! In the economy of mundane happiness, there is no place for the turnip."

"I take it that you don't like turnips," said Valthor.

SINCE Tarzan had been brought to the slave-pen, Troll and Spike had kept to themselves. Spike was much afraid of the ape-man; and he had managed to impart this fear to Troll, although the latter had forgotten that there was any reason to fear him. Spike was worried for fear that, in the event they were liberated, Tarzan would find some way to keep the great diamond from him. This did not trouble Troll, who had forgotten all about the diamond.

Spike encouraged him in the delusion, and never referred to the diamond, although it was constantly the subject of his thoughts and plannings. His principal hope of retrieving it lay in the possibility that the rightful King of Athne would regain his throne, treat him as a guest instead of a prisoner, and return the Gonfal to him; and he knew from conversations he had had with other prisoners, that the return of Zygo was just between a possibility and a probability.

As the slaves were eating their evening meal and discussing the escape of their three fellows, an officer entered the compound with a detail of warriors, one of whom carried an iron collar and chain. Approaching the shed, the officer called Valthor.

"I am here," said the noble, rising.

"I have a present for you, aristocrat," announced the officer, who until the revolution had been a groom in the elephant-stables of Zygo.

"So I see," replied Valthor, glancing at the collar and chain; "and one which it must give a stableboy much pleasure to bring me."

The officer flushed angrily. "Be careful, or I'll teach you some manners," he growled. "You are the stableboy now, and I am the aristocrat."

Valthor shook his head. "No, stableboy, you are wrong. You will always be a stableboy at heart; and way down deep inside you, you know it. That is what makes you angry. That is what makes you hate me, or think that you hate me; you really hate yourself, because you know that you will always be a stableboy, no matter what Phoros tells you you are. He has done many strange things since he drove out the King, but he cannot make a lion out of a jackal's tail."

"Enough of this," snapped the officer. "Here, you,"—to his soldiers,—"snap the collar about his neck and chain him to the stanchion beside the wild-man."

"Why has Phoros thus honored me?" inquired Valthor.

"It was not Phoros; it was Menofra. She is ruling now."

"Ah, I see," said the noble. "Her psychology of hate for my class is more deeply rooted than yours, for it springs from filthy soil. Your vocation was at least honorable. Menofra was a woman of the street before Phoros married her."

"Well, have your say while you can, aristocrat," said the officer tauntingly, "for tomorrow you and the wild-man die in the arena, trampled and gored by a rogue elephant."

CHAPTER XIII

In the Arena

THE other slaves were furious because of the sentence imposed upon Valthor, who was to die, the officer had told them before he left, in punishment for the outbreak that had resulted in the death of an Erythros warrior and the escape of three slaves, and as a warning to the others. Valthor had been chosen ostensibly because he had been charged with

fomenting rebellion among the slaves, but really because he was popular among them, and an aristocrat.

Wood was horrified by the knowledge that Tarzan was to die—Tarzan and Valthor, both of whom were his friends. It seemed to him absolutely inconceivable that the mighty heart of the Lord of the Jungle should be stilled forever, that that perfect body should be broken and trampled in the dust of an arena to satisfy the blood-lust of ignorant barbarians.

"There must be something that we can do," he said; "there's *got* to be. Couldn't we break those chains?"

Tarzan shook his head. "I have examined mine carefully," he said, "and tested it. If it were cast iron, we might break a link; but it is malleable, and would only bend. If we had a chisel—but we haven't. No, there is nothing to do but wait."

"But they are going to kill you, Tarzan! Don't you understand? They are going to kill you."

The ape-man permitted himself the shadow of a smile. "There is nothing unique in that," he said. "Many people have died; many people are dying; many people will die—even you, my friend."

"Tarzan is right," said Valthor. "We must all die; what matters is *how* we die! If we meet death courageously, as befits warriors, there will be no regrets. For myself, I am glad that an elephant is going to kill me; for I am an elephant-man. You know what that means, Tarzan; for you have been to Cathne where the lion-men are the nobles; and you know with what pride they bear the title. It is the same here, except that the nobles are the elephant-men."

"If I were to have my choice of the manner in which I am to die," said Tarzan, "I should prefer the lion to the elephant. For one thing, the lion kills quickly; but my real reason is that the elephant has always been my friend—my very best friend, perhaps; and I do not like to think a friend must kill me."

"This one will not be your friend, Tarzan," Valthor reminded him.

"No, I know it; but I was not thinking of him as an individual," explained Tarzan. "And now, I am going to sleep."

MORNING of their day of doom dawned like any other morning. Neither spoke of what was impending. With Wood they cooked their breakfasts; they talked, and Valthor laughed, and occasionally Tarzan smiled one of his rare smiles. Wood was the most nervous. When the time came for the slaves to be taken to their work, he came to say good-by to the ape-man.

Tarzan laid a hand upon his shoulder. "I do not like to say good-by, my friend," he said.

If Wood had known how rare was the use by Tarzan of that term "my friend," he would have felt honored. The Lord of the Jungle thought of many animals as friends, but few men. He liked Wood's intelligence, his courage, his cleanness.

"Have you no message you would like to send to—to—" Wood hesitated.

Tarzan shook his head. "Thank you, no," he said. "She will know, as she always has."

Wood turned and walked away, following the other slaves out of the stockade. He stumbled over the threshold, and swore under his breath as he drew a palm across his eyes.

IT was afternoon before they came for Tarzan and Valthor, half a hundred warriors and several officers, all in their best trappings, their freshly burnished arms shining in the sun.

In front of the palace a procession was forming. There were numerous elephants richly caparisoned and bearing howdahs in which rode the new-made nobility of Athne. All the howdahs were open except one elaborate pavilion. In this sat Menofra alone. When Valthor saw her, he laughed aloud. Tarzan turned and looked at him questioningly.

"Look at her!" exclaimed the noble. "She could not be more self-conscious if she were naked. In fact, that would not bother her so much. The poor thing is trying to look the queen. Note the haughty mien, and the crown! Dyaus! She is wearing the crown to the arena—and wearing it backward! It is worth dying to see."

Valthor had not lowered his voice; he even raised it a little. His laughter had attracted attention to him, so that many listened and heard his words. They even reached the ears of Menofra. That was apparent to all who could see her, for her face turned fiery red; and she took the crown off and placed it on the seat beside her. She was so furious that she trembled; and when she gave the command to march, as she immediately did, her voice shook with rage.

With the hundred elephants in single file, the many warriors on foot, the ban-

ners and pennons, the procession was colorful; but it lacked that something that would have made its magnificence impressive. There was nothing real about its assumed majesty, and the entire pageant was colored by the spuriosity of its principal actors. This was the impression that it made upon the Lord of the Jungle walking in chains behind the elephant of Menofra.

The procession followed the main avenue to the south gate through lines of silent citizens. There was no cheering, no applause. There were whispered comments as Valthor and Tarzan passed; and it was plain to see that the sympathies of the people were with Valthor, though they dared not express them openly. Tarzan was a stranger to them; their only interest in him lay in the fact that he might serve to give them a few minutes of entertainment in the arena.

Passing through the gate, the column turned toward the east, coming at last to the arena, which lay directly east of the city. Just outside the main gate, through which the procession entered the arena, Tarzan and Valthor were led from the line of march and taken to a smaller gate which led through a high palisade of small logs into a paddock between two sections of a grandstand. The inner end of the paddock was formed by a palisade of small logs, and was similar to the outer end, having a small gate opening onto the arena. The ape-man could not but notice the flimsy construction of the two palisades, and idly wondered if the entire arena were as poorly built.

A NUMBER of armed guards were in the compound; and presently other prisoners were brought, men whom Tarzan had not before seen. They had been brought from the city behind the elephants of lesser dignitaries who had ridden in the rear of Menofra. Several of these prisoners, who spoke to Valthor, were evidently men of distinction.

"We are about the last of the aristocracy who did not escape or go over to the Erythra," Valthor explained to Tarzan. "Phoros and Menofra think that by killing off all their enemies, they will have no opposition and nothing more to fear; but as a matter of fact, they are only making more enemies, for the middle classes were naturally more in sympathy with the aristocracy than with the scum which constitutes the Erythra."

About four feet from the top of the inner palisade was a horizontal beam supporting the ends of braces that held the palisade upright; and upon this beam the prisoners were allowed to stand and witness what took place in the arena until it was their turn to enter. When Tarzan and Valthor took their places on the beam, the royal pageant had just completed a circuit of the arena, and Menofra was clumsily descending from the howdah of her elephant to enter the royal *loge*. The grandstands were about half filled, and crowds were still pouring through the tunnels. There was little noise other than the shuffling of sandaled feet and the occasional trumpeting of an elephant. It did not seem to Tarzan a happy, care-free throng out to enjoy a holiday, but rather a sullen mob suppressed by fear.

THE first encounter was between two men—one a huge Erythros warrior armed with sword and spear; the other a former noble whose only weapon was a dagger. It was an execution, not a duel—an execution preceded by torture. The audience watched it, for the most part, in silence. There were a few shouts of encouragement from the *loges* of the officials and the new nobility.

Valthor and Tarzan watched with disgust. "I think he could have killed that big fellow," said the ape-man. "I saw how he might be easily handled. It is too bad that the other did not think of it."

"You think you could kill Hyark?" demanded a guard standing by Tarzan.

"Why not?" asked the ape-man. "He is clumsy and stupid; most of all, he is a coward."

"Hyark a coward? That is a good one. There are few braver among the Erythra."

"I can believe that," said Tarzan; and Valthor laughed.

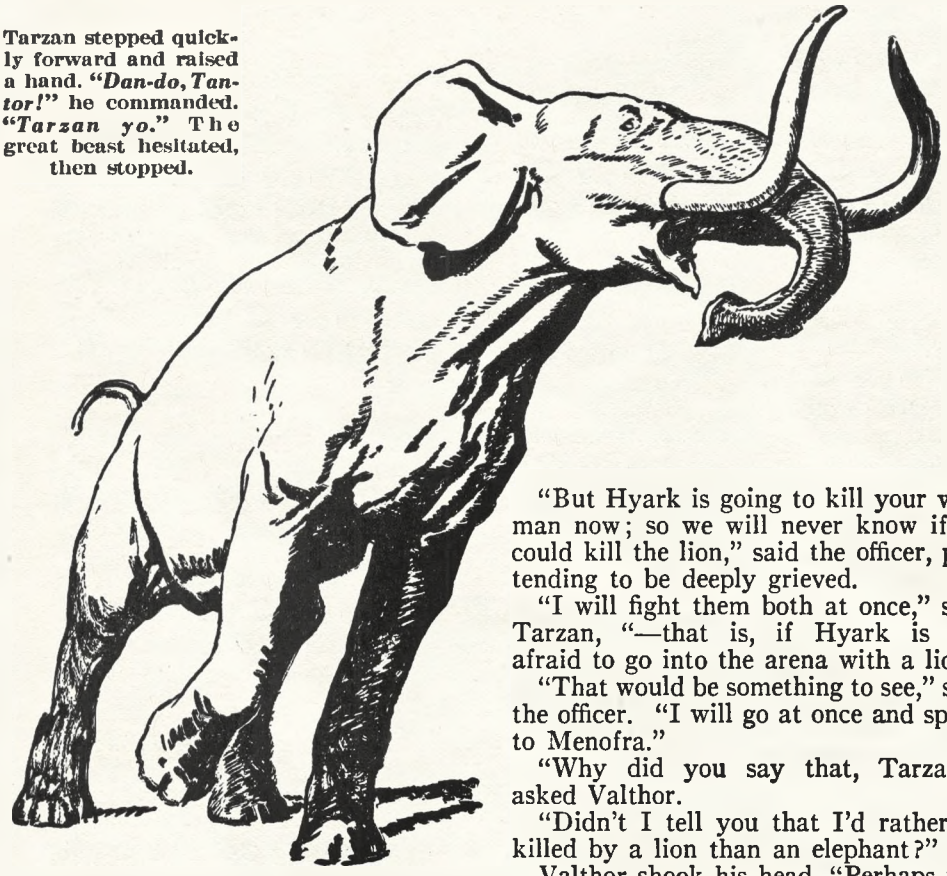
Hyark was strutting to and fro before the royal box, receiving the applause of Menofra and her entourage; slaves were dragging out the mutilated corpse of his victim; an officer was approaching the paddock to summon the next combatants.

The guard called to him: "Here is one who thinks he can kill Hyark."

The officer looked up. "Which one thinks that?" he demanded.

The guard jerked a thumb toward Tarzan. "This wild-man, here. Perhaps Menofra would like to see such an encounter. It should prove amusing."

"Yes," said the officer, "I should like to see it myself. Maybe after the next combat. I'll ask her."



Tarzan stepped quickly forward and raised a hand. "*Dan-do, Tantor!*" he commanded. "*Tarzan yo.*" The great beast hesitated, then stopped.

The next prisoner to be taken into the arena was an old man. He was given a dagger to defend himself; then a lion was loosed upon him.

"That is a very old lion," said Tarzan to Valthor. "Most of his teeth are gone. He is weak from mange and hunger."

"But he will kill the man," said Valthor.

"Yes, he will kill the man; he is still a powerful brute."

"I suppose you think you could kill him too," jeered the guard.

"Probably," assented the ape-man.

The guard thought this very funny, and laughed uproariously.

THE lion made short work of the old man, giving him, at least, a merciful death. Then the officer came, after they had driven the lion back into his cage with many spears, and said that Menofra had given assent to the fight between Hyark and the wild-man.

"She has promised to make Hyark a captain for killing two men in one afternoon," said the officer.

"This one says he can kill the lion too," jeered the guard.

"But Hyark is going to kill your wild man now; so we will never know if he could kill the lion," said the officer, pretending to be deeply grieved.

"I will fight them both at once," said Tarzan, "—that is, if Hyark is not afraid to go into the arena with a lion."

"That would be something to see," said the officer. "I will go at once and speak to Menofra."

"Why did you say that, Tarzan?" asked Valthor.

"Didn't I tell you that I'd rather be killed by a lion than an elephant?"

Valthor shook his head. "Perhaps you are right. At least it will be over sooner. This waiting is getting on my nerves."

Very soon the officer returned. "It is arranged," he said.

"What did Hyark think of it?" asked Valthor.

"I think he did not like the idea at all. He said he just recalled that his wife was very ill, and asked Menofra to give some one else the honor of killing the wild-man."

"And what did Menofra say?"

"She said that if Hyark didn't get into the arena and kill the wild-man, she would kill Hyark."

"Menofra has a grand sense of humor," remarked Valthor.

Tarzan dropped to the ground and was taken into the arena, where the iron collar was removed from about his neck, and he was handed a dagger. He walked toward the royal box below which Hyark was standing. Hyark came running to meet him, hoping to dispatch him quickly and get out of the arena before the lion could be loosed. The men at the lion's cage were having some difficulty in raising the door. The lion, nervous and excited from his last encounter, was roar-

ing and growling as he struck at the bars trying to reach the men working about him.

Hyark held his spear in front of him. He hoped to thrust it through Tarzan the moment that he came within reach of him. There would be no playing with his victim in this encounter, his sole idea being to get it over and get out of the arena.

Tarzan advanced slightly crouched. He had stuck the dagger into the cord that supported his loin-cloth. The fact that he came on with bare hands puzzled the crowd and confused Hyark, who had long since regretted that he had accepted the challenge so boastfully. He was not afraid of the man, of course; but the two of them! What if the man avoided being killed until the lion was upon them? The lion might as readily leap upon Hyark as upon the other! It was this that added to Hyark's confusion.

They were close now. With an oath, Hyark lunged his spear-point at the naked breast of his antagonist; then Tarzan did just what he had planned to do, knowing as he did, his own agility and strength. He seized the haft of the spear and wrenched the weapon from Hyark's grasp, hurling it to the ground behind him. Hyark snatched for his sword; but he was too slow. The ape-man was upon him; steel-thewed fingers seized him and swung him around.

A great shout went up from the crowd —the lion was loosed!

Grasping Hyark by the collar of his jerkin and his sword-belt, the ape-man held him helpless despite his struggles. For the first time the crowd became really vocal. They laughed, jeering at Hyark; they screamed warnings at the wild-man, shouting that the lion was coming; but Tarzan knew that already. From the corner of an eye he was watching the carnivore as it came down the length of the arena at a trot. He could get a better estimate of the beast now, as it came closer. It was a small lion, old and pitifully emaciated. Evidently it had been starved a long time to make it ravenous. Tarzan's anger rose against those who had been responsible for this cruelty; because of it, there was born in his mind a plan to avenge the lion.

As the lion approached, Tarzan went to meet it, pushing the frantic Hyark ahead of him; and just before the beast launched its deadly charge, the ape-man gave Hyark a tremendous shove directly toward the great cat; and then Hyark did precisely what Tarzan had anticipated he would do: he turned quickly to one side and broke into a run. Tarzan stood still—not a muscle moved. He was directly in the path of the lion, but the latter did not hesitate even an instant; it turned and pursued the fleeing man, the screaming, terrified Hyark.

