July

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BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

JULY 1935 THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE VOL. 61 No. 3

THE FIRST CANNON, *by* H. Bedford-Jones

George F. Worts, Robert R. Mill, William Chester, Albert R. Wetjen, James Francis Dwyer

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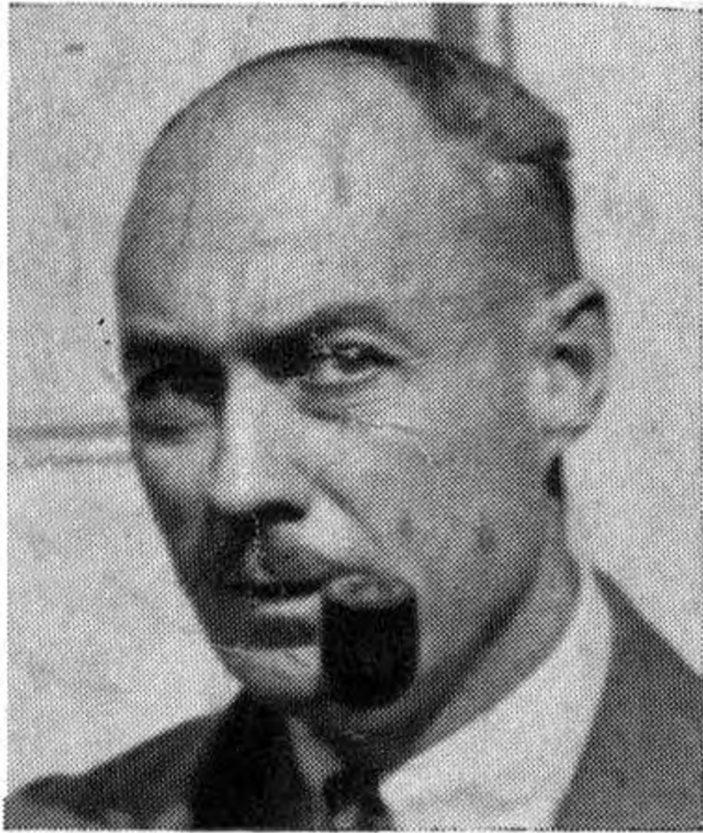

CHARLES L. CLIFFORD

whose stirring story of international polo, "Eight Goal Men," starts on page 16, is a major in the regular army, with a fine professional record which includes service in the Philippines, on the Mexican border and in Russia—and is himself a well-known army polo-player. His stories have appeared in various magazines, and he has two novels of army life—"Parade Ground" and "Army Girl"—to his credit.

ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

whose brilliant drama of South Seas adventure opens this issue, has himself led an adventurous life since he first went to sea at the age of fourteen. He was twice shipwrecked; served in the Manchester Regiment of the British Army during the war, then emigrated to America. "Captains All," "Way for a Sailor!" and "Youth Walks on the Highway" are some of his books. He won the O. Henry Memorial Award in 1926.

Photo by Warren Boyer

GEORGE F. WORTS

whose fine series about the inimitable "Horseface Maud" comes to its climax in this issue, will be well remembered by Blue Book readers also for his famous "The Phantom President," "Six Seconds Dead" and many vivid and virile short stories. He was born in Ohio, studied at Columbia—and learned still more as a wireless operator on the Great Lakes and the Pacific. Another of his fine stories will appear in our next issue.

H. L. DAVIS

whose graphic "The Yaqui Rose" begins on page 34, has won the Levinson Prize for poetry and a Guggenheim fellowship. But his career has not all been scholarly. "The earliest years of my life," he writes, "were spent on a homestead in Oregon. . . . I remember a couple of Indians fighting on horseback one night in front of our house, and of being kept indoors all next day because one of them had beat the other's brains out with a rock and nobody had come to haul away the remains." He has been a cowboy, sheep-herder, deputy sheriff, newspaper man and soldier. His first novel is to appear this fall.

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JULY, 1935 — VOL. 61, NO. 3

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Shark of the South Seas — By Albert Richard Wetjen — 4
Hard men and bitter feud in the remote Pacific . . . . By the author of "Way for a Sailor."

Eight Goal Men — By Charles L. Clifford — 16
A distinguished novelist and army polo player gives us a stirring story of a great game.

For the Good Work — By Donald Barr Chidsey — 29
A police detective plays a strange rôle and fights a tough battle.

The Yaqui Rose — By H. L. Davis — 34
Here a new and able writer gives us a vivid drama of the Southwest today.

Arms and Men — By H. Bedford-Jones — 70
VI—The Bamboo Cannon

Bonanza! — By George F. Worts — 80
The saga of that canny Nevada prospector's wife Horseface Maud comes to its climax.

Lost and Found — By Arthur K. Akers — 116
When darker and dumber deeds are done, Bugwine Breck will be also on the job.

The Blue-Nosed Vampire — By James Francis Dwyer — 124
A Dutch naturalist and an American, combat a weird plot among the Malays.

An Exceptional Novel

Hawk of the Wilderness — By William L. Chester — 92
Specially interesting chapters in this story of a white boy and that strange frontier land whence possibly the American Indian came.

A Thrill-Filled Novelette

The Fourth Missing Man — By Robert R. Mill — 46
Tiny David of the State police in his most difficult and dangerous exploit.

Prize Stories of Real Experience

A Flywheel Explodes — By Vernon D. Brown — 132
A power-plant electrician's perilous job after a flywheel burst.

A Son of the Frontier — By John Abernathy — 135
The autobiography of a man who made a business of catching wolves alive with his hands.

Andes Flight — By Jack Thomas — 138
Ice and fog made this South American landing hazardous.

My Ten Years in the Foreign Legion — By Orval Chenevoeth — 140
Further adventures of an Iowa boy fighting under the French flag in Syria.

Mining and Mice — By William Davidson — 144
A mouse and a nail saved this reader's life.

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Gotch went up the veranda steps as silently as a cat, treading delicately.

Shark

Hard men fight out a desperate little war in this vivid story by the gifted author of "Way for a Sailor" and "Fiddlers' Green."

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

SAMUEL BROCKHURST, the middle-aged resident manager for the South Pacific Trading Company's post on the island of Tamroa in the Marshalls, looked at the ugly muzzle of the .45 pointed at his stomach, and licked suddenly dry lips. He knew that death was very close, and that he ought to keep his mouth shut; but he was a brave man, and loyal.

"You can't get away with this sort of thing," he said thinly. "Coming ashore and taking what you want! Your bill is one hundred and fifty pounds even, and at that I'm not charging you the regular ten per cent above Sydney prices."