"The brave Hyark will have to run much faster if he hopes to get his cap-

taincy," said Valthor to the guard. "He would have been better off had he stood still; the lion was sure to pursue him if he ran. Had he stepped to one side and stood still, the lion might have continued his charge straight for Tarzan. At least he would have had a chance then, but he certainly cannot outrun a lion."

Just in front of the *loge* of Menofra, the lion overtook Hyark, and the screaming man went down beneath the mangy body to a mercifully quick end. Before his final struggles had ended, the starving beast commenced to devour him.

UP the arena, toward the royal *loge* and the feeding lion, came Tarzan. On the way he picked up Hyark's discarded spear, and he crept silently onto the lion from the rear; nor did the lion, occupied with his greedy feeding, see the approaching man. The crowd sat tense and silent—marveling, perhaps, at the courage of this naked wild-man. Closer and closer to the lion crept Tarzan; and still the lion fed upon the carcass of Hyark.

unconscious of the ape-man's presence. Directly behind the carnivore, Tarzan laid the spear upon the ground. He had brought it only as a measure of safety in the event his plan miscarried. Then, with the swiftness and agility of Sheeta the panther, he leaped astride the feeding cat and grasped it by the mane and the loose hide upon its back, lifting it bodily from its kill, and at the same time swinging around and whirling the beast with him, roaring and striking, but futilely. It was the lightning quickness of his act that made it possible—that and his great strength, as, with one superhuman effort, he flung the beast into the royal *loge;* then, without a single backward glance, he turned and walked back toward the prisoners' paddock.

The lion's body struck Menofra and knocked her from her chair; but the lion, frightened and bewildered now, thought for the moment only of escape; and leaped to an adjoining box. Here he lashed out with his taloned paws to right and left among the screaming nobility. From one *loge* to another he leaped, leaving a trail of screaming victims, until he chanced upon a tunnel, into which he darted and galloped to freedom beyond the amphitheater.

The stands were in an uproar and the populace cheered Tarzan as he entered the paddock and took his place again beside Valthor on the cross-beam. The guard who had ridiculed him looked at him now in awe, while the other prisoners praised and congratulated him.

"Menofra should give you a wreath and a title," said Valthor, "for you have given her and the people such entertainment as they have never seen before in this arena."

Tarzan looked across at the royal box and saw Menofra standing in it apparently unhurt. "The lion missed a golden opportunity," he said; "and as for the wreath and the title, I do not deserve them; for it was the lion, not Menofra or the people watching us, that I was trying to entertain."

WHEN the stands had quieted and the wounded were removed, the officer in charge returned to the paddock. "You were a fool," he said to Tarzan, "to throw the lion into Menofra's *loge.* If you hadn't done that, I believe she would have given you your liberty; but now she has ordered that you be destroyed at once. You and Valthor go in next. You will take your places in the center of the arena immediately. May Dyaus have mercy on you!"

"I wish," said Valthor, "that you might have had a better reception in the City of Ivory. I wish that you might have known my own people, and they you. That you should have come here to die is tragic, but the fates were against you."

"Well, my friend," said Tarzan, "at least we have seen one another again; and—we are not dead yet."

"We shall be, presently."

"I think that perhaps you are right," agreed the ape-man.

"Well, here we are. Have you any plan?"

"None," replied Tarzan. "I know that I cannot throw an elephant into Menofra's *loge.*"

"Not this one," said Valthor. "I know him. I helped capture him. He is a devil, and huge. He hates men. They have been saving him for this, and they will probably kill him afterward—he is too dangerous."

"They are opening the elephant paddock," said Tarzan. "Here he comes!"

A HUGE elephant charged, trumpeting, through the opened gates. At first he did not seem to notice the two in the center of the arena, and trotted around close to the stands as though searching for an avenue of escape; then suddenly he wheeled and started for the two men.

Tarzan had noted his great size and the one tusk darker than the other; and on the screen of memory was pictured another scene and another day—hyenas at the edge of a pit, snapping at a huge elephant with one dark tusk, while above circled Ska the vulture.

The elephant's trunk was raised; he was trumpeting as he came toward them; and then Tarzan stepped quickly forward and raised a hand, palm outward.

"Dan-do, Tantor!" he commanded. *"Tarzan yo."*

The great beast hesitated; then he stopped. Tarzan walked toward him, motioning Valthor to follow directly behind him, and stopped with one hand upon the trunk, which was now lowered and feeling exploratively over the ape-man's body.

"Nala Tarzan!" commanded the ape-man. *"Nala tarmangani!"* And he pulled Valthor to his side.

The elephant raised his trunk and trumpeted loudly; then he gathered first one and then the other in its folds and lifted them to his head. For a moment

he stood swaying to and fro as Tarzan spoke to him in low tones; then, trumpeting again, he started off at a trot around the arena, while the spectators sat in stunned amazement. The great beast had completed half the oval and was opposite the prisoners' paddock when Tarzan gave a quick command. The elephant wheeled sharply to the left and crossed the arena, while Tarzan urged him on with words of encouragement in that strange mother of languages that the great apes use, and the lesser apes and the little monkeys; and that is understood in proportion to their intelligence by many another beast of the forest and the plain.

With lowered head the mighty bull crashed into the flimsy palisade at the inner end of the paddock, flattening it to the ground; then the outer palisade fell before him—and he bore Tarzan and Valthor out onto the plain toward freedom.

As they passed the main gate of the amphitheater and headed south, they saw the first contingent of their pursuers issuing from the arena and clambering to the howdahs of the waiting elephants; and before they had covered half a mile, the pursuit was in full cry behind them.

While their own mount was making good time, some of the pursuing elephants were gaining on him.

"Racing elephants," commented Valthor.

"They are carrying heavy loads," observed the ape-man: "five and six warriors, besides a heavy howdah."

Valthor nodded. "If we can keep ahead of them for half an hour, we've a good chance to get away." Then he turned from the pursuers and looked ahead. "Mother of Dyaus!" he exclaimed. "We're caught between a wild bull and a hungry lion—the Cathneans are coming, and they're coming for war. This is no ordinary raid. Look at them!"

Tarzan turned, and saw a body of men that approximated an army coming across the plain toward them; and in the van were the fierce war-lions of Cathne. He looked back. Closing in rapidly upon them were the war-elephants of Athne.

CHAPTER XIV

The Outcome of the Battle

"I THINK we yet have a chance to escape them both," said Valthor. "Turn him toward the east. Zygo and his loyal followers are there in the mountains."

"We do not have to run away from our friends," replied Tarzan.

"I hope they recognize you as a friend before they loose their war-lions, which are trained to leap to the backs of elephants and kill the men riding there."

"Then we'll approach them on foot," said the ape-man.

"And be caught by the Erythra," added Valthor.

"We shall have to take a chance; but wait—let's try something." He spoke to the bull, and the animal came to a stop and wheeled about; then Tarzan leaped to the ground, motioning Valthor to follow him. He spoke a few words into the ear of the elephant, and stepped aside. Up went the great trunk, forward the huge ears, as the mighty beast started back to meet the oncoming elephants.

"I think he'll hold them up long enough for us to reach the Cathnean line before they can overtake us," said Tarzan.

THE two men turned then and started toward the advancing horde of warriors—toward ranks of gleaming spears and golden helmets and lions of war on golden chains. Suddenly a warrior left the ranks and ran forward to meet them; and when he was closer, Tarzan saw that he was an officer. It was Gemnon.

"I recognized you at once," he cried to the ape-man. "We were coming to rescue you."

"How did you know that I was in trouble?" demanded Tarzan.

"Gemba told us. He was a prisoner with you in the slave-pen; but he escaped, and came straight to Thudos with word that you were to be killed."

"Two of my friends are still prisoners in Athne," said Tarzan; "and now that you have caught many of the warriors of Phoros out here on the plain in a disorganized condition—"

"Yes," said Gemnon. "Thudos realized his advantage, and we shall attack at once, as soon as we return to the lines."

Valthor and Gemnon had met before, when Valthor was a prisoner in Cathne.

Thudos the King welcomed them both, for Gemba had told him of the Erythra; and naturally his sympathies were with the aristocracy of Athne.

"If fortune is with us today," he said, "we shall put Zygo back upon his throne." Then, to an aide: "Loose the lions of war!"

The great bull with the dark tusk had met the first of the war elephants of Athne head-on with such a terrific im-

pact that all the warriors were hurled from the howdah, and the war-elephant toppled over, whereupon the others scattered to avoid him. And a moment later the war-lions of Cathne were among them, leaping to the howdahs and mauling the warriors. Two or three lions would attack a single elephant at a time, and at least two of them usually succeeded in reaching the howdah.

The commander of the Erythros forces sought to rally his men and form a line to repel the advance of the Cathneans; and while he was seeking to accomplish this, the Cathnean foot-warriors were upon them, adding to the rout.

The Erythros warriors hurled spears at their foes and sought to trample them beneath the feet of their mounts. The Cathneans' first aim was to kill the mahouts and stampede the elephants; and while some warriors were attempting this, others pressed close to the elephants in an endeavor to cut the girths with their sharp daggers, precipitating howdahs and occupants to the ground.

The shouts of the warriors, the trumpeting of the elephants, the roars of the lions and the screams of the wounded produced an indescribable bedlam that added to the confusion of the scene and seemed to raise the blood-lust of the participants to demoniac proportions.

While a portion of his forces was engaging the Erythra on the plain before the city, Thudos maneuvered the remainder to a position between the battle and the city, cutting off the Erythra retreat; and with this and the killing of their commander, the Erythros warriors lost heart and scattered in all directions.

THUDOS led his victorious troops into Athne, and with him marched Tarzan and Valthor. They liberated Wood and the other prisoners in the slave-pen, including Spike and Troll; and then, at Wood's urgent pleading, marched to the palace in search of Gonfala. They met with slight resistance, for the palace guard soon fled from the superior numbers that confronted them.

Tarzan and Wood, led by a palace slave, hurried to the apartment where Gonfala was confined. The door, fastened by bolts on the outside, was quickly opened; and the two men entered, to see Gonfala standing above the body of Phoros, a dagger in her hand.

At sight of Wood, she rushed forward and threw herself into his arms. "Word just reached him that Menofra is dead," she said, "and I—I had to kill him."

Wood pressed her to him. "Poor child!" he murmured tenderly. "You've been through a lot. . . . But our troubles are over now. The Erythra have fallen, and we are among friends."

AFTER the fall of Athne, events moved rapidly. Zygo was summoned from the mountains and restored to his throne by his hereditary enemies, the Cathneans.

"Now you can live in peace," said Tarzan.

"Peace!" shouted Thudos and Zygo almost simultaneously. "Who would care to live always in peace?"

"I replaced Zygo on the throne," explained Thudos; "so that we Cathneans might continue to have foes worthy of our arms. No peace for us, eh, Zygo?"

"Never, my friend!" replied the King of Athne. . . .

For a week Tarzan and the other Europeans remained in Athne; then they set off toward the south, taking Spike and Troll and the great diamond with them. A short march from Athne they met Muviro with a hundred warriors coming to search for their beloved Bwana; and thus escorted, they returned to the ape-man's own country.

Here Tarzan let Spike and Troll leave for the coast on the promise that neither would return to Africa.

As they were leaving, Spike cast sorrowful glances at the great diamond. "We'd orter get somethin' out o' that," he said. "After all, we went through a lot o' hell on account of it."

"Very well," said Tarzan, "take it with you."

Wood and Gonfala looked at the ape-man in astonishment, but said nothing until after Troll and Spike had departed; then they asked why he had given the great diamond to two such villains.

A slow smile touched the ape-man's lips. "It was not the Gonfal," he said. "I have that at home. This was the imitation Mafka kept, to show and to protect the real Gonfal. And something else that may interest you: I found the great emerald of the Zuli and buried it in the Bantango country. Some day we'll go and get that too. You and Gonfala should be well equipped with wealth when you return to civilization—you should have enough to get you into a great deal of trouble and keep you there all the rest of your lives."

THE END

A story by the author of "Right Guy" and "Copper the Bet" that ends in gun-play and glory.

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

The Captain Retires

By RICHARD WORMSER

ANYBODY who knew police business knew at once that there was something fishy when he saw the sign on Captain Provost's door. It said: "CAPTAIN PROVOST, ESCORT TO DISTINGUISHED VISITORS."

Since Xavier City had only an average of five distinguished visitors a year, there was no apparent reason why one officer should be charged with the exclusive duty of escorting them; and certainly there was no reason why that officer should have the largest and finest suite of offices of anyone in headquarters except the commissioner himself.

The visitor who had his hand on the doorknob now was not distinguished; but he knew what was behind that sign. He knew that the men who ran Xavier City politics had said this: That old Captain Provost was about due to retire, full of his almost seventy years. That if the old Captain retired, he might not be able to live on his half pay; they all knew that he had not saved a cent of the thousands of dollars of money that had flowed into his hands during his years as an active copper.

Being broke, it might occur to the old officer to write a book, or maybe even a series of newspaper articles. The politicians didn't want that. In fact, there was nothing they would have liked less than to see the Captain's memoirs spread out where all could read; they would almost have preferred to lose an election.

The visitor—his name was Paunch Gotthelf—shoved through the door. He had been in on the conference from which was born the Escort to Distinguished Visitors idea. But it hadn't been his scheme. Paunch was a more direct guy. He had gone to the conference—it was in the back room of the speak-easy he had run at the time—with an idea. That idea had entailed the burning of a small amount of gunpowder.

Paunch told the uniformed secretary: "Mr. Basil Gotthelf to see Captain Provost." Yah! The smooth muggs, the

"I'll handle this myself," he said.

wise muggs, should have let him have his way! But they had to point out that Provost had always been a right guy. What was more to the point, they had reminded Paunch that the Captain had three sons, and some sixteen or seventeen grandsons, all old enough to resent the death of the head of their tribe. Should have bumped them off too!

The secretary came back and said: "The Captain'll see you."

"He'd better," Paunch Gotthelf muttered. Scowling, he strode for the inner door. A clerk in alpaca coat and shield got up to open the door for him; old Provost kept his staff well disciplined.

The scowl faded as Paunch Gotthelf lined up in front of Captain Provost's desk. Jees! The old bozo sure didn't look his years.

Gotthelf saw a smooth-faced, white-haired old man with the bluest eyes imaginable. Captain Provost had always looked as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth; he had moved, untroubled, for years through the turbulent waters of graft and corruption, murder and vice and gambling and liquor, taking his ten per cent from those who would give it, and unhesitatingly dealing with those who sought to take advantage of his innocent air.

Captain Provost stood up. He didn't offer to shake hands. "Hello, Paunch," he said, not uncordially. "Nice of you to come and see an old man."

Paunch almost gasped. Why, the old monkey! The guy must know what this call was about! "Hello, skipper," Gotthelf heard himself saying. "Gee, you look fine. Good for another seventy years, huh? How's your family?"

"They're all right." The Captain did not like his more crooked associates to talk about his family. "What's on your mind, Paunch?"

"Huh? Oh—nothin'." Nuts with the old bozo! He couldn't put Paunch Gotthelf off with a few smooth words. "Well, Captain, you know, things aint as easy as they been. Times is kinda hard."

Provost's hand went back to his pocket, and Gotthelf flinched. But the Captain wasn't reaching for a gat. He pulled out some money.

"Fifty help you, Paunch?"

"I'm still eating, Captain. It aint that." Get it out, get it over with. No bozo that old could bluff Paunch Gotthelf. "Couldn't you let up on my payments for a week or so, though?" That was not the way he'd meant to say it!

Captain Provost sat down again, beaming. He reached into his desk and got out a box of cigars. He offered one to his visitor, was refused, carefully lighted a panatela for himself. "Why, Paunch, you've come to the wrong shop. I'm an old man, Paunch. I've quit my unregenerate ways. No sir, I'm living on my salary these days."

Gotthelf began to get red in the face. He squinted through the cigar-smoke, and growled: "Says you! When your own grandson comes in every week for the take! I s'pose the guy don't come home and split with you. I s'pose—"

Captain Provost reared up behind the desk. Not a big man, he was still a born commander. "So you don't like it, Gotthelf? All right; go straight, and we won't bother you—my grandson and I. Cut out the gambling in the back room, the serving of drinks on Sunday, keep those cheap women out of that dump of yours, and live up to your license!"

"And starve to death?" Gotthelf snarled. "Not me, skipper. I'm too old in the game. I'll play marbles my way, and I'll run my own dump, and God help any pappy guy of a copper who tries to reform— O. K., skipper, I'm goin', skipper. I just thought maybe, seein' as how we was old friends, maybe you'd— So long, skipper!"

He got the door open and skidded through. Paunch Gotthelf had forgotten

what Captain Provost looked like when he was mad. He knew now, and the knowledge made him skid across the outer office, and go through the door with the Distinguished Visitors sign as though kicked from behind.

Captain Provost's clerk got up and shut the door to the inner office. The secretary closed the door to the hall, and the office resumed its placidity.

THE old Captain sat at his desk after his visitor had left. No expression crossed Captain Provost's face. He still looked like a fine old gentleman of a good family, immaculately dressed in his shining blue uniform. He'd always spent a lot of money on uniforms.

There was a pile of letters to be answered. His duties on the silly escort didn't take up much of his time, but there were other quasi-official jobs. He was secretary of the Retired Officers Association, though he himself was not retired; president of the Captains' Benevolent Institution; treasurer of the pension fund; Commander of the Honor Legion.

The Captain was not a sentimental man. But across the office there were a number of framed pictures. He went over there. He didn't bother to look at the action-shot of him a newspaper photographer had caught ten years ago: the Captain in full uniform, gun in hand, and Smoke McGonigle holding his belly and dying. He didn't bother to look at later pictures of himself escorting visitors to the city. But he did stop and gaze a long time at the photograph taken on his fiftieth birthday; his son Harold was at his right hand, and little George stood leaning against Harold's knee. George had been five that year.

There was another picture of George, in a patrolman's uniform, taken three years ago when the kid was admitted to the force. The Captain didn't show any interest in that.

He went back to his desk and rang for his secretary. For the next half-hour he was very busy, dictating letters.

When he finished, he said: "That clears it up, eh?"

The secretary said; "Yes sir. That brings everything up to date."

"You can sign my name to them when they're ready," the Captain said. He stood up and reached for his uniform cap, resplendent in gold lace. He planked it firmly on one side of his head, and flicked an imaginary speck of dust from his imported serge sleeve.

Then he undid the brass buttons of his coat, and went back to his desk. From the top drawer he took a gun. This he placed in his hip pocket, and after the coat was rebuttoned and smoothed into place, he went toward the door. The secretary got it open just in time, and stood at attention.

Outside, the clerk jerked open the other door. Captain Provost, commander of the Escort for Distinguished Visitors, walked out.

After he had gone, the clerk whistled. "You'd never know the old duck was pushing seventy, would you?"

The stenographer said: "No. You sure wouldn't. The skipper wore his gun, Joe."

"He'll pop for some one," Joe answered promptly. "There's a lot of life in that old man yet."

At the corner of State and Tremaine, the traffic cop saluted with his heels apart. Captain Provost stopped in front of the big patrolman, and spoke in his politest tones. When he finished, the cop saluted again, with his heels together this time. Satisfied, the old skipper walked on. There was a frosty glint in his eye.

He walked around the City Hall without stopping. He was going to see the man who ran the city, but that did not mean the mayor. The building he finally entered was neither large nor distinguished; but it had the air of having been there a long time.

ON the second floor a number of men had congregated. The room was cloudy with tobacco-smoke; guttural accents split the air.

Captain Provost disregarded the ward heelers and went toward a door. No other man in that room or in that city would have dared open that door without knocking; but the skipper did. He let it shut behind him, and stood there, bright and neat and handsome against the dingy furnishings.

Michael Quinn dropped his feet off a battered desk and stood up. "Skipper!" he said. "This is a pleasure. And how's the air treating your bones?"

"Can't complain, Michael." The Captain laid his cap upside down on the desk and dropped spotless white gloves into it. He sat down.

"Something I can do for you, Captain?"

"You know I don't ask favors, Michael. I want some information, though. Who's

shaking down Paunch Gotthelf these days?"

"Eh? You always were a man to come right to the point, skipper. Don't you know that I'm the head of a great political organization, above graft-taking and fixing? Jake Bordlen's got that territory these days, Captain."

"Thank you, Michael." The skipper rose to go. He had one of his white gloves on before Michael Quinn thought to ask his next question.

"Paunch a friend of yours, skipper? I can tell Jake to lay off him."

The Captain was slow in answering. "No," he said. "I've no use for Gotthelf. But he was in my office this day. It seems that Jake Bordlen is using my grandson George as a collector. I don't want my grandson to be a crooked cop, Michael."

What Quinn said then took a lot of courage. Even Michael Quinn dropped his eyes before he said it, and he was the biggest man in the city. "That sounds funny—coming from you, skipper."

There was an awful silence. "Michael," Provost said then, "you've got your guts. Things were different in my day, boy. Even when you came along, they were different, and you're twenty years younger than I am. When I first joined the cops, we got fifteen dollars a week. No man could bring up a family on that; no man was expected to. We didn't. I took my graft where I found it, and if maybe I took a little more than anyone else, it was because I was smarter. But I gave the city something for their money. There's no man on the force caught more crooks or went into more gun battles than I did. And you know it."

The Captain finished what was a long speech for him and began to draw on the other glove.

MICHAEL QUINN said throatily: "Maybe the kid's a chip off the old block. Maybe he'll be like that too."

Captain Provost finished with the gloves. He set his cap on his head and took two martial strides toward the door. "No, Michael," he said. "That time's past. A cop gets enough to live on, now. Even I'm living on my salary. And it isn't a matter of maybe winking at a little extra drinking nowadays. The cop who takes graft in this town now does it to cover murder, and worse."

Quinn's face purpled. The Captain waited, as though he expected the political boss to say something.

Michael Quinn opened his mouth and raised his eyes. The old man was looking straight at him. Quinn dropped his eyes, and said: "You want I should speak to Bordlen, Captain?"

"I'll handle this myself," the old skipper said. He walked to the door, opened it. "Good-by, Michael." When he walked through the anteroom, it was as though bands were playing, and the whole King's Guards were marching in their fine red coats. But it was only an old man, nearly seventy, going about his own business.

BEHIND him, Michael Quinn picked up a phone. "Get me Jake Bordlen . . . I don't care; find him. . . . Jake? Capt'n Provost was in. He's heard his grandson, that dick in your territory, is mixed up in something. . . . Don't tell me about it. All I want from you is votes. . . . The skipper doesn't like it. . . . Naw, I wouldn't leave town. If I was you, I'd look up the Capt'n and tell my side of it before he looks you up. . . . So Paunch Gotthelf told you he'd been to see the old man. . . . You can't control George Provost? Well—forget I called you."

Captain Provost stood on a corner. Strangers in town turned to stare at him, and went on their way with a fine idea of Xavier City's police force. People who had lived there all their lives nudged each other: "Captain Provost—seventy if he's a day—oldest man on the force—as active as he's ever been—you'd never know he was—"

He let three cabs go by him. Not his business to check up on the taxicab bureau, but there were certainly some dirty cabs running around the streets. Man could make himself a little money and do the city a service as well; make a rule only cabs with new upholstery could run, and speak first to the people who made car-cushions—

The fourth cab came quickly to the curb in answer to his signal. He stepped in, checked the license-card with the driver's face, and gave the address of George Provost.

He knew his city well. When he passed a little group of stores, he knew he was passing the last public telephone before his destination; a good cop would stop and phone the office. But there would be no business for the Commander of the Escort for Distinguished Visitors, or whatever his silly title was.

He stepped out of the cab and turned to face the driver. A certain light in the hackman's eyes amused him; the man

"So you was bein' shook down, huh? Couldn't you of come to me?"

was afraid he wasn't going to be paid for carrying a policeman. Captain Provost paid the full fare and dime over for a tip.

"You went over the speed-limit twice, son," he said. "Watch that in the future."

"Yes, Captain." The hackie waited respectfully until the Captain had climbed the neat little steps of the house.

George's wife, Ellie, answered the door. The Captain laid his cap on the hall table and kissed her chastely on the cheek. She was a picture in her cottage apron, with her black hair and red cheeks.

"Cooking, my dear?"

"I just took the cake out of the oven. Have a piece. It's angel food."

"An old man like me has to watch his figure, Ellie . . . . George home, or do you expect him soon?"

The girl smiled. "He's on a case, Grandfather Skipper." The kids had all called him that. "But I think—maybe he'll phone pretty soon."

The Captain smiled. "As his superior officer I should disapprove of that. When your grandmother-in-law was going to have her first baby, though,"—he smiled, —"I sent messengers up every fifteen minutes. We didn't have a phone in those days. Only a couple of hundred of them in town."

She led the way into the parlor. "Everyone all right, Grandpa Skipper?"

"All right, my dear. I haven't seen your father-in-law lately. How is he?"

She dropped her eyes. "He was here last night. He and George had a fight. He says George spoils me."

"Harold was always a fool." He was grateful that his face never gave away what he was thinking. The boy was spending too much money. How would it be if he gave them a little present? No. Kids had to stand on their own feet.

They talked for a few minutes. If everything went well, this girl Ellie would present him with his first great-grandchild in the spring. Funny he didn't feel any older! Why—it was fifteen years since his wife had died.

The phone rang. Ellie ran to answer it, her cheeks flushing again, deliciously. He suspected that she had hoped it would be her husband, when the doorbell rang.

She was back in five minutes. "George is on the wire, Grandpa Skipper."

He said into the phone: "George? I want to see you for a few minutes. Right away. . . . You're on a case? Maybe a good cop could help you. Where are you? . . . Stay there for twenty minutes."

Jake Bordlen was a fat man, as fat as Paunch Gotthelf, at whom he was scowling. Jake's jowls quivered with anger as he said: "So you was being shook down, huh? Couldn't you of come to me, instead of runnin' to old Cap Provost? Whassa matter with you, these days?"

"Jus' a minute, Alderman." Paunch Gotthelf's voice was pacific. "I aint ever

complained about kicking in, have I? Aint I always been a regular organization guy? But this dick, George Provost, he's too much for me. Sure, I give him the dough you says I should, and sure, he gives it you. But then, the other day, he comes in here, and there's Kansas City Moe sitting near the bar. Provost slaps him down with his blackjack, and puts the bracelets on him. O. K. If Moe's a big enough fool to sit next to the bar, that's his worry. But then this Provost, he says that either I kick in to him, or he books me for harboring a fugitive from justice. Sure. So I kicks in. And now I gotta kick in twicet, once every week for him to give you, and once for himself."

JAKE BORDLEN nodded. He drained a glass of whisky straight, and stood up. "It's hell," he said. "Hell. I shouldn't ever have taken that kid on. But he comes to me, and he's a cop, and his grandpaw's done plenty for me in his day. So now—yours isn't the only complaint. But you're the only one was dumb enough to run to the ol' skipper." Bordlen leaned over, shaking his meaty finger into Paunch's face. "If I was you, guy, I'd see that the skipper croaked before he ever got to you. You get me? If he gets the idea that maybe you're going to take a pass at his baby—"

The Alderman broke off and ran his finger across his throat suggestively.

Paunch Gotthelf let his beery eye light up. "What I said all the time, Alderman. Only—listen: You're in this too. The word's drifting around that maybe the skipper won't like it if he finds out you put the kid on a spot. Huh?"

Maybe Alderman Jacob Bordlen had an answer for that. He never got to give it. There was a rap on the door, and a waiter stuck his face in. "That cop Provost outside, boss."

"Which one?" Paunch asked. He looked as scared as the ward heeler, now.

"Both of 'em," the waiter said. "The old man looks just like he did when I was a kid t'irty years—"

"Get out!" Gotthelf roared. He turned to Bordlen, licking his lips. "How about it, Alderman? We can't let him—walk out o' here."

"We're lucky if he walks out instead of walking back to this office," Bordlen grumbled. "Better for him to come back here than to start talking. He's got enough on both of us—"

Gotthelf knew it. He turned his back and opened a safe; he took out two guns.

The two fat, middle-aged men looked at each other. Then Gotthelf started talking in a low, harsh whisper. As he talked, he took little sips of whisky; so did Bordlen. The bottle went down and down. After a while it was empty. . . .

The bright sun caught the gold badge on Captain Provost's cap and made it shine as though it were not of this earth. The Captain was not aware of this as he crossed the littered sidewalk and went into Gotthelf's saloon. He remembered it when it had been a saloon once before, remembered it more vividly than he did the long years when it had been a speakeasy. Now it was a saloon again, though the euphemistic, *"Bar and Grill—Restaurant,"* was gilded across its front.

He saw his grandson leaning against the bar. The glass the kid was using might have contained ginger-ale, or it might have held whisky and a chaser. But the Captain remembered that that was not a highball or chaser glass, and was glad. It didn't pay for a cop to drink on duty.

"Hello, George."

George was in plain clothes. He saluted, smartly. "Hello, sir."

The Captain nodded to the barkeep, and led the way to a booth. The young detective sat opposite him.

"What you working on, George?"

The kid dropped his head, and spoke softly. "Some money that was stolen from a bank in K.C. turned up in this end of town. We thought—the detective bureau—Hal Grotz might be in town."

"Hope you get him, George. I was out to see Ellie—you know that. The girl's looking fine, George. Tells me your father thinks you spend too much money on her."

"Yes."

"Harold and I never did see things the same way. Always have liked my grandchildren better than any of my sons. . . . Boy, you taking graft?"

THE plain-clothes man lifted startled eyes to peer under his grandfather's gold-leafed cap. He hesitated a moment. Then he said, "Yes," as simply and directly as the word has ever been said.

Captain Provost loved George more that moment than he ever had before. "Hum," he said finally. "I don't mince words, George. The city pays you plenty. A patrolman, even, gets about two thousand a year. You make a little more than that, and you don't have to buy uniforms."

"They can't possibly expect a man to live decently on that, Grandpa Skipper." The young voice was very earnest, very troubled—and very reminiscent. Another Provost had said that once. "Not a married man—who's going to be a father. Ellie's doctor will get almost three hundred dollars alone, before we're through. And there'll be the hospital, and nurses, and baby-clothes—"

"I got fifteen a week when I was a patrolman."

The kid flushed. He was scared. But he had nerve, and he used it. "Did you live on it, sir?"

The Captain smiled. "No. But I fought all my life for higher money for cops because my own troubles sent me into grafting. I don't want you to follow in my path. It doesn't pay."

George Provost laughed at his grandfather. "It hasn't hurt you, sir. The crooks are as much afraid of you as if you'd never taken a cent from them. A cop can take graft and still be straight."

The Captain said: "There's never any use in talking to the young. If these muggs think you've taken their money and double-crossed them, they'll shoot you in the back some night. Your shield won't help you then."

Again the boy laughed. "I'll take my chances, sir."

The Captain nodded. "Go along, then, son. You've got your bank robber—Grotz?—to catch. Have you asked Paunch Gotthelf about him?"

"No. Why?"

"Nothing. Go on and work for the taxpayers."

The boy walked away. The city got a good cop there, Captain Provost thought. Fine shoulders, straight eyes—how long would they stay straight? But you couldn't talk to the young. They had to be shown. Because the kid admired him, and yet knew he'd been a grafter, George was one too. For a briefly bitter moment, the old Captain wished he'd never seen crooked money. But you had to face the facts. In his day, all cops were crooked. Not only a few of them were. And he didn't want George to be one of them.

Captain Provost raised his hand. "A glass of whisky, boy." He drank it neat, holding it to his smooth-shaven lips with a hand that didn't tremble. Age had dealt kindly with him, so far. Another year or so, and he'd go like the one-hoss shay. Kidneys, eyes, hands, all at once. Well, he'd got a lot out of life.

The story to Reilly, the Captain thought coolly, would cover the ring. . . . God, it hurt. But he'd been shot before; now he'd never live to see his hand go, his mind wander, his kidneys break down. Reilly said: "Ambulance on the way, sorr! Hold out, skipper!"

He left a quarter on the table for the liquor, and stood up. He walked, not toward the door, but toward the rear of the saloon.

His walk was steady, firm and quick on the floor. Every button of his uniform coat shone, and every one of them was buttoned tightly. He put his hand on the knob of the door that led to Paunch's office. That door was locked.

The old knuckles beat a brisk tattoo on the door. After a minute, a voice cried: "Who is it?"

"Captain Provost."

He waited.

When he was finally admitted to the room, the two fat, scared men, the empty whisky bottle, the smell of fear on the air, told him a story. The old Captain smiled, wintry and bleak.

"Hello, Paunch. Hi-ya, Jake."

"H-hello, Cap'n. Wh-what can I do for ya?" That was Paunch.

"This is official, boys. Hate to put the pinch on a couple of old friends, but here it goes. You're coming down to Headquarters."

The alderman stuck out his stomach. "What's the idea of this, skipper? Didn't even know you were active." But Jake's voice shook a little.

The Captain was slow about answering. "Just getting my hand in, men. I'm doing a little job for the detective bureau. You two are wanted for harboring one Hal Grotz, late of Kansas City." He'd known it ever since he'd heard the boy's story. K.C. Moe pinched in here a few days ago, and now another killer suspected of being in the same part of town. The chances were strong that these men were hiding him. Hadn't George been working right around the corner?

THE Captain's uniform was complete. He produced handcuffs. "Come on, you muggs!"