"When I need stores, I load 'em," stated Red Burke unpleasantly. "And no one bothers me with bills. Is that clear? Or do you want some of what your houseboys got?"

Brockhurst stared at the three inert natives sprawled on the packed earth before his veranda, and slowly shook his head. No, he didn't want that. And resistance was hopeless. There was not only Red Burke, Captain Red Burke of the notorious brig *Galloway*—huge, ugly, flaming-haired and callous as a shark. There were also his lean mate, Chalmers, and the hunchbacked supercargo, Burroughs, both half-drunk and heavily armed, and backed by half a dozen other unshaven white men, equally drunk and wielding rope's-ends on the backs of Brockhurst's frightened Kanakas as they staggered down to the water's edge with the stolen stores. Brockhurst licked his lips again.

"You'll be hearing about this," he promised at last, and his face was white but grim. "The South Pacific Company is more than a one-post affair. You're handling dynamite, Burke."

The burly sailor laughed, and hefted his gun, arrogant and careless.

"Meaning that boss of yours, Gotch?" He spat deftly sidewise at a land crab scuttling off toward the palms. "Shark Gotch! The hell with him! He might have the rest of the Islands scared stiff, but he can't scare Red Burke. I don't know him, and I'm damned if I want to know him; but any time he wants to see me, I'll be waiting. And if I feel like coming back for some more free stores, I'll do it. You can tell him that. Just pass this along in the meantime."

He brought his gun-muzzle down upon the defenseless manager's head, and Brockhurst slumped to the floor of the veranda with a groan. Red Burke laughed, and jerking a bottle of gin from his hip, upended it and drank heartily. His mate Chalmers hitched thumbs in his cartridge-belt and scowled.

"Like I told you afore, Red, I don't know that we're so smart, raiding here. That guy wasn't putting up no song and dance. Gotch is bad medicine, from all they say. Flashy with a gun, and takes nothing from no man. You ought to hear the tales up Singapore way."

Red Burke coughed, and wiped his dripping chin with the back of a hairy hand.

"To hell with Singapore! To hell with Gotch! You're getting soft, Chalmers.

of the South Seas

One place is as good as another for stores. Aint I Red Burke? Aint I got a rep? If Gotch comes around me, I'll plant him. . . . Now get those blasted Kanakas smarted up. We gotta be going."

Chalmers shrugged, and turned away to swear at the laboring natives; but he felt a bit uneasy just the same. He had heard tales: Gotch was some one to think about. And there were so many other and safer posts to raid. It was like Red to buck the South Pacific Company just to show he could get away with it; but he had an idea Red would sometime regret this afternoon's bloody work. Still, what the hell! It was Red's grief, not his. Chalmers took a long drink himself, and felt better.

WHEN Brockhurst came to, some hours later, Red Burke had gone; the *Galloway* was hull down on the horizon, her topsails flecks of pearl against the tropic evening sky. The trader staggered into his bungalow, undressed, climbed beneath the improvised gasoline-can-shower, bandaged his head, dressed again, mixed a dynamite of a brandy and soda, and then routed out a frightened house-boy. He gave him a sealed envelope.

"Take a canoe," he directed curtly. "You can be at Sands Island the day after tomorrow. The *Kauri Bird* should be in. Give this note to Captain Downs with my compliments, and ask him to see that Shark Gotch gets it. You savvy?"

The houseboy, mission-raised, grinned uncertainly but nodded, and tucking the message inside his loin-cloth, started down the beach. . . . Three months later a trim gray-painted bark named the *Stingray* dropped her anchor off Tamroa, and a curious little wisp of a man sank to a cane chair on Brockhurst's veranda, a half-burned cheroot smoldering beneath his ragged fringe of sandy mustache, and a tall glass of gin and lime-juice circling idly in his hand. He could not have been much more than five feet tall, and he was as frail as a boy. His voice was mild, his eyes a light blue, his hair sun-bleached and sandy, and he looked altogether as if he could not have harmed a fly. Yet the respect Brockhurst accorded him was something more than was to be normally expected between a man and his employer. Which was just, for the little man was Shark Gotch, and Shark Gotch was a legend in the Islands.

"I'd have dropped in before," said the Shark lazily, stretching comfortably in his chair. "But I had a little affair in the Gilberts to clean up. Got your note in Apia. So it was Red Burke, eh?"

"And his crowd," agreed Brockhurst thinly. "Shot up three houseboys. One of them was a cousin of that big Samoan bo's'n of yours, I believe."

"Tiro's cousin? That means a blood-feud, then."

"I suppose so."

"What else did Burke do?"

"Took five native women, a hundred and fifty pounds' worth of stores—nearly all I had left—and carted off my office

safe. Nothing in it, fortunately. One other thing: Red Burke slugged me—put me out for three hours. I'm supposed to pass that on to you."

"Consider you have," said the Shark dryly. He removed his cheroot and drank. "Burke's getting big ideas. He raided Larsen's place on Woodlark two years ago. Last year he provisioned free at the Roach plantation on Ender, and killed Anselm the manager there in a quarrel over some pearls. Now he's getting into me."

"What was I to do?" Brockhurst complained. "I knew he wasn't any good. But when a man sticks a gun in your stomach—"

Gotch drew on his cheroot and waved curtly.

"I'm not blaming you. You're not expected to fight a brig's-crew of blackguards. But it's time some one stopped Burke. He needs a lesson. The Woodlark and the Roach affairs were none of my business, but this is."

Brockhurst nodded. Shark Gotch had very definite ideas when it came to business. And it certainly wasn't business to let a free-lance semi-pirate take whatever he needed, from wherever he chose, without considering the formality of paying. The matter was serious. If one man was allowed to get away with a series of such bold raids, every hard-up schooner-captain in the Islands would be trying them.

PROTESTING to the law was useless. The South was savage and untamed, and such law as there was stopped short outside the compounds of the scattered Administration posts. A man held what he could, and took what he could, at the muzzle of a carbine or the barrel of a six-gun. Straight shooting, and fast. And the sea, the crabs or the jungle attended to the dead. Shark Gotch rubbed his throat very gently, and his blue eyes were suddenly icy hard.

"I'll attend to Red Burke," he said. "Any idea where he was bound from here?"

"Samarai, I think," answered Brockhurst. "I heard his mate say something about it, before they cracked me."

Gotch nodded, remained another hour or so to discuss routine business, then went back to the *Stingray*. Porpoise Bailey, his mate, was leaning against the taffrail on the poop talking with the giant Samoan bo's'n Tiro. Porpoise was immense, but the native dwarfed him.

"Your cousin was shot, Tiro," Gotch stated. The Samoan looked at him with a sudden wrinkle of anger between his brows.