The indignity of the handcuffs decided Jake Bordlen. He, an alderman! He screamed: "This is a bluff! That brat grandson of yours has been shaking us down for a week to keep him under cover. Not another cent do you get, you broken-down old—"

The seventy-year-old fist still had something behind it. It lashed into Jake Bordlen's face. The alderman rolled back; he shouted something incoherent at Paunch Gotthelf.

Both fat men went for their guns.

The Captain said coolly: "I've told you gentlemen before that I don't like talk about my family." Then he smiled urbanely, and spent the barest fraction of time waiting for Paunch Gotthelf's knuckles to turn white against the trigger of the automatic.

When this happened, the Captain's hand went down, under his coat, and up again. Horrible, thundering sounds filled the room. The gold-leafed cap went flying, ruined; Gotthelf's bullet had gone high when the saloonkeeper fell down. But Paunch Gotthelf lay on the floor, and there was not much left of the part of him that had given him his nickname.

Jake Bordlen had been taken off guard. He was standing there with his finger wide of the trigger when the Captain turned; Provost could have got him.

Bordlen turned pale blue, the color of the milk in the city jail. He said: "This —this is murder."

PROVOST shook his head. "No," he said. He smiled again, a wide smile that split his rosy old face and made him look as though he were about to give a child an apple. "No," Provost said. "No sir. You're resisting arrest—"

But he held his fire. He had to do something to get his grandson clear. This was the crossroads. He had killed Gotthelf, and that was fair enough. Gotthelf had been out to get the boy, had probably planned to kill him too.

And yet it was Bordlen who had offered George his first bribe. If Bordlen died, the kid's link with the ring, with politics, was broken.

Would that do it? Still holding the gun, the old Captain knew clearly that it would. He had been a bribe-taker for years, and had kept his skirts clean; but now he was being paid back. The boy would always take easy money, because his grandfather had, and because he admired his grandfather more than anyone else.

Killing wouldn't do it, no sir. There was one other way; and the Captain saw it. Show the ring up, come clean, turn reformer; he could do it.

And go to his grave the thing he hated worst in all the world: a squealer. Turn up the system that had nourished him all his life.

Captain Provost's blue eyes traveled from the gun to Jake Bordlen, and back again. Then he smiled, because he saw the way clear.

A man had been a grafter and a good cop. A man could be a grafter and a good grandfather too.

He said: "Say our prayers, Bordlen." Perhaps it was a full minute since the first shot. Time had stood still; but no longer.

Bordlen's eyes goggled.

Then Captain Provost dropped the gun. He stooped, recovered it.

Bordlen jerked his gat up and fired....

Captain Provost felt no pain. He felt only a tremendous blow in the chest, a blow that sent him back against the wall. He braced himself, and shot Jake Bordlen's leg out from under him. No need to kill Bordlen; he hadn't done anything.

As Jake went down, the Captain caught him behind the ear with the butt.

When Patrolman Reilly got there, the old man said: "Reilly, it's a good three minutes since the first shot. You should have got here sooner. Now go get an ambulance; on the double. No, wait. Here's the story—in case I'm sick when you get back. Gotthelf was covering a crook. You hear me? Then where's your notebook? Take this down—didn't they ever teach you how to be a cop? Right. I tried to make a pinch—and Bordlen came to my help. Now get the ambulance."

Reilly saluted. "Yes sorr!" he said. He ran out.

The story to Reilly, the Captain thought coolly, would cover the ring. God, this hurt.... But he'd been shot before; now he'd never live to see his hand go, his mind wander, his kidneys break down.

REILLY came running back, and with him George and another cop.

Reilly said: "Ambulance on the way, sorr! Sir, hold out! Hold out, skipper! There's—"

"I know my own business. You and Gavney, there, get out. I want to talk to my grandson."

"Yes sorr." God, the big Mick looked as though he were going to cry.

With George's help, Captain Provost struggled over to the desk.

And now he was alone with George, and Captain Provost had only one more duty to execute. His chin felt weak, and his eyes were a little misty. Shoulders back, skipper!

"George, these two muggs jumped me. They were never scared of you—they thought you were representing me. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Grandpa Skipper. Yes sir. But—don't try to talk—"

"Don't interrupt your superior officer! I don't want you to have anything more to do with Bordlen. If you take graft—this is where it brings you. See? Every cent you"—he had to cough; he couldn't go on much longer, in the face of the look in the boy's eyes,—"you take that's crooked—you're going to take from the men who killed me."

He shut his mouth tight. A man couldn't talk forever when his insides were slowly running out. He looked down. A spot on his uniform; he tried to brush it away, but it wouldn't go.

George would be all right. George would go straight now, because not to go straight would be an insult to his grandfather's memory. And the Captain had not had to squeal—the system would go on. Bad as it was, he owed it plenty. Captain Provost was no reformer—

He looked down again. The red stain on his blue coat was bigger. He tried to rub it out again, but it kept on growing.

Then it didn't matter, because those blue eyes couldn't see it.

He said: "George—kiss me. Once you were a little—little boy—"

The Captain told himself he was slipping. He'd almost forgotten something. "George. No revenge stuff. You leave—Bordlen—alone—"

Reilly lumbered back in. "The ambulance, sorr—"

Then the big Irish cop began blubbering as he turned to the ambulance surgeon.

"He remembered my name," Reilly sobbed. "Him dyin', and he remembered my name!"

Straight Up

RELENTLESS weapons rattled the tattoo of mad machine-guns. The helmeted, khaki-clad men hunched over them looked warlike. But their arms were jack-hammers, chewing into the bedrock that would support the world's greatest dam. They were soldiers of peace and progress—big Ox Carder, and Jimmy Evans, and lonely Paul Moritz, and all the rest. . . . All the rest, that is, but Nick Bruno.

Nick was a rebel. He was always yapping about something. At times, his eyes glinted queerly. Nick's favorite sport was eating between meals—biting the hand that was feeding him. He growled about the pay, the hours, the tough work, the living conditions. He even blamed the company for the hundred-ten-degree heat squashing down on them in the bottom of the Hole.

Paul Moritz thought him crazy. He could see Ox Carder did too. Carder, the hard-boiled gang boss, couldn't fire Bruno, though, for men were scarce in the Coulee region. Frequently Carder said: "Shut up, Nick. You're nuts."

And Nick generally answered: "Nuts, huh? Some day Nick shows you if he is nuts or not."

The rest of the crew seemed to think Nick a balmy, harmless windbag, but at least they paid him a certain amount of attention. Paul envied Nick for that. Even ridiculing attention was better than none at all. He knew these hard-muscled men had no use for him. They did not chat and joke with him. If ever they looked his way, at his sharp-cut features and fine, light skin, he could feel only scorn in their eyes. To them he lacked nerve.

He knew why. He'd been ordered to another job one day, up on the soaring steel lacework of the west-side trestle. Whitening, drawn suddenly taut inside, he had begged off—without an excuse. Only stocky Jimmy Evans, grinning sympathetically, had stayed out of the razzing chorus that followed.

Later had come an order to join the jack-hammer gang swarming antlike up the precipitous south slope of the Hole. Again Paul had begged off. That time there had been no razzing; rather, it was the crushing silence of disdain, charging more harshly than any spoken thrusts: "You're yellow, kid."

When curly-haired Jimmy stuck by him again, Paul had said to him, disconsolately: "The men are disgusted with me. You should be. I am disgusted with myself. I'm afraid I'm no good on a job like this."

On the verge of pouring out to Jimmy the thing that was in him, he'd been stopped by Jimmy's stanch advice: "Forget it, Paul. You don't have to apologize to me about being scared of high places. Lots of men are. My dad used to get dizzy at a second-story window. It's nothing to be ashamed of. So keep your chin up. Don't let these birds get you down."

Well and good, Paul thought, for Jimmy to talk so. But he felt that deep inside, his one friend must doubt him too. Some day, he'd have to prove himself to Jimmy. He could not bear to lose this loyal companion, whom he had grown to think of almost as a brother.

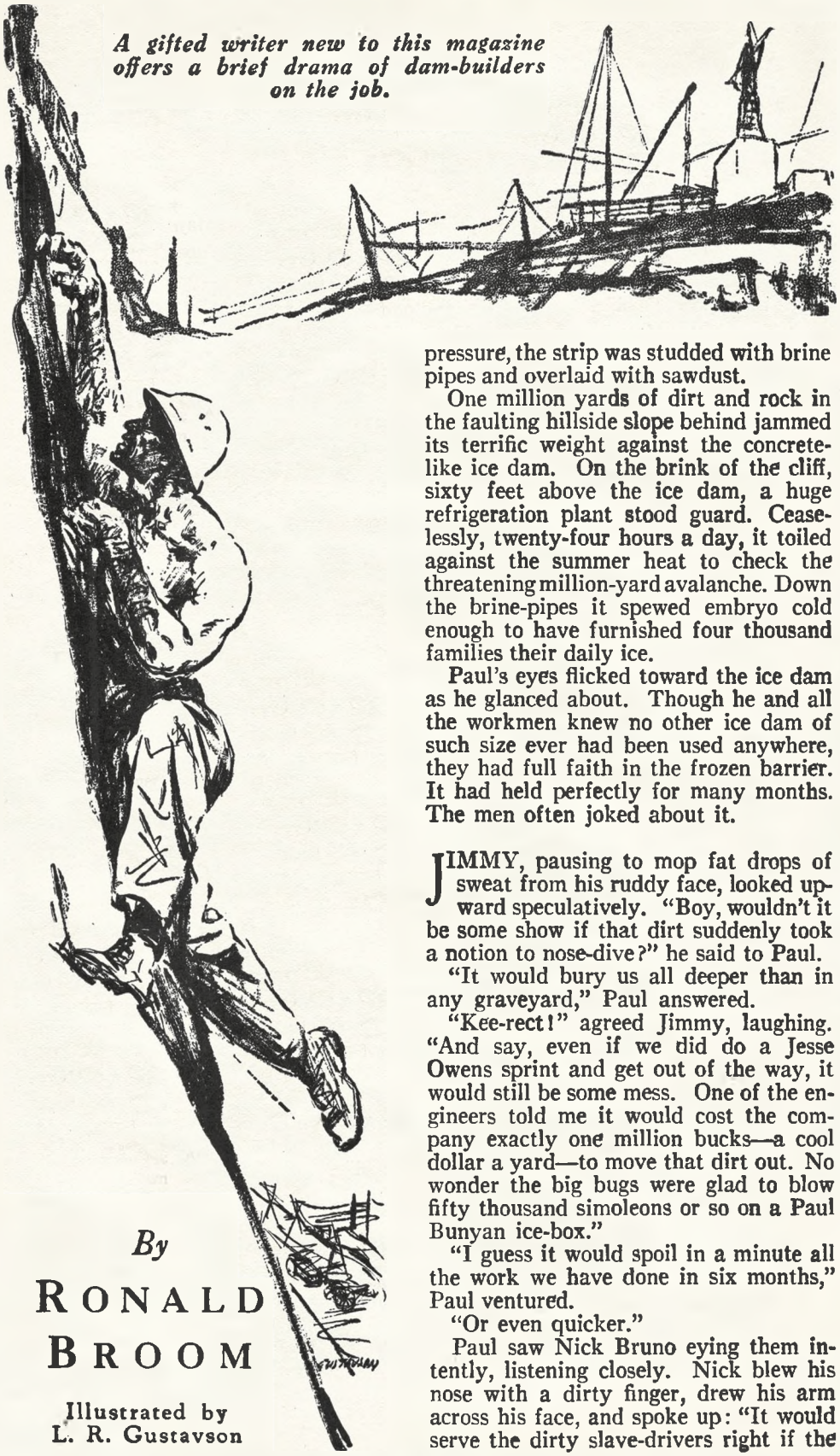
And the proof must be—

Paul shivered under beading sweat at the very thought. A glance at the towering construction trestle across the river, a fleeting look upward at the rocky walls of the Hole, chilled him through.

He knew he was not fundamentally cowardly. No cowardly man could work in the Hole, even if he never climbed to the high jobs. Down there below water-level, in the huge excavation that was to accommodate the east end of the great dam, workers were ever endangered by falling granite, ill-timed dynamite blasts, any one of a thousand other things that may happen when man sets out to hog-tie raw nature.

THERE was another ominous hazard: High on the away-from-river side of the Hole was a scallop-like dip at the top of the rocky wall, oddly resembling the spout groove of a gigantic cream pitcher. Across this hundred-foot depression, near its mouth, was a strip of ground frozen hard as the foundation of a glacier—a flinty ice dam. Twenty-five feet thick, twenty-five feet deep, and shaped on an arc with its backbone bowed toward the

A gifted writer new to this magazine offers a brief drama of dam-builders on the job.



By

RONALD BROOM

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

pressure, the strip was studded with brine pipes and overlaid with sawdust.

One million yards of dirt and rock in the faulting hillside slope behind jammed its terrific weight against the concrete-like ice dam. On the brink of the cliff, sixty feet above the ice dam, a huge refrigeration plant stood guard. Ceaselessly, twenty-four hours a day, it toiled against the summer heat to check the threatening million-yard avalanche. Down the brine-pipes it spewed embryo cold enough to have furnished four thousand families their daily ice.

Paul's eyes flicked toward the ice dam as he glanced about. Though he and all the workmen knew no other ice dam of such size ever had been used anywhere, they had full faith in the frozen barrier. It had held perfectly for many months. The men often joked about it.

JIMMY, pausing to mop fat drops of sweat from his ruddy face, looked upward speculatively. "Boy, wouldn't it be some show if that dirt suddenly took a notion to nose-dive?" he said to Paul.

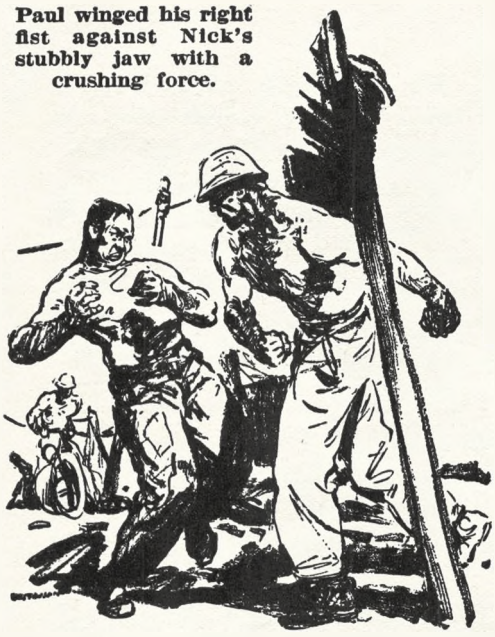
"It would bury us all deeper than in any graveyard," Paul answered.

"Kee-rect!" agreed Jimmy, laughing. "And say, even if we did do a Jesse Owens sprint and get out of the way, it would still be some mess. One of the engineers told me it would cost the company exactly one million bucks—a cool dollar a yard—to move that dirt out. No wonder the big bugs were glad to blow fifty thousand simoleons or so on a Paul Bunyan ice-box."

"I guess it would spoil in a minute all the work we have done in six months," Paul ventured.

"Or even quicker."

Paul saw Nick Bruno eying them intently, listening closely. Nick blew his nose with a dirty finger, drew his arm across his face, and spoke up: "It would serve the dirty slave-drivers right if the



Paul winged his right fist against Nick's stubbly jaw with a crushing force.

slide came down. They will put a fortune in machinery—but will they pay decent money to the poor men who make all their filthy machinery run? No—never! Yet they expect the poor men to work all hours of day and night, like steel machinery."

Paul and Jimmy slammed their jack-hammers into the granite again. Anything to discourage Nick or drown him out, Paul knew, before he got started again on one of his rebellious tirades.

Nick Bruno did not take the hint. He stepped over to another group, and the movements of his thick mouth showed he was shouting invectives. His eyes were fiery. Ox Carder strode over toward him. Paul heard Carder shout: "Pipe down, you loose-lipped radical."

"I will talk as I please!" came Bruno's answering shout. "In this country there is free speech. I will say what I—"

Carder's big right fist shot out, crashed against Bruno's mouth. Staggered, Nick did not go down, but blood showed around his bared brown teeth. "You've had that coming for a long time," Ox snapped, "and you'll get more if you don't smart up." Carder glared around at the rest of the gang. "Well, what are you staring at? Get to work and earn your day's pay, you guys."

The jack-hammers rattled again. Nick Bruno was silent, now, but his big lips moved in a soundless mutter. . . .

Evening was a welcome relief for Paul. His slender, wiry frame was not built to stand the heavy jack-hammer work. He always sat out on a gentle hill above the dam-site for an hour or two before flopping wearily into bed. He liked to breathe the night air. Somehow, too, there was music in the clatter and crash of the night shift's work, down in the glow of innumerable floodlights. His keen ears knew every different sound.

"The eighth wonder of the world, they call it," he mused, as he gazed out over the tremendous construction area. "And that is right."

Paul sat far longer than usual on the hillside this night, thinking about it. It was nearly midnight when he finally returned to the room he and Jimmy shared in one of the long, low buildings of Construction City. Jimmy was breathing deeply and rhythmically. "My only friend," thought Paul gloomily. "And perhaps I shall lose him."

He lay awake for a long while. Finally, as he was dropping away, a voice outside aroused him. He distinguished a familiar, growling mumble which died away at once. Nick Bruno had walked by, muttering to himself in an eerie tone. Paul was wondering why Nick was abroad at that hour, when at last he fell asleep.

NICK was missing when the gang began work the next morning. "He vas not in his quarters ven I come by," Oscar Schmidt revealed. "Ven I didn't heard him, I looked in."

"Well, good riddance!" boomed Ox Carder. "He was sore because I popped him. He probably pulled out and hooked a freight for the Coast."

That explanation seemed to satisfy the men. Paul was not so sure. He couldn't forget the weird sound of Bruno's voice in the middle of the night. "He had some pay coming, too," Paul thought.

But the day-shift jack-hammers already had begun to clatter. From across the river came the rattle of riveting on the high trestle. At one side of the Hole, a gigantic shovel renewed its intermittent snorting as its jagged maw scooped up huge bites of broken granite. The mile-long conveyor hummed, its wide belt speeding dirt and stone toward Rattlesnake Canon. Trucks roared. Men shouted. The whole great area, split by the silent, as-yet-unharnessed Columbia, was a place alive.

At night, those noises were melody. In the scorching daytime they jumbled into a riotous jangle to Paul's keen ears. He knew each noise, each different sound, by

heart. Today the jangle was not right, somehow. Some part of it was missing.

Yet three strenuous hours had passed, before he abruptly realized what was wrong. Then a sensation of cold prickled the back of his neck. Quickly he stepped to Jimmy's side. "Jimmy! The refrigeration plant isn't operating!"

"Huh? What makes you think so?" Jimmy looked up at the isolated building on the ledge.

"There's no sound from it."

"I didn't know it made a noise. I've certainly never heard it in this racket. You must be dreaming, Paul."

"But I'm not. It doesn't make much noise—but I always heard it. And today it isn't running. The ice dam must be weakening every minute."

Jimmy started to chuckle, but Paul's keen excitement stopped him. "Well," he said, obviously doubtful, "a man is on duty up there, or supposed to be. I'll tell Ox Carder what you think, and get him to send me up to see what's what."

Ten minutes later, Paul dubiously watched Jimmy stride briskly along the ledge road toward the refrigeration plant, a sheer two hundred feet above the bottom of the Hole. Jimmy was within a hundred feet of the building when a rifle cracked sharply. Jimmy stopped, put both hands to his side, and crumpled to the ground.

Construction noises died magically at the gun report. From the ice-plant window drifted a crazy, cackling laugh—the wild laugh of Nick Bruno.

Men scurried like jack-rabbits, deserting their machines as they scrambled out of the Hole. A million yards of fidgety hillside might stick unblocked for days—or it might slam down in another instant.

FIERCE anger was searing Paul. He climbed hastily with the others toward the outer end of the ledge road. A lump swelled in his throat as he watched his injured friend crawl feebly. Jimmy covered a hundred feet or more before he collapsed.

Paul and Ox Carder rushed out, risking the crazed Nick Bruno's bullets to bring Jimmy out of range. Others lifted him carefully into a truck, which hummed away toward Construction City hospital.

By then, two hundred men swarmed at the ledge road. More were pouring up. "The man's gone crazy!" Ox Carder shouted. "He's barricaded himself. He'll try to hang tough till the slide goes down. Maybe he killed the plant operator. We've got to rush him!"

But even as Carder suggested the attack, a black muzzle showed at a little window. There was a rattle like a jackhammer. A stream of lead whistled over the mob's head. "Machine-gun!" The incredulous gasp snapped from Ox Carder and a score of others.

THE insane workman, then, had not merely a single weapon, but a deadly arsenal, to hold his fort until a million yards of dirt, a million-dollar avalanche, thundered into the Hole. Rushing the plant would be slaughter. Heavy firing on it would mean ruining vital machinery, which had to operate again at once. It was a fiendish set-up.

Nick Bruno had the north and east sides covered against attack at the ledge level. He could easily stave off approach up the steep slope of the ice-dam groove to the south. And the perfect protection from the west was a sheer wall of granite two hundred feet high.

Mighty hatred welled up in Paul's heart toward the man who had shot down his only friend. Jimmy was everything to him, he realized suddenly. A one-way devotion, he was sure, for he never had proved himself to Jimmy. . . .

Understanding of the thing he must do jolted Paul like a terrific punch to the jaw. For a moment he stood staring down as if paralyzed. Then, while the electric murmur of the seething, swelling mob grew louder, Paul slipped quietly away. And as he did, he heard Oscar Schmidt's old-country accents trail after him: "Vat's wronk, pale-face? No guts?"

When a hump of rock hid him, he ran hard; down in the Hole, he slipped from one shelter to another, praying that Nick Bruno's attention was fixed on the mob above. Then he stood looking straight up the two-hundred-foot granite cliff.

Most of the surface was brick-wall smooth. Here and there were the faintest suggestions of hand- or foot-holds. Unclimbable—that's what men who could climb would have called it, Paul knew. But he was going to climb it.

He felt strangely numb. His feet seemed leaden, and an aching protest burned in his brain. His hands were sweaty. For a moment, stark, awful terror held him motionless.

Then, somehow, his fingers were hooked into almost invisible niches, and his feet were finding imperceptible support, and he was crawling away from the bottom.

The pain of intense fear made each move agony. Slowly he crawled upward. He dared not look down—realized that if he did, his unreasonable fear would make him fall. Retreat was already impossible. He knew that any move from now on might leave him hopelessly blocked, clinging like an insect to the perpendicular granite. He wondered how far he had progressed. He fought a hypnotizing urge to look down and see.

Slowly, the shock of his excruciating fear began to wear away. He was moving a bit faster now, his feet more sure, his hands ferreting out irregularities.

So sheer was the cliff that he could not see the boarded side of the refrigeration building as he looked up. He was halfway now, he guessed.

Paul's clinging fingers were tiring. His right hand bled a stream of oozing red drops. He pressed his cheek flat against the sun-heated granite, and rested momentarily. A shudder flicked through him at the faintest suggestion of a cramp in his left knee. He moved on upward.

"Concentrate—concentrate." He could not let his mind stray a fractional degree away from that rocky wall which seemed almost to overhang in its steepness. No time to think of Jimmy—dying, maybe. Nothing to do but climb—*up—up*.

Oddly, as Paul crawled higher, his tensing terror seemed to slip away. Suddenly he was no longer afraid of the sheer granite. His holds sometimes were virtually nothing. Once his right foot slipped off a quarter-inch niche. He clung tenaciously, tried again, scaled past the treacherous spot.

HE was startled when his fingers hooked in deeply. The top! Silently, he pulled himself to the narrow flat between the brink and the ice-plant wall. He dared not risk a pause to rest.

Cautiously he stood erect, to peer through the open window. Nick Bruno's back was toward him. The plant operator was bound like a mummy, in one corner. Acrobatically, Paul pulled his feet up, crouched on the sill. Nick spun around, roaring, as Paul leaped.

With a desperate lunge, Paul twisted the machine-gun from Bruno's hands as Nick's finger squeezed the trigger. Bullets thudded through the shingled roof. Nick charged Paul cruelly against a wall. Paul wormed away. He dived at Nick's legs, to send him sprawling to the floor.

They were up again, slugging in a savage, deathly clinch; Nick far outweighed him. "Tried to fool Nick, huh?" raged the maniac. "You will see!"

The force of Bruno's next mad-bull charge crashed them together against the wooden door. It smashed open. They rolled out, struggling on the ground in view of the mob far down the ledge road. Roaring, the horde of workmen charged upward at a run.

Nick tore away. He swung a venomous fist deep into Paul's stomach. As the sickening blow doubled him over, Paul winged his right fist against Nick's stubbly jaw with crushing force.

The blow dazed the crazed man. He staggered, turned, stumbled toward the cliff edge, swinging his arms idiotically. And as the workmen rushed up, Nick Bruno wavered at the brink, swayed, and plunged out of sight.

PAUL slumped down; blackness curtained his eyes and brain. When the light of day came back a moment later, he heard the hum of the refrigeration machinery. Opening his eyes, he saw big Ox Carder staring puzzledly at an oblong gold case. "Look what I found lying here," Carder said.

Paul snatched feebly and unsuccessfully at the case. "It's mine," he mumbled; but Carder opened it. Perplexed, he handed it to Oscar Schmidt—and in a moment, Schmidt was translating in halting, astonished tones to the encircling swarm. The story was etched on a plaque, beneath a gleaming gold medal:

Geneva, Switzerland. . . . Swiss Government award to Paul Moritz for distinguished bravery in the rescue of Rodger Eastman and party on the Matterhorn—following which daring feat, Moritz was saved after a ninety-foot fall into Satan Crevasse on Black Jules Glacier.

His eyes closed, Paul listened to the rising murmur of hard-muscled men who no longer were distant and unfriendly.

And only minutes later he was beside a white bed, answering the insistent questions of a fellow much too hardy to be rubbed out by a single leaden slug:

"I was afraid, after that, and no good any longer as a Matterhorn guide. I came to America to get away from my fear. I—I had not climbed again until today . . . Maybe I have beaten it, Jimmy."

Jimmy snorted loudly. A soft gruffness in his voice meant more than any words to Paul: "Listen, where do you get that 'maybe' stuff?"

Etching by Yngve Soderberg

Man's Boldest Adventure

A famous writer here sets forth for you the thrill-crammed story of Magellan and the first ship to sail round the world—a story fascinating as a great historical novel.

By STEFAN ZWEIG

THE quest for spices began it. From the days when the Romans, in their journeys and wars, first acquired a taste for the hot or aromatic, the pungent or intoxicating dietetic adjuvants of the East, the Western World found it impossible to get on without a supply of Indian spices in cellar and storeroom. Lacking spices, the food of Northern Europe was incredibly monotonous and insipid, remaining so far on into the Middle Ages. Centuries were to elapse before the fruits, the tubers and the other products which now seem commonplaces were to be used or acclimatized in Europe. Potatoes, tomatoes and maize were unknown. There were no lemons to prepare acid drinks; there was no sugar for sweetening; the cheering tea and coffee were still lacking; even at the tables of the rich and the powerful, there was naught to relieve the sameness of perpetual gluttony—until, wonderful to relate, it was found that a touch of spice from the Orient, a dash of pepper, a minute addition of ground nutmeg, the mingling of a little ginger or cinnamon with the coarsest of dishes, would give an unwonted and wholesome stimulus to the jaded palate.

The West, however, did not need spices and kindred Oriental products for the kitchen alone. The women of Europe made an increasing demand for the sweet-scented products of Araby; for wanton musk, fragrant ambergris, heavy-smelling attar of roses. They asked weavers and dyers to provide them with Chinese silks and Indian damasks; goldsmiths and jewelers to supply them with lustrous pearls from Ceylon and glittering diamonds from Hindustan. And the apothecaries must offer them Indian or Levantine specifics, such as opium, camphor and the costly gum-resin.

For the very reason that they were so fashionable, Indian goods were dear, and grew steadily dearer. It is difficult, nowadays, to calculate the febrile rise in their prices, for as is well known, historical accounts of such matters are vague and fabulous. Perhaps the best idea of the crazy cost of spices can be formed by recalling that in the Eleventh Century of our era pepper, which today stands unguarded on every restaurant table and is scattered almost as freely as sand, was counted out corn by corn, and was certainly worth its weight in silver. So precious was pepper that many States and towns kept their accounts in pepper as if it had been silver or gold. With pepper you could buy land, pay dowries, purchase the freedom of the city. Many princes assessed their taxes in weights of pepper. When, in the Middle Ages,

Decorations by Bertrand Zadig

you wished to describe a man as a bloated Crœsus, you spoke of him as a "pepper-sack."

What an Odyssey every peppercorn, every dried blossom had to traverse from its green plant in the Malay Archipelago to reach its last strand on the counter of a European shopkeeper! In the land of its origin, not one of these spices was a rarity. On the other side of the earth, the cinnamon-laurel grew in Ceylon, the clove in Amboina, the nutmeg in Banda, the pepper-plant in Malabar—as lavishly there as do thistles in our own land. In Malaysia a hundredweight of one of these products was worth no more than a teaspoonful here in the West. But trade-goods passed from hand to hand; the owner of each pair of hands demanded his recompense; and the goods we are now considering had to pass through many hands before, across deserts and seas, they reached those of the last purchaser, the consumer. Not only toilsome, but fearfully dangerous was the voyage across two or three tropical seas. Did but one petty ship out of five get home after three years well freighted with spices, its cargo would amply suffice to furnish a profit. In the fifteenth century, a sack of pepper was worth more than a human life.

But the phase of land-travel which now followed was no less arduous and no less perilous. By thousands, in these seaports, waited the camels in long, patient rows. Obediently, at a sign from the master, they knelt for the bales of pepper or nutmeg or what-not to be laden on their patient backs. Now the four-legged ships of the desert continued the northwestward trail. By the more easterly caravan route, which was the commoner, in journeys that lasted for months, the Arab caravans conveyed the Indian goods by way of Bussora, Baghdad and Damascus to Beyrout or Trebizond; or by the western route to Jidda and Cairo. Extremely ancient are these paths across the desert, well known to caravan leaders since the times of the Pharaohs and the Bactrians. But if known to the itinerant traders, they were known no less well to the Bedouins, the pirates of the desert. One bold raid would often carry off the fruit of countless laborious months.

The boldness which inspired Columbus' voyages to the West, those of Bartholomeu Dias' and Vasco da Gama's expeditions to the south, and Sebastian Cabot's voyage from Bristol to Labrador, was, above all, the outcome of the long-repressed yearning to free the West from Mohammedan domination, and to discover an unhampered route to the Indies on which Christian trade would no longer be shamefully subject to Islam. Kings and their counselors would have been impressed by the ideas of Columbus and Magellan; would have been friendly to these explorers' schemes for ideal reasons. But they would never have opened their purse-strings freely, nor would merchant adventurers have backed the schemes to the extent of equipping fleets, had there not been good prospects of discovering a new trade route to the Indies, to the land of gold and spices.

HOWEVER, it is a part of the tragic fate of forerunners that they should die without catching more than a passing glimpse of the Promised Land. Prince Henry the Navigator did not survive to see any one of the great discoveries which were to make his country memorable in the history of geographical discovery.

Columbus had no idea that he had discovered a new continent. Down to the day of his death he continued stubbornly to believe that he had reached the continent of Asia, and that by steering westward from his "Hispaniola" he would, within a few days, be able to reach the mouth of the Ganges. But that was why Portugal was so terribly alarmed. Of what use would be the papal charter conferring a right to all lands reached from the east if Spain could steal a march upon her by reaching the Indies from the west? If Portugal wished to retain her advantages and her privileges in the Indies, her only chance was to take up arms against these unexpectedly successful rivals.

Fortunately the Pope was able to avert the threatening peril. Taking the globe as if it had been an apple, by the Bull of May 4, 1493, he sliced it in twain. The

line of section started a hundred leagues from the Cape Verde Island. All undiscovered countries westward of this line were to belong to his dear child Spain; all that lay eastward, to his dear child Portugal. To begin with, the two children expressed themselves grateful for this gift. Soon, however, Portugal grew uneasy. . . . Within which half would the much desired, the precious, Spice Islands lie? At the date of the settlement, neither the Pope nor the kings nor the sages knew, for the globe had not yet been measured. Spain had to swallow the huge area of the Americas; and on the other, little Portugal had to swallow the whole of India and Africa.

COLUMBUS' voyage aroused measureless astonishment in Europe. Immediately thereafter, came a frenzy for adventure and discovery such as the Old World had never before known. Here is a brief catalogue of the incomparable results of these voyages of discovery. In 1498 Vasco da Gama, having rounded the Cape of Good Hope in the previous November, reached Calicut on the Malabar Coast. The same year, Cabot (an Italian navigator in the English service) reached Newfoundland and the mainland of North America. In 1500, independently of one another, Pinzon under the Spanish flag and Cabral under the Portuguese discovered Brazil, while Gaspar Cortoreal, a Portuguese successor of the Vikings, reached Labrador.

During the first years of the Sixteenth Century, there was a further quick succession of wonderful discoveries. Two Portuguese expeditions, in one of which Amerigo Vespucci participated, followed down the South American coast as far as the Rio de la Plata. In 1505, the Portuguese discovered Mauritius; in 1507, Madagascar; in 1509 they reached Malacca, thus having the key of the Malay Archipelago in their hands. In 1513, Ponce de Leon discovered Florida; also in 1513, from the peak of Darien, Nunez de Balboa, first of all Europeans, caught sight of the Pacific Ocean.