"I know," he said shortly. "That is a debt."

"Two of us," Gotch agreed. "I can't have my posts shot up by every tough who happens along."

Porpoise Bailey patted the immense round of his stomach and looked distressed.

"More trouble, I suppose."

Gotch lighted a fresh cheroot and nodded absently.

"Just a debt to collect," he agreed. He looked aloft and then to seaward, and touched the butt of the gun holstered beneath his left arm. "The wind's making," he said, and his eyes were frosty and hard again, the eyes of a killer. "Set the course for Samarai."

SIR ARTHUR LOCKWOOD, K.C.M.G., C.B., Special Commissioner for New Guinea and pertaining islands, leaned back in his swivel chair and eyed his visitor frowningly. Outside, Samarai sweltered in the noonday heat, but the interior of the Commissioner's office was reasonably cool, the light seeping greenly through drawn shades of split cane.

"And just what," inquired the Commissioner, "do you want with Red Burke?"

Shark Gotch laid his white-topped captain's cap on the massive desk before him, and dropped slowly to a chair.

"A little talk," he explained mildly. "And a matter of one hundred and fifty pounds or so."

The Commissioner's eyes narrowed in his sunburned face.

"You'll have trouble getting at him," he observed. "My own men never seem to succeed at it. I need him on half a dozen charges—from robbery to murder; but he has the devil's own luck."

Gotch shrugged.

"That's your affair," he said indifferently. "But this is mine. I understand Burke touched here very recently. Why didn't you take him then?"

The Commissioner went a brick red, and choked.

"He called at night," he snapped. "Like his damned cheek! Did some funny business ashore—I haven't got a line on it yet—and cleared out almost before his anchor was wet. The swine's got nerve!"

"Where is he now?" Gotch demanded impatiently. The failures of the Administration did not interest him at all. He wanted Red Burke. "You must have some idea."

"Certainly I've an idea," snapped the Commissioner. "Where d'you suppose he'd be? Back on his island, of course. Where he always goes after one of his looting cruises."

"His island?" jerked Gotch, sitting up. "What sort of talk is that?"

"I thought everyone knew," said the Commissioner testily. "Red Burke's supposed to have a headquarters on Frigate Island in the Bismarcks. Controls the place. It must be a regular rat's-nest, from all reports."

"Then why don't you clean it out?"

The Commissioner swore.

"It's in Japanese waters. And they're not interested, so long as Burke leaves their ships and trading-posts alone, and pays his percentage, I suppose. But let me catch him outside the limit, and I'll hang him higher than a kite."

"Frigate Island," said Gotch thoughtfully. "Funny I've never heard of it. It's a bit north of my usual runs, of course. Maybe that's the reason."

"Well, you'd better forget the place," warned the Commissioner. "You'd need a warship to raid it." He looked sharply at the frail little man before him. "You're not thinking of going there?"

The Shark shrugged, and helped himself to one of the Commissioner's expensive cheroots.

"Why not?" he asked coldly. "I've got business with Burke, and I'm not a patient man."

The Commissioner stared at him for a full half-minute, and then his jaw tightened.

"You're a damned fool!" he snapped at last. "Sticking your head in a rat-trap for the sake of a hundred and fifty pounds. For your own sake, I ought to jail you!" He opened a drawer and took out a thin sheaf of papers. "Warrants," he went on grimly. "I can hold you for the killing of Hans Keller and his mate on the island of Tench eighteen months ago. And I've got more than a hunch that you're the man who raided the Jap pearl preserves at Tamanu last year. They suggested they'd like to see you."

Gotch let smoke trickle through his thin nostrils, and smiled very faintly.

"Keller needed killing," he observed, his voice brittle. "You know that. And as for the Jap preserves, the shell was all wormy. I didn't even pay expenses." He paused, and met the Commissioner's level gaze. "But I take it," he said gently, "you're not serving the warrants."

There was a tight silence, and the Commissioner's eyes rested for a moment on the bulge beneath the other's left armpit. He remembered with a hint of grimness that Shark Gotch was the fastest and straightest shot in the Islands, and he made a sudden wry face.

"No," he agreed. "I'm not serving them. I'll tell you why: You're outside of the law in more ways than one, Gotch, but you're square; and I believe what men say—that you seldom shoot except in self-defense. The Islands are tough, and it's taking tough men to tame them. You do occasionally mop up some of the bad spots we can't reach. To be frank, you're of more use to the Administration running loose than you would be in jail. That's unofficial, of course. But I still think I'd be saving your life if I kept you away from Frigate Island and Red Burke. One hundred and fifty pounds! You're a damned fool even to think of going there!"

Gotch inspected the tip of his cheroot, and smiled thinly.

"Not a fool," he corrected. "I'm Shark Gotch."

The Commissioner looked at him for a long time, and then he nodded.

"Perhaps," he reflected, "that was what I meant."

Gotch did not expect any trouble at Samarai. Anything might happen in the Islands, but it was reasonable to suppose a man could relax in a port that

Gotch's carbine spat evenly, methodically. Even in that light there was not one miss in five; and the hail of lead checked pursuit.

was the center of the government. So it was that when the two strangers stepped before him, the Shark was considerably surprised. He was walking down a narrow path flanked by wild hibiscus vines; no one else was in sight; and since the two strangers blocked all passage, there was nothing to do but stop.

"You wanted me?" Shark Gotch asked mildly.

"Yeah," agreed one of the men. "We want you."

He was a bearded man, and strongly built, and he looked down on Gotch with a faint sneer, his thumbs hooked in his cartridge-belt. His companion was thinner but quite tall, and was obviously holding a gun in the side pocket of his white-duck jacket.

"You don't know us, Gotch," said the first man harshly. "And it doesn't matter. But we're friends of Red's, see? There's a lot of loose talk going on about your rep. Red don't scare easy, but Chalmers got a bit jumpy after that raid on your Tamroa place, and got Red to ease us the word in case you showed up here asking questions."

"Quite an honor," said the Shark dryly. The other laughed, and ran a contemptuous glance up and down the frail figure before him.

"I'm damned if I can see what's about you to be scared of," he stated. "Anyone with a bit of beef could smear you with one smack."

Gotch blinked at him, and began to gently caress his throat—danger-signals, as all the South knew. The bearded man went on.

"You been up to the Commissioner's getting the dope on Frigate Island. Never mind how we know; we do. Lay off, see? You aint wanted on Frigate. Not that you won't be handled if you do land there; but Red figures it'd be more comfortable all round if he don't have to plant you."

"I appreciate his thoughtfulness,"

drawled the Shark. "May I ask just what it all means?"