Only one thing remained to do—the last, the finest, and the most difficult—to circumnavigate the world on one and the same vessel, thus giving absolutely incontrovertible proof—in defiance of the cosmologists and theologians of the past and of the flat-earth lunatics of today—that the world is quasi-spherical in form. This was to be the life work of Ferdinand Magellan.

CHAPTER II

Magellan in the Indies

IT was a spectacular occasion, this March 25, 1505, when Portugal's first war-fleet, which was to inaugurate the conquest of a new empire in the East, departed from Lisbon. There had been nothing comparable to it in history since the crossing of the Hellespont by Alexander the Great. The affair was no less tremendous, seeing that the Portuguese fleet, likewise, was setting forth to conquer a world. Twenty ships were awaiting the King's order to up anchor and sail; in addition to the hundreds of able seamen trained for war, there were on board fifteen hundred fully equipped and armored soldiers, as well as a couple of hundred bombardiers or gunners.

For good reasons had the title of Viceroy of the Indies been given to Dom Francisco d'Almeida, the Admiral of the Fleet. He was to dismantle and demolish all the Mohammedan trading-stations in India and Africa, to build fortresses at all important strategic points, and to garrison them adequately. In anticipation of England's political ideas, he was to occupy the places of ingress and egress from all inland seas; block the chief straits from Gibraltar to Malacca; close the southern inlets from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf into the Indian Ocean, which was to be made impracticable for any maritime traffic other than that of Portugal. He had also received instructions to annihilate the sea-power of the Sultan of Egypt and of the Indian rajahs; to keep the eastern forts under such strict control that from the year of Our Lord 1505 no ship unprovided with a Portuguese license could take on board so much as a peppercorn.

In association with these military and naval schemes, he was to spread Christianity in the countries he would conquer —this plan giving his expedition the character of a Crusade. . . .

Among the fifteen hundred who, with bowed heads, had knelt before the altar and with uplifted hands had taken the oath of loyalty, was a man of twenty-four, Ferdinand Magellan, who had not as yet made a name in the world. Of his origin little more is known than that he was born about the year 1480, his very birthplace being open to dispute. About his family nothing more is known than that it was noble, though only in the fourth grade of nobility, that of the *"fidalgos de cota de armes."* Still, this

sufficed to make him an armiger, and to give him the entry at court. It seems probable that in early youth he had served Queen Elinor as one of her pages, though there is no evidence of his ever having held an important position at court. When he became, at the age of twenty-four, a member of the expeditionary force to the East, it was only as a plain "*sobresaliente*," one of the fifteen hundred subalterns who took their meals with the crew and the cabin-boys.

After a few minor skirmishes, which were plunder-raids rather than genuine warfare, Magellan received his true baptism of fire in the naval action of Cannanore on March 16, 1506. This battle of Cannanore marked a turning-point in the history of Portuguese conquests in the Indies. In 1498, at the time of Vasco da Gama's first arrival on the Malabar coast, the Zamorim of Calicut had given him a friendly reception, being fully prepared to trade with the representatives of this unknown people. Eight years later, however, when the Portuguese reappeared with a fleet of larger and better-armed ships, the Indian ruler was quick to realize that the strangers from the West had come for conquest as well as for trade—that they intended to make themselves masters both by land and by sea.

NOTHING but force could put restraint upon these conquerors, so that the sole resource of the injured parties was to get together in an attempt to destroy the Portuguese in the Indies before they had established their power. The attack was prepared by the Zamorim of Calicut, privily supported by the Sultan of Egypt, and doubtless by the Venetians, who (gold being thicker than blood) under the rose sent gun-founders to Calicut. At one blow, the Portuguese navy was to be attacked and destroyed.

The Portuguese were saved only by a lucky chance. Wandering hither and thither through the world in those days was an Italian adventurer named Ludovico Vartema, a bold fellow whose vigor makes him no less attractive than his courage. The young man had been driven forth on his travels, not by ambition, but by a native lust for vagrancy. He was the first *giaour* to enter the forbidden city of Mecca, his description of which is still the standard one. After numerous vicissitudes and with much hazard to his life, he not only made his way to the Indies, to Sumatra and Borneo (which had already been visited by Marco Polo), but was the first European to set foot upon the greatly coveted Spice Islands—a fact which was to have much influence upon Magellan's subsequent adventures. On the way home through Calicut, disguised as a Mohammedan monk, Vartema learned from two Christian renegades of the Zamorim's intended attack upon the Portuguese. Moved by a sense of Christian solidarity, at grave risk to his life he made his way to Cannanore, where he had a private interview with Dom Lourenço, son of Viceroy Almeida. Vartema's information was of the utmost importance to the Portuguese. Whereas, on March 15, 1506, the Zamorim, with two hundred ships, had hoped to take the eleven of the Portuguese by surprise, these were in battle array when the Indian forces appeared on the scene. This was the most serious attack which Portugal had as yet had to repel; but with the loss of eighty dead and two hundred wounded (a huge number for the first colonial wars), they won a victory which, for the time being, made them supreme in the Indian Ocean.

Among the wounded was Magellan, it being his fate during these years to be wounded again and again without securing distinction. He was sent with the other wounded to Africa, where we lose track of him, for who troubles to report the life or death of a subaltern? No doubt he was shipped on one of the transports; and it is possible that, in the summer of 1507, on the same ship he accompanied Vartema to Lisbon. But he had already become inspired with a craving for far horizons. Portugal seemed a humdrum place, and his brief home leave was nothing more than an impatient waiting for the departure of the next Indian fleet, which brought him back to his true home—adventure.

A special task had been assigned to this new fleet, with which Magellan got back to the Indies—to gain control of the Strait of Malacca, which was the key to the Malay Archipelago. The ruler of Portugal began by sending Lopez de Sequeira to Malacca with no more than four ships, to spy out the land while presenting himself as nothing more than a peaceful trader.

The little fleet reached Hindustan without incident in April 1509. On September 11, the little fleet anchored in the port of Malacca. From afar those on board the ships could see that Vartema had not exaggerated when he said that in this harbor "there are more ships than

in any other place in the world." Barks, junks and prahus of Malay, Chinese and Siamese origin thronged the roads. Thanks to its position, this strait, of which the Golden Chersonese forms the eastern boundary, had become the great place of assembly in the Eastern seas. Malacca was the Gibraltar of the East, commanding the route to the Malay Archipelago, the South Seas in general, China and Japan. It was natural, therefore, that it should be a great emporium for goods of all sorts: for spices from the Moluccas; cloves and rubies from Ceylon; porcelain from China and ivory from Siam; cashmeres from Hindustan and sandal-wood from Timor; damascened swords, pepper from the Malabar coast, and slaves from Borneo.

THE Portuguese stared open-mouthed at the huge city, this jewel of the worshipers of the Prophet sparkling in tropical sunshine, and destined, so they thought, to become the brightest jewel in the crown of their king, who was to be the Portuguese Emperor of the East. The Malay Sultan, in his turn, contemplated the new arrivals in ships of an unfamiliar type with no less amazement and with much disquiet. He knew that these white robbers could fight like devils —were in fact irresistible. The best course would be, then, to counter deceit with deceit, and await the chance of striking a shrewd blow before they had gathered their forces for the assault.

With high-flown protestations of delight, therefore, did the Sultan of Malacca receive the envoys of Sequeira, and with exuberant gratitude accept their presents. They were heartily welcome, he declared, and his markets were open for them to trade as they pleased. Within a few days he would get together as much pepper and other spices as they could carry home with them. Hospitably he invited the captains to a banquet in his palace; and although this courteous invitation was refused (the Portuguese having been warned of the dangers of acceptance), the soldiers and the sailors were given shore-leave, and rejoiced to stretch their legs once more on firm ground. What a comfort to escape from the ships! They sat chattering in the tea-houses, bought what they wanted in the markets, delighted in the tart Malayan drinks and in the flavor of fresh fruit. Never, since leaving Lisbon, had they secured so cordial a reception. The Malays, in their turn, paddled off by hundreds to the Portuguese ships in their crazy-looking catamarans; scrambled up the ropes as adroitly as monkeys; were amazed at the numerous foreign utensils they had never seen before. Brisk barter went on between the two parties, and the crew were not best pleased to learn that the Sultan had quickly got the promised freight together, that Sequeira could send his boats to fetch it next morning and would have it aboard before evening.

Sequeira, delighted to hear that matters were to be arranged so quickly, did actually send the boats of the four largest vessels, strongly manned, to collect the goods. He himself, being a Portuguese nobleman who regarded mercantile business as beneath his dignity, remained on board, to play chess with one of his comrades. The three other big galleons lay drowsily at anchor. But Garcia de Sousa, the captain of the little caravel which was the fifth ship of the Portuguese fleet, was struck by the fact that, from the increasing number of Malay prahus which were surrounding the four galleons, ostensibly to bring goods on board, more and more of the naked brown-skinned fellows were climbing up the ship's ropes. His suspicions were aroused.

Luckily the little caravel had not sent her own boat ashore, and De Sousa ordered the trustiest of his men to pull over quickly to the flagship and warn the captain. De Sousa chose his messenger well, for the man sent was named Ferdinand Magellan. With sturdy strokes, he pulled across, to find Captain Sequeira tranquilly playing chess; but he was quick to note that several Malays stood behind each of the players, ostensibly watching the game, but each of them with a kris ready to hand. Inconspicuously he whispered a warning to Sequeira. The latter, not wishing to arouse suspicion, quietly continued his game, but he commanded one of the seamen to take an outlook from the masthead, and kept his own sword-hand ready.

Magellan's warning had come at the last moment, and indeed too late. At this precise instant a column of smoke rose from the Sultan's palace, the prearranged signal for a simultaneous assault on the Portuguese by land and sea. On the flagship, the sailor at the masthead uttered a shout of alarm. Sequeira sprang to his feet, and struck down the Malays before they could use their krises. A signal was piped; on all the ships the Malays were thrust overboard, and those who regained their prahus made a joint attack upon the ships. Sequeira gave orders to slip the cables and bore down on the enemy, at whom his guns thundered. Thanks to the watchfulness of De Sousa and promptness of Magellan, the surprise attempt to seize the fleet failed.

Less fortunate was the fate of the shore party, a handful of men taken by surprise, scattered through the streets among thousands of foes. Most of the Portuguese were mercilessly cut down when the signal was given; some were taken prisoners; and only a few succeeded in making their way to the strand. Even so, it was too late, for the Malays had seized their boats, thus making return to the ships impossible, so that one after another the Europeans fell into their hands. One only among them, the most valiant of them all, Francisco Serrão, close friend of Magellan, made good his escape. He was surrounded, wounded, and might have been thought already doomed. Magellan, however, rowed to land accompanied by one of the soldiers, the pair of them venturing their lives to save their companion. Coming to the rescue of Serrão, outnumbered ten to one, his friend brought him off alive. . . . In this disastrous attack, the Portuguese lost their boats and more than a third of their strength. But Magellan won a blood-brother, whose friendship and trust were to be decisive in his future career.

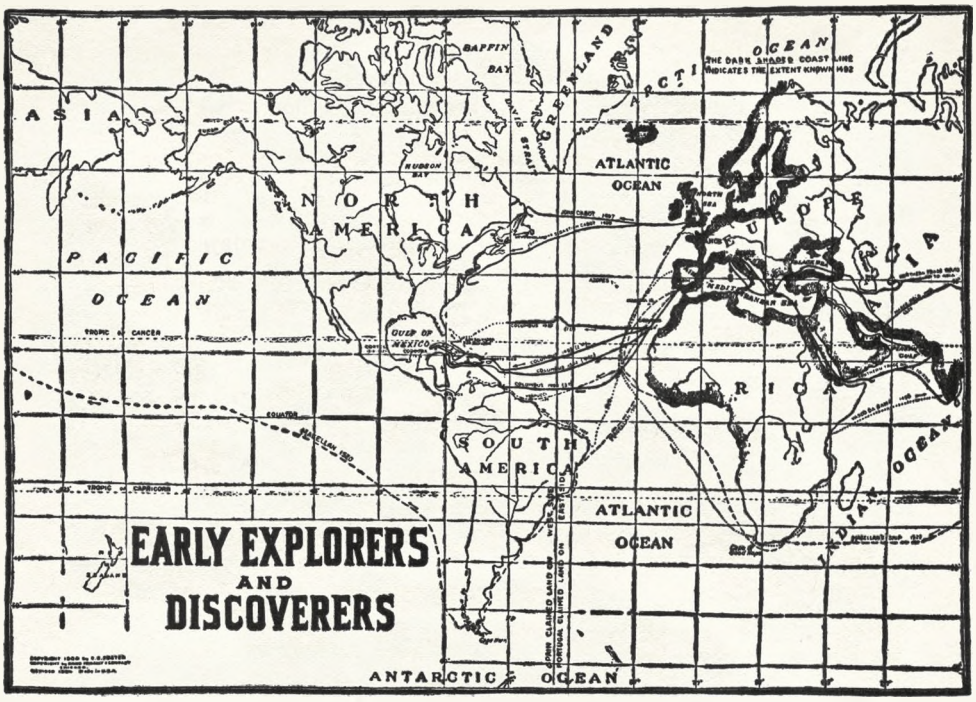
Francisco Serrão's remarkable private enterprise, which was to prove so decisive in Magellan's career, forms an agreeable and tranquillizing episode in the bloody chronicle of Portuguese battles and massacres. Among the *conquistadores* who were both heroic and brutal, the figure of this voluntary Crusoe assumes a most congenial aspect. After bidding farewell in Malacca to Magellan, who was about to return home, Francisco Serrão set sail for the Moluccas with the other captains. They reached their destination without incident, and secured a friendly welcome. The natives of the Spice Islands, naked and pacific, lived in a state of nature. They had no coined money; nor did they set much store on lucre. For two or three bells or bracelets, the simple-minded islanders would barter spices by the hundredweight, so that at the first two islands the Portuguese touched, Banda and Amboina, they could fill the holds of their ships to bursting.

Perhaps in their greed they had overloaded their ships. Anyhow, the one commanded by Francisco Serrão struck a rock and split. The disaster was irreparable, and the mariners were lucky to get off with their lives. The forsaken men wandered hither and thither on the reef for a few days until at length Serrão, by a cunning device, got possession of a pirate craft on which he returned to Amboina. Here the chief gave the wanderers a no less friendly reception than when they had come as great lords.

It was, of course, the military duty of Captain Francisco Serrão to return forthwith to Malacca. But the paradisaical landscape, the warm balsamic climate, had seriously undermined his sense of military discipline. He no longer cared a fig or a peppercorn whether, ten or twelve thousand miles away in Europe, a monarch might be grumbling. He felt he had done more than enough for Portugal, had carried his skin to market too often. Now he was going to seize his chance of enjoying his own life after the manner of the naked and carefree inhabitants of these fortunate islands. Without more ado, he leaped from the heroic world into an idyllic one, having determined to adopt the wholly primitive, splendidly slothful manner of life of these friendly savages. The dignity of Grand Vizier, bestowed on him by the King of Ternate, was not burdensome. The only service he was called upon to perform was to act as military adviser in case of war. In return, he received a house of his own with a sufficiency of slaves and a pretty brown wife, by whom he had several children.

For years this new Odysseus continued to enjoy the embraces of his dusky Calypso, with no demon of ambition to expel him from a *dolce far niente* Eden. Down to the day of his death, nine years later, the refugee from Western civilization never quitted the Sunda Islands.

To begin with, Francisco Serrão's renunciation of the world seemed to have no bearing upon the life and exploits of Magellan. In reality, however, the epicurean choice of his friend exerted a de-



cisive influence upon Magellan's life, and therewith upon the history of maritime discovery. For across the vast oceanic distances the pair, connected by ties of close friendship, remained in unceasing contact. Thanks to Serrão's letters, Magellan was better primed than any other European with precise geographical and statistical data about the Sunda Islands. We can hardly doubt that it was through his keeping in touch with Francisco Serrão that Magellan must have happened upon the inquiry whether these islands that lay so far to the east might not be more readily approachable by Columbus' route from the west, than by that of Vasco da Gama, from the east.

The leading idea, a few scars on his sunburned frame, and a Malay slave whom he bought in Malacca—these three things were all that Magellan brought home after seven years' service on the Indian front. The battle-scarred soldier must have been filled with strange and perhaps reluctant astonishment when, in 1512, he at length set eyes upon a very different Lisbon, a very different Portugal, from those he had quitted seven years before. King Emanuel *"el fortunado,"* was now the richest monarch in Europe. Everything was changed. Everything was more luxuriant, more inclined to promote enjoyment and spendthrift ease; as if the conquest of spices had given wings to the gold it brought. Yet he himself, Ferdinand Magellan, had returned as he had left, an "unknown soldier," in soiled, torn, blood-stained clothing; expected by no one, thanked by no one, greeted by no one. As a stranger, Magellan the subaltern came home after seven years' service in the Indies.

CHAPTER III

Magellan Renounces Portugal

HEROIC eras are never sentimental. Little gratitude did the kings of Spain and Portugal show to those bold *conquistadores* who added whole worlds to their dominions. Columbus was brought back to Seville in chains; Cortez fell into disgrace; Pizarro was murdered; Nunez de Balboa, the discoverer of the Pacific, was beheaded; Camoëns, Portuguese warrior and poet, spent, like Cervantes, months and years in jail.

It counted for nothing that Magellan had fought at Cannanore, at Malacca, and in many other battles; that he had dozens of times risked life and health for Portugal's victory. When he got back home, he was not more esteemed for his exertions. Only to the chance that he was of noble blood and had in youth been attached to the King's household did he owe the favor of being reenrolled as a pensioner or almoner—with the beggarly allowance of one thousand reis a month. It was impossible that an honorable and ambitious man should

long content himself with such a pittance; it was only to be expected that Magellan would seize the first opportunity of renewed war service.

Yet it was utterly alone, without protector or patron, that Magellan sought audience of his king, thus choosing the most unlucky path a man can choose at court—the honest and direct route.

Magellan asked whether the monarch could not offer him some worthy post in the royal service, since he felt too young and vigorous to spend his life as a court pensioner and recipient of alms. Ships set sail from Portugal to the Indies, to Africa or to Brazil, month after month, and almost week after week. Nothing could seem more reasonable than to give the command of one of these to a man who knew the Eastern sailing routes perhaps better than anyone else then alive. King Emanuel, however, had by now begun to find the hard, challenging glances of his would-be servitor intolerable. He coldly refused. There was no position in the Portuguese service for Ferdinand Magellan.

THAT was over and done with. The importunate suitor endured a rebuff. But Magellan had something else to request, a petition which was rather an inquiry than a petition. He asked whether His Majesty would have any objection to Magellan's taking service in some other country, where he might find better chances of promotion. With mortifying indifference, Emanuel replied that there could be no objection whatever.

Magellan turned his talent for silence to admirable use. Any other man, after being treated so contemptuously by Emanuel, would probably have hastened to leave the country and offer his services to another sovereign. But Magellan stayed quietly in Portugal for another year, without informing anyone as to his schemes. There was nothing conspicuous about his manner of life. All that anyone could notice—in so far as such conduct was noticeable in one who had been a navigator to the Indies—was that he had a good many interviews with pilots and captains, and especially with those who had made voyages to the South Seas. Even when, in King Emanuel's private library, he gained access to all the charts, the sailing directions, and the log-books of the latest expeditions to Brazil (kept as *secretissima* in the "Tesoraria") this could not arouse suspicion, for what should an unoccupied ship's captain study in his abundant leisure other than such documents?

Somewhat more striking was a new friendship entered into by Magellan. Ruy Faleiro, with whom he became more and more closely associated, was an unstable, irritable, nervous intellectual, who had never been on board a ship or left the soil of Portugal, but knew what he knew about the heavens and the earth from calculations, reading, tables and maps; in this abstract sphere, however, as a cartographer and astronomer, he was accounted the greatest authority in Portugal.

Magellan passed on to Faleiro what he had learned from Serrão concerning the far eastward situation of the Spice Islands, and mooted the possibility of reaching them from the western side by a new route. Faleiro, having studied Magellan's scheme, provided it with a scientific foundation. With precise calculations and with tables of figures, he was able to confirm what Magellan had reached by emotional guesswork. The more the theoretician and the practical man compared their suppositions, the more manifold the lights they threw upon their problem, the more zealous did they become, until definite plans crystallized out. The upshot was that they determined to realize jointly a design which had been jointly formed. They mutually pledged themselves to keep the details secret until achievement had crowned their efforts; they also decided, in case of need, without the aid of their country and perhaps against their country, to do a deed which was to benefit, not one land alone, but all mankind.

WITHOUT taking leave of the Portuguese court, and without informing any of his friends or acquaintances of his plans, Magellan crossed the Spanish frontier. For the time being, his associate Ruy Faleiro stayed behind in Lisbon.

Accompanied by his slave Enrique, who had followed him for years like a shadow, Magellan reached Seville on October 20, 1517.

He could not have chosen a better place of sojourn for Seville, in its commanding position on the Guadalquivir, was one of the largest and most important commercial cities of Spain, and had already become an important center of trade with the Indies. So great was the afflux of merchants and captains, of brokers and factors, that the King had opened there his own trading-house, the famous Casa

de Contratacion, or India House. Here was collected and stored every document relating to the activities of the navigators and traders. And everyone who planned some new enterprise under the Spanish flag began by reporting at the Casa de Contratacion.

Magellan would appear to have secured some important introductions before leaving Portugal. However that may be, he was cordially received, on arrival in Seville, by Diogo Barbosa, who had likewise renounced Portuguese nationality some years since, and for fourteen years had been highly respected in the important position of alcalde of the Seville arsenal, and was a knight of the Order of Santiago. Various authorities declare that the Barbosas were kindred of the Magellans; but what made the two men draw closer together than could have cousinship was the fact that a good while back Diogo Barbosa had made a voyage to the Indies—before ever Magellan went there. His son Duarte Barbosa had inherited the father's adventurous spirit. He too had sailed the Indian, Persian and Malayan seas, and was the author of a book of travel greatly prized in its day. The three men promptly became close friends.

Barbosa hospitably invited Magellan to stay in his house; and ere long the energetic and imposing man of thirty-seven found favor in the eyes of Barbosa's daughter Barbara. Magellan speedily became the alcalde's son-in-law, and this alliance gave him a strong footing in Seville. He was no longer a nameless vagrant. Vouched for by his friendship and his marital alliance with the Barbosas, he could unhesitatingly approach the Casa de Contratacion.

We have no trustworthy information regarding his reception at that institution, or the conversations he held there. We do not know how much of his scheme Magellan, bound as he was to Ruy Faleiro by the terms of their mutual oath of secrecy, thought fit to disclose; but India House refused to help Ferdinand Magellan. The very first door of the numerous doors which led into the King's audience-chamber was slammed in his face.

This must have been a black day for the projector. His journey, his recommendations, had been fruitless. Vain had been the eloquence, the passion, which had carried him away in his attempts to persuade those able to help him. His best arguments had not won over the three experts of the Casa de Contratacion.

Often, however, in war, when a commander believes himself defeated and is preparing to retreat, a messenger brings tidings that the enemy has withdrawn, has evacuated the battlefield. Such was now Magellan's experience. At the very time when he supposed that all three members of the commission were hopelessly adverse, it was announced to him that one of them had been greatly impressed by his ideas. Juan de Aranda, the "factor," the business head of the Casa de Contratacion, announced that he was desirous to hear fuller details of this extremely interesting and, as he fancied, practicable scheme—in private—if Magellan would get into touch with him.

THE last obstacle had been removed. Thenceforward the factor of the Casa de Contratacion, whose recommendation in nautical matters was of decisive value at court, determined to forward Magellan's affairs in the conviction that thereby he would be forwarding his own. The original partnership between Magellan and Faleiro was thus enlarged into a trio, to which Magellan contributed practical experience, Faleiro theoretical knowledge, and Aranda capital and business acumen.

Aranda did not waste any time. He promptly wrote a long letter to the Chancellor of Castile, explaining the importance of the enterprise, and recommending Magellan as "one who might do a great service to His Highness" (The King). He enlisted the interest of various privy councilors, thus insuring a royal audience for Magellan. Nay more, this zealous intermediary declared his readiness, not only to accompany Magellan to Valladolid, but also to defray the expenses of the journey and of upkeep while at court. The wind had changed. Magellan's boldest hopes had been more than fulfilled. Within one month in Spain, though it was a foreign land, he had effected more than during ten years' self-sacrifice in his native country. Now, when the doors of the royal palace had been opened to him, he wrote to Faleiro to come with all speed to Seville.

A deed of partnership was drawn up and signed, in accordance with which Aranda, for acting as broker, was to have one-eighth of the total profit of the venture (out of which neither Aranda nor Magellan nor Faleiro was ever destined to make any money). Certainly we cannot regard this share as an excessive

payment for the services of the shrewd and energetic factor, who knew well enough that anyone who wished to influence the young and infirm ruler must begin by winning over his Privy Council.

We have several divergent and therefore untrustworthy reports about what passed at this decisive council. The only thing of which we can be certain is that something in the behavior and the words of the sinewy and sunburned seaman must, from the first, have created a powerful impression. There were very few Europeans who had journeyed as far to the east as he; and when he spoke of the Spice Islands, of their geographical position, their climate and the immeasurable riches they could supply, his acquaintance with Vartema and his friendship with Serrão made his statements seem more trustworthy than those who had learned of the Far East only from books and maps. At a sign from Magellan, the slave Enrique, whom he had brought with him from Malacca, stepped forward. The members of the Privy Council were naturally astonished at sight of this slender Malay, the first man of his race they had set eyes on. Magellan had also brought to the meeting a slave woman from Sumatra, and the pair of Orientals chattered to one another in an unknown tongue, much as if a pair of hummingbirds were twittering before the august assembly. At length Magellan read, as weighty evidence, a letter from his friend Francisco Serrão, now Grand Vizier of Ternate, in which it was stated that the country where he had settled was "a land greater and richer than the world which Vasco da Gama discovered."

Having thus awakened the interest of his audience, Magellan proceeded to his inferences and demands. As he had just explained, the Spice Islands, whose wealth was incalculable, lay so far to the east of the Indies that it was needless to approach them as did the Portuguese by the eastern route after rounding the southernmost point of Africa, crossing the vast Indian Ocean, and then sailing through the Sunda Sea. There was a much shorter approach to them from the west, which was precisely the part of the world which the Holy Father had assigned to the Spaniards. No doubt there was a long barrier in the path, in the form of the newly discovered continent of America. But he, Ferdinand Magellan, had received sure intelligence that there was a way through, a *"paso,"* an *"estrecho."* Its precise situation was his secret and that of his friend Ruy Faleiro. He was prepared to make the voyage by this passage in the service of the Spanish Crown if a fleet were placed at his disposal. Thus Spain would get ahead of Portugal, though the Portuguese were impatiently stretching out their hands toward the treasury of the world. His Majesty—and here Magellan made obeisance before the pale and delicate young man with the prominent lower lip of the Hapsburgs—the mightiest monarch of the day, would become also by far the richest.

CHARLES and his councilors had listened, perhaps indifferently, perhaps interestedly. Now the unexpected happened. It was not the humanists or men of learning who showed most enthusiasm for this voyage round the world which was to establish once for all the circumference of our planet and to set at rest the fable of Lost Atlantis—for it was the expert, the dreaded skeptic Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos, who espoused the cause of Magellan. Through his advocacy the scheme was approved on principle, Magellan and Faleiro being told to prepare for His Majesty a written statement of their proposals and demands.

Magellan's and Ruy Faleiro's demands were conceded with a haste which was in marked contrast with ordinary governmental activities of those days, and everything was speedily put through. On March 22, 1518, King Charles, in his own name and in that of his (insane) mother Joanna, subscribed with the formal *"Yo el Rey"*—"I, the King"— the *"capitulacion,"* the binding agreement, with Magellan and Ruy Faleiro.

"Inasmuch as"—thus begins this verbose document—"Ferdinand Magellan, Knight, born in the kingdom of Portugal, and Alderman (bachelor) Ruy Faleiro, of the same kingdom, propose to do Us a great service within the limits of that part of the ocean which has been allotted to Us, We order that the following agree-

ment shall be entered into with you for this purpose."

The first of the subsequent clauses assigns to Magellan and Faleiro exclusive rights within the specified area. "You have, with the favor of fortune, to proceed upon the discovery of that part of the ocean which lies within the limits of what has been assigned to Us; and seeing that it would not be right for others to work injury to you by proceeding thither while you are engaged on this enterprise, it is my favor and my will, and I pledge myself, that for the ten years next ensuing We shall grant to no one permission to proceed by the same route as that which you have chosen for your discoveries. Should anyone wish to undertake such journeys and should he ask our permission, We, before granting such permission, shall inform you of the fact, that you may simultaneously provide yourself with the same equipment and have as many ships as the others who propose such discoveries as you yourselves are undertaking."

In the financial clauses, Magellan and Faleiro, "in view of their good-will and of their services," are assigned one-twentieth of all income which may accrue from the lands they will discover, in addition to a particular right to two islands should they discover more than six new ones.

In this document it is likewise expressly declared that the two Portuguese are to receive all possible rights, that the King pledges himself to equip five ships of a specified tonnage, providing them with crew, victuals and artillery sufficient for two years. The noteworthy document concludes thus: "In respect of all this I pledge my honor and my royal word that everything shall be precisely arranged as is specified in the foregoing, and to that end I have commanded that the *capitalucion* shall be drawn up and signed with my name."

NOR was this all. It was expressly agreed that every office and official in Spain from the highest to the lowest was to be informed about this agreement, that they might support Magellan and Faleiro in their undertakings, for all time.

In his boldest dreams, Magellan could not have expected more than this. But something still more wonderful and still more important ensued. King Charles, though in youth he was of a hesitating and reserved temperament, became the most impatient and passionate advocate of the new voyage of the argonauts. Something in the virile demeanor of Magellan must have personally enthused the youthful monarch. For it was he who now continually urged on the work. Week after week he asked for reports upon the progress of the equipment. Whenever any obstacles were encountered, Magellan merely had to apply to His Majesty, and a royal letter would brush resistance out of the way. This was almost the only occasion in the course of his long reign on which the usually vacillating Emperor proved inviolably faithful to a great idea. To Magellan, the homeless outcast, the despised and rejected, it must have seemed a wonderful transformation to find himself, of a sudden, appointed Captain-General of a fleet, Knight of the Order of Santiago, Governor-to-be of all new islands and lands, Lord of life and death, Master of a whole armada, and for the first time able, unhindered, to do his own will.

CHAPTER IV

Departure

ON August 10, 1519, a year and five months after Charles, the ruler of two worlds, had signed the "*capitulacion*," the five ships at length left the port of Seville and dropped down stream to San Lucar de Barrameda, where the Guadalquivir debouches into the Atlantic. Here the last overhaul and the victualing of the fleet were to take place. Substantially, farewell to Spain was already said at Seville. In the church of Santa Maria de la Victoria, Magellan, having with bended knee taken the oath of fealty, was, before his assembled crew and a reverent crowd of spectators, given the royal standard.

Magellan held the final muster in the port of San Lucar opposite the castle of Duke Medina Sidonia. Before the start, he examined and re-examined his fleet with the tender affection of a conductor surveying his orchestra before a concert. He already knew these five ships as well as he knew the palm of his own hand. He must have been horrified when he looked at them for the first time at Seville—worn, old and battered; since then, however, a lot of work had been done on them. The galleons had been thoroughly renovated; rotten timbers had been replaced; from stem to stern they had been calked and scoured. Magellan had personally tested every one of the planks,

lest it should be perished or worm-eaten; had examined every rope in the rigging. The sails were of new and strong linen, stamped with the cross of San Jago, patron saint of Spain. The largest of the five was the *San Antonio*, drawing one hundred and twenty tons. For some unknown reason, Magellan put Juan de Cartagena in command of this ship, choosing for his flagship (which he himself captained) the *Trinidad*, although she drew ten tons less. Next in size came the *Concepcion*, of ninety tons, commanded by Gaspar Queseda; the *Victoria* —destined to do honor to her name— under Luis de Mendoza, having eighty-five tons' draught; and finally the *Santiago*, of seventy-five tons, under the command of João Serrão. The smaller ships, having a lesser draft and being more mobile, were to be used mainly for reconnaissances and for plumbing the depths of unknown waters. There were many advantages in these differences of tonnage and type, which had been arranged by Magellan of set purpose; but it would need remarkably skillful seamanship to keep five heterogeneous craft together upon the open sea for a year or more amid storm and fog.

HAVING, for the last time, with the invincible patience which was one of the man's signal characteristics, examined each of the five ships as to seaworthiness and perfection of equipment, Magellan proceeded to inspect the crew. It had not been easy to enlist them. Weeks and weeks had passed before they had been gathered from the alleys and the taverns. They arrived in rags, dirty and undisciplined, talking to one another in a babel of tongues: Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, Greek, Catalan and German. Yes, it would take a good while to convert this olla podrida into a sound, trustworthy, well-behaved crew. Still, by the time he had had them at sea for a few weeks, he would hold them in his grip. The man who, for seven years, had been a *sobresaliente*, quartered among the common sailors and soldiers, knew the needs of ordinary seamen, how much could be asked from them, and how they had to be treated. The admiral had little anxiety about his crew.