"Sure. You've got a bunch of friends down south, Apia and Suva way. Red's figuring on going into straight business soon, and he don't want any hard feelings with the big guys. He didn't think about it when he raided Tamroa, I guess. Maybe he didn't give a damn. Anyway, he don't want you butting in now. If you've got that idea fixed, I'm to pay you for the stores he took."

Gotch's eyes were like ice.

"And if I haven't the idea fixed?" he said crisply.

The other stiffened.

"Then you aint leaving Samarai. No one can blame Red if you're planted here," he snarled. "Better not get tough, Gotch. We can plug you and pitch you in the mangroves, and it'll be months before they even find the bones."

The Shark nodded, took a step back, and his right hand dropped a little.

"So you'll pay me for the stores?" he observed thinly. "But it's a greater debt than that: Three of my houseboys were killed. Five women taken from my village. So I'm going to Frigate Island."

The bearded man whipped for his gun with an oath. The other man fired through the pocket of his jacket. Neither of them saw the Shark's hand move—it was too fast. The bearded man crumpled with his hand still on his gun-butt; and the other man died with a bullet under the heart even as he pulled his own trigger, his shot slashing through the hibiscus. Gotch holstered his own weapon and went on, unhurried and calm, without a further glance at the bodies. He did not need to look to know what happened. He never missed.

"Porpoise," he told his mate when he had boarded the *Stingray* again, "get the hook up and clear out of here. I don't want to hang around for a couple of weeks while the Commissioner drags out one of his inquiries. In Samarai a couple of dead men are hard to explain."

IT was night when the *Stingray* hove to. The sky was big with stars; the sea long, low and moaning—velvet dark and shot with phosphorescent fires. From the north the wind blew cool and steady, while from the east, seeping athwart it, came the hot, rank scent of mangroves and jungle where the ominous hills of Frigate Island loomed inky black. The *Stingray* carried no riding-lights, and the ports of both her fo'c'stle and main cabin were closed fast. She drifted all but motionless, and invisible to any but a close watcher.

"ALL right," said Gotch curtly. "Send Tiro aft. I've talked it over with him, and he'll be all the help I'll need."

"The Commissioner was right," grumbled Porpoise Bailey. "It's suicide. If you must yank Burke out of that rat's-nest, why not let's make a rush with a full boat's-crew?"

Gotch lighted a cheroot and shook his head.

"From all accounts, Burke has quite an outfit," he said decisively. "An attack in force would be washed up before it got started. All I need is to get the lay of the land and figure things out. Tomorrow night ought to give me Burke."

Porpoise swore, and wheezed his bulk up the companion from the main cabin to find Tiro. Gotch was getting ready, changing from whites to thin dark serges; removing the white top from his peaked cap and changing his tropic shoes for stout black leather ones. There was no need for him to darken his skin for night prowling. Twenty years of sun and wind had already done that.

He slipped on twin shoulder holsters, pulled his jacket on over them, and thrust a sheath-knife inside his shirt. Tiro came below as he was finishing, and without a word buckled round his waist the cartridge-belt Gotch handed him. Then he picked up the two carbines waiting on the main cabin table, slung two bandoliers of cartridges over his shoulder and stood ready, his broad face grim.

"The time to back out is now," warned the Shark coldly. "It's not going to be a picnic."

Tiro grunted, and shot a scarlet stream of betel juice into the sandbox near the table.

"My cousin was houseboy to Mr. Brockhurst," he reminded Gotch. "And the first one killed. There is a blood debt."

Gotch nodded.

"Let's go, then."

He preceded Tiro up the companion to the poop, and found Porpoise near the for'ard rail.

"I'll take the small-boat," he ordered. "Put in some grub and a dozen sticks of capped dynamite. You know what you're to do. Stand on and off with the

Stingray, out of sight. Run in close after dark. I'll send up a rocket when I'm clear or need you."

Porpoise spat noisily over the rail.

"I got it," he complained, "but I don't like it. And suppose there's no rocket?"

"After three days you can figure Burke got me instead," said the Shark grimly. "But that's one of the chances."

HE dropped down the ladder to the small-boat with Tiro; pushing off, they hoisted sail. In a matter of seconds the *Stingray* was only a dark loom against the stars; in a minute or so she was utterly gone. Gotch eased the tiller and headed straight for the shore, his mind filled with a rough chart of Frigate Island which the Commissioner had given him before he had left Samarai.

"The harbor should be northeast," he figured aloud. "We'll locate some place to hide the boat and supplies, and then scout around the settlement." He paused a moment and then added harshly: "The only thing that worries me is that Burke might be away on a cruise."

"That would be bad," Tiro agreed. The Commissioner and Porpoise Bailey and other white men might consider all this business a very great madness, but Tiro understood perfectly. A debt was a debt. He rubbed the haft of the great knife he wore in his loin-cloth, and thought of his cousin, who had been houseboy to Brockhurst before Red Burke had come. Yes, a debt was a debt. And now they were not in Samarai, or some other place, where foolish ideas held forth. They were in the outer Islands, where the law was unwritten but very plain. . . .

Gotch eased the boat into the shallows at last, into an inky blackness beneath somber mangroves, and with Tiro's aid dragged it through foul mud to a reasonably secure hiding-place, so far as they could judge in the dark. He stuffed his pockets with the dynamite then, took one of the carbines and bandoliers, and proceeded to climb the slope of a hill that overlooked the harbor, Tiro close behind him. By daylight the two men were lying in a thicket of scrub near the hill crest, and Gotch was inspecting the beach and settlement far below him. He was faintly astonished.

"If Burke runs this place, he's a bigger thug than I thought," he muttered. "Looks like a regular hang-out for every blackguard in the northern islands."

To his relief, Red Burke's black-hulled and notorious brig *Galloway* was at anchor in the harbor, together with two rakish schooners, a few luggers and a trim barkentine, the sight of which caused the Shark to utter an oath. He pointed the vessel out to Tiro.

"That's Clint Samuels' *Cassowary.*"

Tiro nodded.

"I know. That man you shot once on Ponape."

"Three years ago," the Shark agreed. "He'll remember me, all right. But what's worse, Burke knows I'm coming. The *Cassowary* was in Samarai when we were, and she must have beat us here. That ship's fast."

Tiro made no reply to that, and Gotch continued his inspection. Ashore, backed by the palms and the jungle, were nearly a score of shacks and bungalows, some of them quite large and obviously permanent, probably dealing with liquor and women. A short way from the bungalows showed the conical hut tops of a considerable native village; the harbor itself was dotted with native fishing-craft. Frigate Island was off the beaten track, yet a convenient headquarters for such as needed headquarters, and its settlement was the great-great-descendant of the buccaneer resorts of the old Caribbean.

"If the Commissioner knew the place was this important, he'd make a serious complaint to the Japanese," said Gotch grimly. "There'd be questions asked at cabinet meetings, and probably a squadron sent out to clean up. Well, that's not my business. I want Red Burke and some money."

ALL through the blazing tropical day, the two on the hill-top endured the flies and the heat; but with the first sign of darkness again they began to work down through the jungle. It was full night when they eased back of the native village and approached the shacks and bungalows where white men held forth. The village was flickering redly with cooking-fires, and a native dance was in progress. The white settlement was lighted along the verandas where men ate or drank, or were playing cards and arguing. Occasionally there were serious quarrels; and once, as Gotch came close, the bark of a gun. Native women and liquor were the chief amusements on Frigate Island, and after a few days of those, tempers were apt to grow ragged.

"That biggest bungalow should be

Burke's dive," said Gotch shortly. "Wait here, Tiro, until I see what's going on."

He left the big Samoan impassive in the shadow of a koa tree and slipped through the blackness beyond the lights, skirting the jungle edge behind the settlement, until he could worm through thick bushes to within a few feet of Red Burke's veranda, silent as a ghost, implacable as the savage sea tiger after which he was named—the Shark.

THERE were five men gathered on Red Burke's wide veranda, gathered about a table and intent on a chart held flat with gin-bottles and glasses. Red Burke himself Gotch recognized from descriptions, though he had never before seen the man: big, flame-haired, arrogant and noisy. The hunchbacked man next to him was obviously Burroughs, the *Galloway's* supercargo; the slender black-mustached man on the other side was Chalmers, the *Galloway's* mate. None of these three knew him by sight, the Shark was certain; but one of the two remaining men was Clint Samuels, and he and Clint had shot it out on Ponape three years before. Gotch could see in the lamplight the livid scar of his bullet, gouged across Samuels' left cheek. The last man, a stocky brown-mustached individual, in a ragged cotton singlet and faded dungaree pants, Gotch supposed must be Samuels' mate or partner on the *Cassowary*. . . . Gotch drew closer and listened.

"There's Gannet's Lagoon," Burke was saying, stabbing at the chart with a heavy forefinger. "And we'd better sail at dawn. Just three days' run if the Trade holds."

"Most of Gannet's shell should be rotted out by then," Samuels agreed. "And he'll be starting loading."

"So we run in and clean up," snapped Burke. "It's simple and it's safe, with any sort of luck at all."

Chalmers spat aside and moved his holster to a more comfortable position.

"That's always the joker," he complained. "Luck. If Gannet's on the lookout for something like a raid, we've got a fight on our hands. He's carrying a big crew."

"Fifteen whites and over twenty natives," prompted Samuels. "I got all the dope in Samarai. It's first-class shell, and they do say the pearls are averaging high."

"Then it ought to be rich pickings," put in Burke harshly. "He likely won't be figuring anyone would dare raid him with the crowd he's got. But if the bunch of us go in together, it ought to be a cinch, even if he's on his toes. We'll slam a ship each side of his packet and take her first, then look after the shore parties. Run in just before dawn."

"Well, it's all right with me," Samuels agreed, "so long as we get to hell away from Frigate Island before Gotch comes. You can sniff all you want, Burke; but I know that little devil, and you don't."

"Aw, shut up!" Burke blazed. "I'm sick of hearing about Gotch. Chalmers give me the willies all the way back from Tamroa because we'd raided his place. Got me so jumpy I went and told Curt and Joe to trip him up if he came to Samarai poking about for news."

"And they fell down," Samuels pointed out. "He killed 'em both."

"I don't believe it," Burke stated flatly. He slopped himself a stiff drink. "Curt and Joe were fast with guns; and anyway, I told 'em to pay him off for his damned stores. If he's as big a shot in the southern Islands as you say, I don't want any trouble with him. I've got to get that guano concession on the up-and-up."

"I tell you he shot 'em," Samuels insisted. "Who else would have? He was in port. He cleared out sudden-like. Four or five hours later they find your pals stiff, and I make a fast run here to tell you."

"I STILL think you're crazy," snarled Burke. "No man can be as good as this Shark Gotch is supposed to be. Hell, I can rake up fifty hard-cases to handle things if I want to, and you yap about a runt of a gunman busting me wide open. I don't get it, and I aint worrying any; so shut up!"

"Listen to reason, Red," Chalmers put in. "Samuels has been in the Islands longer than we have. We only come down from the China Seas three years back, and the chances are we aint wise yet to a lot we will be some day."

"You're damned right!" Samuels swore. "Some of the southern Island boys are bad, you can take it from me. There's Typhoon Bradley, Big Bill Gunther, Cassidy and a half a dozen others; but Gotch is the worst. That's one reason I want to get out of here and get this raid on Gannet's place done with, so I can skip north and get clear. Gannet is a friend of Gotch's, and the little swine

"You little swine!" he snarled. "Think you got the best of Red Burke, eh? Take it!"

goes down the line for his friends. I don't want him knowing I'm mixed up in the business, and no man can say I'm yellow."

"All right, have it your way," Burke said wearily. "We'll say he's bad and let it go at that. He's not going to try anything on Frigate Island with all my crowd around, that's a cinch; and no one knows we're planning the Gannet affair but us. So let's get to figuring."

SHARK GOTCH inched back through the bushes and rejoined Tiro under the koa tree.

"Time's short," he said curtly. "I've got to chance things right away. Burke's figuring on sailing at dawn. Your job is to see I get as much of a clear field as possible. Create a diversion. You've got the idea."

"Yes," said Tiro simply, and he took the dynamite sticks carefully from the Shark's pockets.

"If anything goes wrong, use your own judgment. If I get Burke clear, I'll need you to handle him. If I don't and we're separated anyway, make for the hill-top again, and we'll figure out something else. Maybe we can stop the *Galloway* sailing if we have to. All clear?"

"All clear," Tiro agreed calmly, as if it were just the matter of another order given on the deck of the *Stingray*. He turned and faded into the darkness, and the Shark returned to a spot close to the veranda. He waited a full five minutes so that Tiro could be well started, and then moved in. The men were still arguing around the table; and once Burke roared an order to some one who passed just in the lamp range, bound for a brilliantly lighted bungalow farther down the beach. Gotch went up the veranda steps silently as a cat, treading delicately as if walking over eggs. He laid his carbine gently against the veranda rail and loosened his short guns, as much preferable for work like this.

"Hey!" roared Red Burke, peering over the lamp-top and slightly dazzled with the light. "What're you doing, buttin' in here? You'll get your orders later!"