He was less easy in his mind when he looked at the four Spanish captains who had been placed in command of the other ships. His muscles grew tense like those of a wrestler at the beginning of the struggle. Here was Juan de Cartagena, the king's chief inspector, who had replaced Faleiro in command of the *San Antonio*, looking at him coldly, arrogantly and with ill-concealed (perhaps purposely ill-concealed) disdain. No doubt Juan de Cartagena was an experienced seaman, and a man no less honorable than he was ambitious; but would this Castilian nobleman be able to hold his ambitions in leash? King Charles had appointed him supreme inspector of material concerns; Faleiro's retirement had made him captain of the largest ship in the fleet, and had given him the title of *conjuncta persona*—a plethora of offices and honors. Would this cousin of the Bishop of Burgos be content with purely mercantile control? As Magellan studied him, he remembered the words which Alvarez, a Portuguese agent at Seville, had whispered in his ear, when that spy declared that Cartagena had received secret instructions and plenipotentiary powers of which Magellan would only learn "when it was too late to save his honor." No less hostile was the aspect of Luis de Mendoza, who was in command of the *Victoria*. Before leaving Seville he had, on one occasion, refused to obey orders; but Magellan could not discard this secret foe whom the Emperor had appointed treasurer of the expedition. It counted for little that in the Cathedral of Santa Maria de la Victoria, beneath the unfurled banner, the officers had sworn him loyalty and obedience, for in the depths of their hearts they remained his envious foes.

Lucky, therefore, that he had been able to smuggle a few trustworthy Portuguese friends and relatives into the fleet. Above all he had brought with him Duarte Barbosa, his brother-in-law, and, though very young, an experienced navigator; then there was Alvaro de Mesquita, a near relative; and Estevão Gomez, the best pilot in Portugal. There was also João Serrão, enrolled as a Spaniard, but presumably Portuguese, being a relative of Francisco Serrão, Magellan's old chum. He had gained much, too, by bringing along João Corvalho, who had visited Brazil years before, and had with him on the present voyage the son borne to him in the New World by a brown-skinned wife. Both these men might do much service in Brazil through their knowledge of Indian dialects and topography. If, having found the strait of which they were in search, the explorers reached the Malay-speaking areas in the Spice Islands and Malacca, Magellan's

slave Enrique would be a valuable interpreter. But all in all, there were not more than half a dozen to a dozen men among the two hundred and sixty-five upon whom he could unconditionally rely.

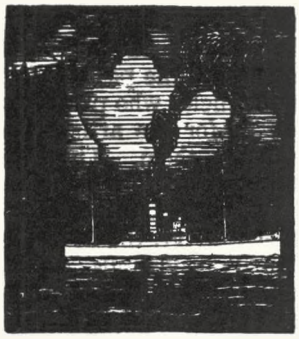
Grave of mien, as he made his lengthy review, Magellan walked along the front, secretly reckoning whom he could count on at a decisive moment, and who would be against him. Without his becoming aware of it, the strain had furrowed his brow. Then the tension relaxed, and involuntarily he smiled. Here was a man he had almost forgotten, a supernumerary, a superfluous hand, whom fate had brought at the last moment. Or was it really by chance that the quiet, modest, youthful Italian, Antonio Pigafetta, sprig of a noble family in Vincenza, had joined this motley company of adventurers, gold-hunters, and desperadoes? He came to Barcelona to attach himself to the court of Charles V in the train of the papal prothonotary. A beardless lad, though a Knight of Rhodes, he heard of a mysterious expedition which was to set out for unknown regions. It is probable that, in his native town of Vincenza, Pigafetta had read Vespucci's book (printed there in 1507) "Newly Discovered Lands," and he was greatly moved at the thought of seeing with his own eyes some of the "magnificent and dread things of the ocean." When he applied to Charles V with the request to be allowed to participate in this mysterious expedition, the Emperor recommended him to Magellan; consequently, with these professional navigators and adventurers, there now became associated a remarkable idealist who rushed into danger, not for glory or for pelf, but from a simple longing to see the world. Pigafetta was a dilettante in the best sense of the term, from pure delight in seeing, experiencing, admiring, wondering, staking his life for adventure's sake.

THE upshot was to be that this supernumerary would become for Magellan the most important participator in his voyage. For what is an action worth when there is no one to describe it? History does not represent the sum-total of all things that have been done in space and time; history comprises those small illuminated sections of world-happenings which have had thrown upon them the light of poetical or scientific description. Achilles would be nothing but for Homer; the figures of the world's heroes would be shadows, and the deeds they did would have slipped unnoticed into the infinite azure of the past, had it not been for the chronicler who preserves them in his story or for the artist who creatively reconstructs them. Thus we should know little of Magellan and his exploits had we nothing but the *"Decades"* of Don Peter Martyr, the bald letter of Maximilian Transylvanus, and a few dry sketches and logbooks penned by the various pilots. Only Pigafetta, inconspicuous supernumerary and Knight of Rhodes, has preserved an adequate narrative of Magellan's voyage.

This worthy fellow was, indeed, neither a Tacitus nor a Livy. But Pigafetta compensates for minor flaws by the zeal and care with which he describes whatever comes to his ken. Owing to the sedulous way in which he questioned the Patagonians in accordance with the Berlitz method, this Knight of Rhodes has unexpectedly acquired a niche in the Temple of Fame as the first to have penned a vocabulary of an American dialect. An even more signal honor has accrued to him. No less distinguished an author than Shakespeare transcribes in "The Tempest" a scene from Pigafetta's "Book of Travels." What can there be more splendid for a mediocre writer than that a genius shall take from his perishable work something to include in the imperishable, and thus, on an eagle's wings, lift the name of the nonentity into his own eternal sphere?

Magellan's last duty in the home-land had been discharged. The time had come to take farewell. His wife stood tremulous before him, the wife with whom he had been happy for a year. She held their son in her arms, while her body was shaken with sobs. He embraced her for the last time, and pressed the hand of his father-in-law Barbosa, whose only son was to accompany him on his adventurous journey. Then quickly, that he might not be unmanned by the tears of the wife he was leaving, he took ship for San Lucar, where the fleet awaited him. Having confessed his sins in the little church of San Lucar, Magellan, with the assembled crew, received the Holy Sacrament. In the gray of morning, on Tuesday September 20, 1519 (a day to be momentous in history) the anchors were heaved, salutes were fired at the departing land. The longest voyage of discovery, the boldest adventure in the records of our race, had begun.

In the next colorful installment you share in this great voyage into the unknown.



Each month we print in these pages a group of true stories of real experience contributed by our readers. (For details of our Real Experience contest, see page 3.) This month we have given part of the space to Stefan Zweig's unique story of Magellan: here follow, however, two lively records of modern adventure —the first the tale of a young man who sought to advertise a life-saving device by attaching a dummy torpedo to a British warship.

By JOSEPH GRAY KITCHELL

Twisting the Lion's Tail

IT was at Martin's on Madison Square that I was invited to dine with the Major in the building long occupied by Delmonico. The Major had an inflatable rubber suit inside of which a man could safely do many aquatic stunts; and it had proved useful in the United States Navy for repair work on warship hulls, painting and the like; for a dozen years it was listed as an accessory on official requisition sheets.

The company that manufactured his rubber suit also made for me a pocket-life preserver I had invented, and the production manager incidentally mentioned to the Major my name, address and ambitions. I had almost reached the age of twenty-one, having migrated to New York from Cincinnati to promote my invention.

All too soon it was disclosed that if my life-preserver didn't preserve life at sea better than on land, it was a failure. The Major needed a sales-agent for his suit, and I needed to make suit sales, so we quickly got together.

The very next day after accepting the sales agency, I began soliciting orders by mail, and in due time sold several suits for testing purposes to the Imperial Russian Marine in St. Petersburg, and also worked up the Admiralty Office in Whitehall, London, to the point where they asked a quotation for a hundred suits. I figured to make forty dollars' profit on each suit.

One afternoon in October, a big, untidy chap burst into the office on Broadway where I had desk-room, loudly announcing that he was Captain Daly. He had worked for the Major as a demonstrator. Now he wanted to borrow one of the suits "just for tonight."

His program was simple enough. Enveloped in one of our suits, Daly was to steal out to a British warship lying in the harbor, and under cover of a moonless night plant a dummy torpedo against her hull. This, Daly asserted with almost frantic fervor, would offer convincing proof that the device was invaluable in offensive operations of any navy.

I hesitated. A suit in the office was better than two in the Police Court. But I didn't say yes, and I didn't say no. Daly went away depressed but far from discouraged. Two hours later, he returned with two *Herald* reporters. The upshot was, I fell for the racket—provided I would be allowed to go along on the black errand of mischief.

We all met at ten o'clock one raw, chilly night, at the Whitehall ferry slip. In a push-cart, carefully covered, were the properties for the act.

Arriving at Tompkinsville, we hired a large dory and a man to row it. After a long wait, we heard two bells from the British ship—more than a mile away.

Quietly we put forth, after some difficulty in getting Daly stowed away in the bottom of the boat. He required considerable space when fully blown, and looked not unlike a certain grotesque tire figure pictured on advertising posters.

Steering our course two hundred yards ahead of the war vessel, we jockeyed to float to where we could catch the long anchor chain. Not a sound came from the unsuspecting Briton.

To get Daly out, over the side of the dory, with his excelsior torpedo and his double-bladed paddle—to do it with no audible testimony and at the same time avoid swamping the flat-bottomed boat—was difficult. But it was done.

Grasping the paddle, Daly dexterously propelled himself feet first, under the chain of the slumbering warship and succeeded in fastening the long torpedo rope to a link, so that the outgoing tide swept the torpedo without sound against the port bow.

Having accomplished the trick, the exultant old scout lusted to proclaim his achievement—and did it, thunderously broadcasting at the top of his voice to those aboard the warship that there was a torpedo planted at their bow!

We dragged Daly over the gunwale, shipping much water. But before we were even headed aright, aboard the warship a shrill whistle followed a shout, then running feet, and in a few seconds a bugle call. Lights pinked up in every quarter; voices over the rail; whining pulleys and then a soughing splash.

"They've lowered a boat," the dory-man moaned. "We'll be hung!"

At the same instant a searchlight swung to horizontal, swept to right and left. The glaring beam picked up our dory in its path and settled steadily upon its passengers. A stuttering *put-put-put-put* came over the troubled waters. Almost immediately there swung into the zone of illumination a dazzling white launch, manned by two officers and a dozen marines with raised carbines.

Then a clear voice, resonant with authority; "Ahoy there! Ease off. Stop, you beggars!"

"Keep a-goin'!" panted Daly. "Don't answer 'em."

"If you don't stop, we'll fire!"—spoken quietly enough, but with a grim, rising inflection that was amply persuasive even without its accompaniment of gun hammers, clicking to full cock. Twelve of them and not twenty feet away!

Well, we stopped.

The launch edged closer and grappled.

"What the hell are you blighters up to?" He was a fine-looking ensign, and I was convinced that the Crown expected much from him and that he knew it.

We began simultaneously to explain.

"Oh, chuck it," the officer exclaimed impatiently. "You will have your chance when we're aboard. Give them a line, bosun."

Then up spake Young America—that's me. "Nix on your ship!" said I with swelling breast. "We're American citizens. You have no authority to put us under arrest. We meant no harm and haven't done any. It isn't a real torpedo. You come with us to land and we will tell you all about it."

The ensign almost smiled at that outburst, and after a quick survey of the wind-bloated rubberized Daly, he unmistakably grinned. Then he went into caucus with his brother-officer. They agreed: "Show the way. We'll tow you in."

Diplomatic amenities were exchanged, seeds of harmony were sown and pilot-bread was dunked in the sweat of the still. At four o'clock the parley ended, and the sailors put off for the warship.

The news-hawks made their front pages, and they willingly collected a purse of six dollars, the cost of repairing the suit. I received another measly order from Russia, but—England turned me down cold.

Ablaze on the Trans-Siberian

An American soldier wakes up in a hot spot.

By L. J. W. KELLOGG

AFTER spending the spring months on the Ussurri front, our infantry company was returning to barracks at Razdolnya, Siberia, on the Trans-Siberian railroad, and a train of short Russian box-cars, with their high-wheeled trucks, had been brought up for transportation. The cars were so short, that even by shelving them midway between the floor and roof, each would accommodate only sixteen men and their equipment.

Included in our train, we found a long steel American-made gondola, which was to be used in transporting our quartermaster and ordnance stores. Since any steel cars found in this territory were usually commandeered to be used in armored trains, it is a mystery to me how we managed to obtain this one. The car was of such size, that when our supplies had been loaded, it still lacked a good foot of being level full.

Upon seeing this, I took my rifle, pack and spare bandoliers of ammunition, and placed them on the forward end of the loaded car. I could see no sense in passing up a ride in the warm fresh air, under star-studded skies, when the alternative was to spend the night riding in a musty box-car recently used by numerous other troops, Japs, Chinos, Czechs and Russians, some of whom surely must have left a menagerie behind.

Leaving my equipment, I returned to the station, where I purchased a few kopecks worth of *porozhnya,* or Russian pastry, from a Chino vendor. This was to be my evening's dessert, for I had already obtained a can of corned-beef hash. I returned to the car with my additional supplies, and was agreeably surprised to find one of my automatic riflemen spreading out his blankets next to the place I had selected for my bunk.

The train soon started, and after we got tired of looking at the long grassy steppes through which the train was passing, we had chow. Then, removing our pistols and belts, we wrapped them in the ends of our blankets for use as pillows, and removing our clothes, lay down for the night. As the train sped through the night, we talked and smoked and watched the stars shining such a seemingly short distance above us.

I was just ready to doze off, when I saw my bunkie jump to his feet and begin clawing at his undershirt. While doing a dance that would have done credit to a Navajo on the warpath, he finally managed to remove it, and the air almost turned blue at the language he used. A glowing ember from the engine had fallen inside his shirt and burned him severely, leaving a welt running well down the middle of his back.

At this moment a regular barrage of embers flew over our heads, and we dived under our blankets for protection. After a few anxious moments, I peered out, and as no embers were in sight, we sat up in our bunks, watching the engine's stack, just ahead of us, to see if any more hot coals were headed our way. Though we waited some time, none appeared, and we drifted off to sleep.

IT was possibly an hour later that I wakened with the feeling something was wrong. One look at the rear end of our car and I prodded Miller in the ribs, telling him to rise and shine. The rear end of the car was in flames, and because of the draft caused by the speeding train, the flames were leaping high in the air. We pulled on our trousers and shoes, then buckled on our pistols. With the fire raging at the rear, we could expect no help from the cars, and there is no way to get onto the rear of a Russian engine unless a man is a broad jumper.

Firing our pistols in the air proved useless, for the heavy automatics could scarcely be heard above the rumble of the train. We knew something must be done soon, for the fire was working forward, and the entire center of the car was loaded with ammunition. I was at a loss to know just how it would react when it got real hot and decided to go places. Would it go a case at a time, or would the whole works go off like an enormous firecracker?

At this moment a case of ball cartridges decided to become temperamental. We fell flat on our faces on the wooden boxes as the explosions sent a lot of industrious little bees humming around over our heads. With each fresh explosion we tried to burrow deeper into the boxes on which we were lying.

JUST as we had decided we must take a chance on jumping off the train, it slowly came to a halt. The flames had become so bright that they attracted the attention of the engine crew. Without stopping to look for a landing-place, we grabbed our packs and rifles and took off over the side of the car like two birds in flight. I came to a stop at the bottom of a fifteen-foot embankment; my mouth full of gravel and ashes, and the bolt of my rifle buried between two of my ribs.

By the time I had located my pack and climbed back up the bank to the tracks, our car had been disconnected from the train; and as the flames had died down somewhat, with the stopping of the draft caused by the moving train, we all hurriedly climbed onto the front of the car to salvage as many of the supplies as possible. After unloading part of the car, however, exploding ammunition made it too dangerous to work any longer, so we retired down the tracks until the fire should complete its work of destruction.

When we arrived in Razdolnya, late that afternoon, I was still clad only in shoes and trousers, as when we left the car. After searching through the supplies we salvaged, I found that my foot locker and barrack-bag had been among the boxes lost in the fire, but I managed to borrow clothes to last me until more could be obtained from Vladivostok.

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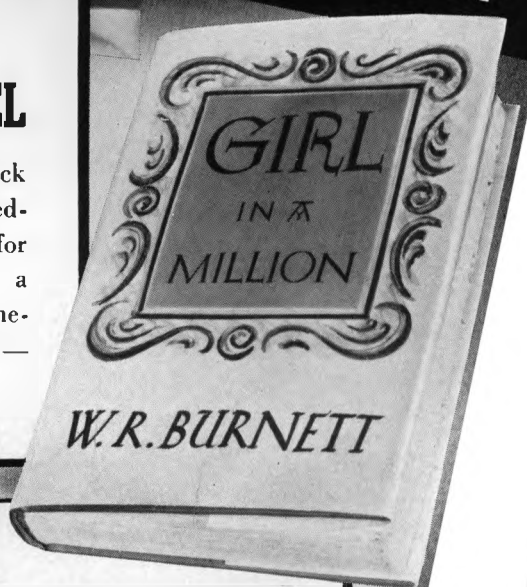

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