He thought it was one of his men, half-drunk probably, come to bother him with a request. But he stopped with a fresh oath on his lips, uncertain. The others half-turned, curious but not alarmed, and then some curious tightness in the atmosphere tightened them too.

"Seems like I've seen you afore," said

Red Burke slowly. "Or heard of some one like you."

But Clint Samuels checked him. Samuels had a glass halfway to his lips, and he let it slip through his fingers to crash on the table and run white gin across the chart. His eyes widened, and a ghastly pallor came over his face.

"You?" he managed at last, choking. "What in hell you doing here? Shark Gotch!"

Two of the chairs went over as the rest backed abruptly. And then for a moment there was a hard, deep quiet. The Shark was smiling faintly, his icy eyes running from face to face, and his right hand slowly caressing his throat. No one spoke; and suddenly the night was shattered by the harsh bang of an explosion, followed by another and another, while livid flame leaped upward along the beach, etching for a second the sweep of the sand, the harbor and the anchored ships before blackness came down again. Men began to shout. Some one yelled, "Hey, Red! The village is busting loose!" and there was a sound of running. Every man and woman in the white settlement was streaming excitedly for the village now, where the huts began to burn red, and at longer and longer intervals the explosions continued, until at last they ceased altogether. Tiro was making a good job of it.

"Keep still," said the Shark gently, as Burke made a half-move as if to leave. "You're not going anywhere—yet."

BURKE recovered then, sneering and arrogant and sure of himself, now the initial shock was past.

"Gotch, eh? So you're Shark Gotch? There aint much of you for such a lot of big talk. You've got a hell of a nerve butting in here!"

"I've got four men covering you," the Shark assured him calmly. "But this is just a business talk."

"Four men," muttered the awe-struck Chalmers, straining to pierce the shadows. Samuels was wiping cold sweat from his head and trying to muster enough courage to pull his gun, while the three-year-old scar across his cheek burned him like a warning fire. The others on the veranda were just beginning to gather what was happening.

"Business?" said Burke harshly. "I don't talk business here. What in hell do you want, and how did you come? You never anchored in the harbor."

"Never mind that," snapped the Shark. "The fact remains I'm here. It's a matter of a little raid on my place at Tamroa. You owe me one hundred and fifty pounds, plus damages and expenses."

There was another silence, a stunned silence. Five pairs of eyes were glued on the frail little figure that seemed absurdly harmless, and yet was somehow deadlier than anything they had ever known before. They remembered tales whispered along the verandas, muttered beneath hands in many dives, told in drunken confidences in the fo'c'stles and cabins of many ships. Shark Gotch! He was a legend in the South.

IT was Chalmers who spoke first. "You mean to say you've busted ashore here just to collect a lousy hundred and fifty pounds?" he demanded incredulously. The wild excitement going on down at the native village left them unmoved, for they had forgotten everything except what was immediately before them. Samuels choked.

"He's the sort of swine who'd bust into hell if he felt like it," he raved. "Didn't I tell you? Didn't I warn you? He killed Curt and Joe. I know. Watch his guns. I told you that Tamroa business was a mistake. So did Chalmers."

"Shut up!" Red Burke snarled. "I'll handle this!"

He was a little astonished and dazed, for all his outward hardness. It was incredible that one man should land on Frigate Island and face him in the center of his own men. Incredible! But there he was. Shark Gotch drew a folded sheet of paper from inside his shirt and tossed it on the table.

"I know you've got a credit with the Burns-Philp people for twenty-eight hundred pounds," he said crisply. "I looked you up. There's a draft made out. Sign it, and I'm leaving."

Burke mechanically put out his hand and opened the paper, acutely aware that the other's icy eyes missed never a move. And then Burke's face went crimson.

"A draft for twenty-eight hundred?" he roared. "Do you think I'm crazy? Trying to clean me out? That's all I've got. You talked of a hundred and fifty pounds, and I had that offered to you in Samarai. What's this?"

"We'll say the balance is for damages," said Gotch evenly. "There were three houseboys killed, you may remember. Their villages have to be paid. And five

native women whose relatives will want payment too. That's the Island custom."

Red Burke flung the draft aside and laughed. Burroughs, his hunchbacked supercargo, laughed also, thin and high. And presently Chalmers laughed too. Only Clint Samuels seemed still deadly afraid.

"You've got a nerve, I'll say that," Red Burke spat. "Busting into my joint like this! Well, there's five of us here. If you feel lucky, then start something and try and collect."

"He's got four men—" Samuels began, but Red Burke laughed again, jerked a vicious oath and went for his gun. A flash from the burning village had shown the shadows empty, outside and beyond the veranda.

"A bluff!" he snarled. "A damned bluff. And I'll call it!"

ABRUPTLY the veranda was a chaos then. A man held what he could, and took what he could, in the savage South.

But Burke had paid no attention to the tales of the Shark, and that was his mistake. Men did not call Gotch's bluff. Not ever. The little sailor was backed against a veranda post with both guns spouting flame before Red Burke had cleared his holster.

Chalmers toppled suddenly, a hole between his eyes and his hand hardly at his belt. Burroughs the hunchback crashed against the bungalow wall with a shattered arm, his own bullet splintering the floor. Red Burke spun half-around as lead bit into his left shoulder, and he dropped his unfired gun to grab at the wound. Clint Samuels and the remaining man did not even attempt to shoot. They leaped the veranda rail and were gone, running down the beach, shouting for their crews milling about the flaming village.

There was no time to waste. Gotch knew that Tiro's diversion had made things safe for him for a while, but now the alarm was given, hard-bitten gunmen would come swarming at his back. He was across the veranda like a cat. He kicked the groaning Burroughs aside and jammed a gun savagely into Burke's throat.

"Get up," he grated. "And move!"

For one long instant Burke had a notion to refuse, to stick it out until help came. But he met the unwavering stare of those icy eyes, and he knew he was flirting with death. He knew, too, that Gotch could have drilled him as easily as Chalmers had been drilled, and a sudden, stark fear swept through him. He straightened, the blood from his wound trickling between his fingers.

"You're a devil," he whispered. "You're a devil!"

"Down the beach," the Shark directed. He picked up his carbine leaning against the veranda rail and prodded the frightened Burke down the steps. They passed into the shadows, moving quickly toward the water's edge; but lights were springing up on the anchored ships, and such men as had been on board were pulling ashore to see what it was all about. Men were streaming back from the glowing village too, some of them with lanterns, all of them with guns; and it was with a grunt of relief that Shark Gotch saw Tiro looming close beside him.

"Fine work," he said calmly. "You carry Burke—and run, while I cover you!"

"Run, hell!" Burke whimpered. "I'm wounded, and—"

Gotch brought the butt of the carbine hard against Burke's head, and the big man collapsed.

"You sent me one of those by Brockhurst," said the Shark. "I'm returning it."

The giant Samoan picked up Burke as if he had been a sack of flour, tossed him over one shoulder and set off at a jog-trot along the sand. A sudden flare of light as a village hut collapsed gave a glimpse of the fugitives. Samuels cried out, pointed, and the shooting began. The pursuers fanned out; and with a little contented sigh, Gotch stopped, turned, dropped to one knee; and his carbine spat, evenly, methodically.

HE was doing the thing he did best in life, the one thing he really loved—shooting. And men dropped. Even in that uncertain light, there was not one miss in five, and the deadly hail of lead checked the pursuit for a while. That was Gotch there, Shark Gotch. No man wished to be in the line of his fire. Samuels raged and cursed. Here was the one big chance to wipe out Gotch once and for all. He whipped his own crew onward, roared directions to the incoming boats. But three times Gotch stopped and emptied his carbine, and three times the freshly roused pursuit checked and ebbed away.

They crashed into jungle at last, where

the harbor curve met the low headlands of the bay; and for a while the shooting ceased. By the time Tiro had located their boat and dumped Burke into it, the shouts of the raging Frigate Island men were dim behind, and the only menace was the ships' boats which had paralleled the fugitives' course. Whoever was in charge of them knew his business, knew that before long Gotch would have to take to the water, and knew also that his hidden boat could not be far away.

Tiro jerked the little craft to the water and hoisted the sail as a sliver of moon lifted above the horizon. Gotch took the tiller and steered to sea, cutting across the bows of the boats; and then holding the tiller beneath the bend of one knee, he picked up his carbine and shot again, implacable and deadly. He did not aim at the dark blobs that were men this time, but at the boat's hulls; and the first one suddenly began to go down. The others swerved to pick up figures floundering in the water—and, the heart taken out of the pursuit, it stopped entirely.

"You hurt, Tiro?" Gotch asked then.

"A scratch or two," answered the big Samoan calmly. "Ai! That was fast while it lasted."

"Fair," agreed the Shark. He was relaxed now, even indifferent, the killer lust gone from him, now he had achieved his object.

Tiro touched Burke's groaning form with his foot.

"And this?"

"I still have a little business to finish with Burke." Gotch stopped suddenly and leaned forward to peer at Tiro. "Why?"

"My cousin was houseboy to Brockhurst," said the Samoan stonily. Gotch said nothing to that, but nodded to himself, and touched a match to the rocket that would bring Porpoise Bailey and the *Stingray*.

THEY ran alongside about two hours later, and Red Burke found himself stumbling into the bark's main cabin. He dropped wearily to a chair, and Gotch poured him a stiff brandy.

"Get that down," he ordered shortly. "And here's another draft for the twenty-eight hundred pounds. The pen's beside you."

Red Burke glared at him, livid with rage and fear, incredulous even yet, that two men had brought him out of Frigate Island and from the middle of scores of the hardest men in the South. He had lost face, he knew. Always boasting, ruthless and arrogant, he had invariably made good before. And how many times, and in how many places, had he not openly jeered at the reputation of this frail little man who confronted him? Rage seethed over within him.

"I'LL see you damned first before I sign!" he choked.

"Probably," the Shark agreed. "But the Commissioner will attend to you before I'm damned. You sign, or you go to Samarai."

"You can't get away with this," Burke blazed. "My men will be at sea after you. Samuels' ship can run rings round this hearse of yours, anyway. He beat you in from Samarai as it was."

Gotch was faintly amused.

"Being a rat, you ought to understand rats," he observed. "Samuels isn't going to any trouble for you now. Nor are your own men. You're gone, and they can take over. Share what you've left. If Burroughs recovers, which I doubt, he'll confiscate the *Galloway*. I've a picture of Frigate Island busting its neck to get you back! On their own beach, perhaps, but not at sea."

There was a long silence. And then the flame died a little from Red Burke's eyes as he understood at last that Shark Gotch meant exactly what he said—that he always meant exactly what he said. He knew now that Chalmers had been right. And Clint Samuels had been right. That cheap little raid on Tamroa had been a terrible mistake. And now—"Sign, or you go to Samarai." And at Samarai a grim-faced, grizzled Commissioner would be ready with a fine new length of rope.

With a bitter curse Red Burke finished his drink. They were alone in the main cabin, just Gotch and himself. On deck, of course, there were Porpoise Bailey and Tiro and the Kanakas of the crew. But if a man reached the deck, in the dark, with a gun. . . . He narrowed his eyes and thought, while Gotch calmly lighted a cheroot and waited. There was plenty of time.

"Damn you!" said Burke at last, with freshly simulated anger. He slammed his glass viciously on the table, and seizing the pen beside him, scrawled his signature across the waiting draft. Twenty-eight hundred pounds! All he had in the world. If he ever did get clear, he would have to start again, un-

less he got back to Frigate Island before the wounded Burroughs took his ship.

"All right," said the Shark mildly. "You can take my boat now. It's still alongside, and I'll make you a present of it. It might be awkward with your wounded shoulder, but you can sail her back to Frigate Island. So far as I'm concerned, the debt's squared; the Commissioner can attend to his own dirty washing."

Red Burke did not answer, but started up from his chair. Gotch was reaching for the draft at that moment, and for one of the few times in his career, he was momentarily off his guard. Burke's right hand caught up his empty glass and slammed it hard against the Shark's head, all in one motion. And then, as the little man reeled, he jerked a gun from one of the other's shoulder holsters, snatched the draft back, and sidled toward the companion to the upper deck.

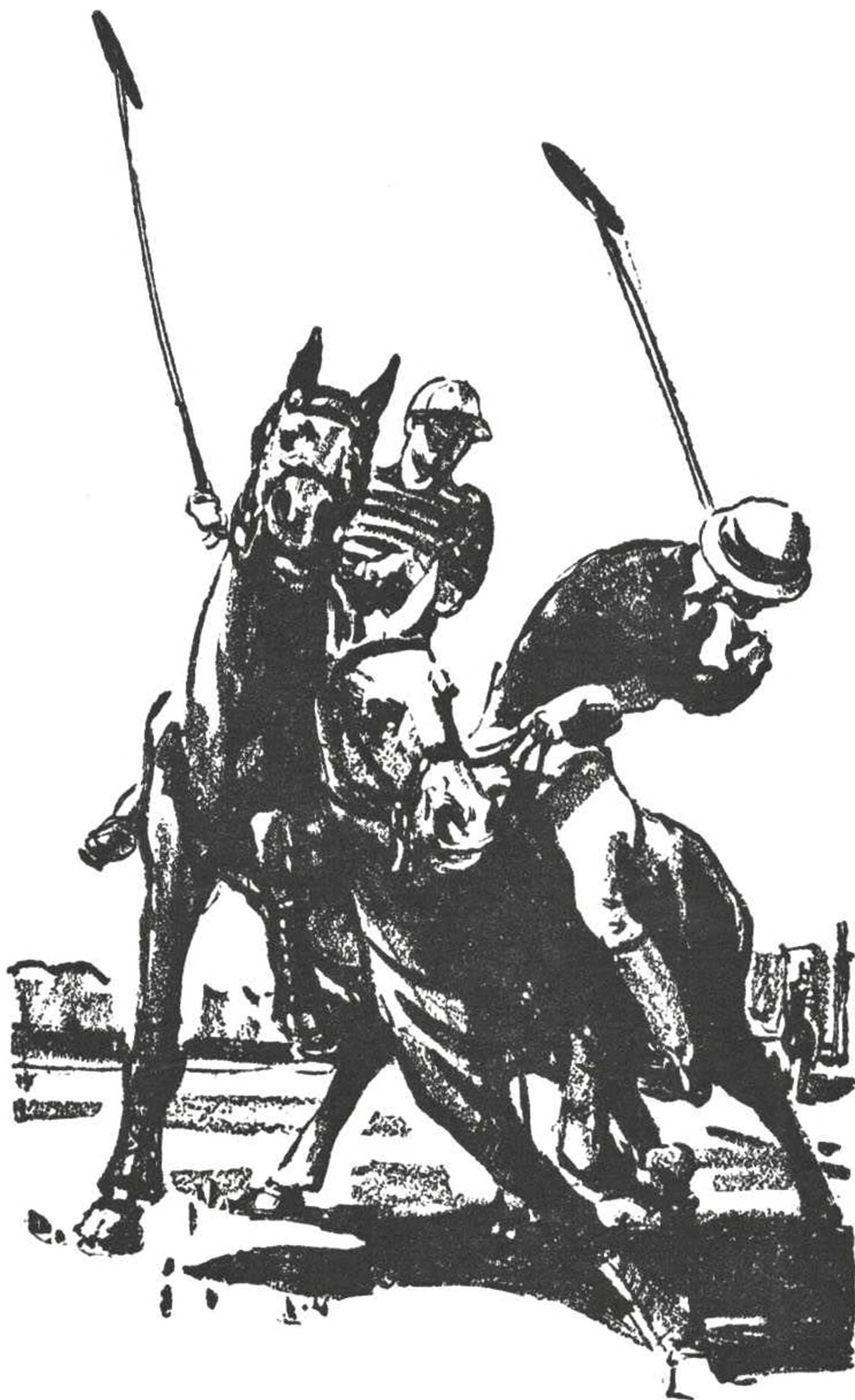
"You little swine!" he snarled. "Think you got the best of Red Burke, eh? Well, I'm plugging you first, and then I'm taking my chance on a getaway. They won't know on deck what's happening until I'm clear. So take it!"

Gotch turned and ducked, hoping to get under the shelter of the table for a second while his head cleared and his other gun leaped to his hand. But he knew, even as he moved, that there was no time. He would get it full in the back. The crash of the explosion rocked the main cabin; and cutting across it, almost deadening it, there came a scream of mortal pain.

Gotch felt the lead pluck at the sleeve of his jacket, and then he was crouched, his own gun ready, facing the companion. He could not understand how Burke had missed at that short distance, until he saw the big man was swaying like a tree in the wind, swaying and drooping, falling forward to thud on the deck, roll a little and lie still.

The Shark waited for one tense moment and then relaxed. He moved softly forward, took the crumpled draft from Burke's unresisting hand and straightened, smoothing it. Then he looked long and steadily at the haft of a flung knife protruding from under Burke's left shoulder-blade, a knife that had come down the companion from the darkness of the scuttle on the poop above. Tiro's knife.

"Ah, yes," said the Shark quietly to himself. "I had forgotten. Tiro's cousin was houseboy to Brockhurst. And that was a debt too."



INSIDE the big entrance hall of her great California house Barbara Randall tossed her fur neckpiece on a chair and led Bill Cochran into the long drawing-room that overlooked the wide, flagged terrace. Away down below them the sea churned white against the rocks.

There were two big log fires burning in the long room, one at each end, but the windows were open because it was California.

Barbara flung her hat at a chair seat, the way an expert catcher would snap a ball to second base. Then she looked up and smiled warmly at Bill Cochran.

"Like a cocktail, Bill?"

He smiled back. "I told you," he said, "I'm up the pole."

She wrinkled her neat little nose. "One wouldn't hurt you, would it?"

"One would break a rule. And it might lead to—others. You can't play international polo and drink, Barbs."

A warm glow came into her lovely eyes. She said: "*You* could, I'll bet. Except for Archie Shenstone, I never saw a man quite as good as you."

Cochran felt a sudden sinking feeling in his stomach. "Except for Shenstone, eh?"

"That's fair. Ever since you've been here with the team, you've refused even

Eight Goal Men

A thrill-crammed story of the most exciting game in the world—international polo: by the able author of "Parade Ground" and other noted books.

By CHARLES L. CLIFFORD

Cochran pulled over to the right. Miss Riley, leaning far over, had to go.

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

a bottle of beer, or to take me out to a simple, early dance. Or movies, if they kept you up after ten o'clock. You've seen Archie take plenty to drink. Didn't seem to hurt him. You've played two games of the series. The American army won the first, the British the second—and by a bigger margin, by five goals. And that's a beating, my lad, at polo."

"That's all right too," Bill Cochran muttered.

"You say you love me."

"Yes, that's right."

"It doesn't sound right. If you loved me, you'd try to please me."

"Poison myself with alcohol after a hard game, or the night before a game, eh? Drink like Shenstone? Act like a fool to be a good sport." His voice was frankly bitter.

"Acting the fool seems to improve his play, then. Or is he so much better than you? In yesterday's game I didn't see you getting off on any runs; but I did notice Archie backing them right under your nose. And making you miss when you did have a few chances for a shot at goal. You're both eight-goal men. But Archie's outplayed you in both games."

He got up, his big hands moving restlessly. "Guess I'll push. Mess closes at seven-thirty."

She stood, too. There was now a bright anger in her eyes. "Why can't you be normal—act like a human being? Do you think you're any fun for a girl? No wonder you got beaten. And you'll be beaten tomorrow. Don't you see you've gone stale with these absurd ideas you have of training? Practicing all morning and afternoon until your muscles stiffen—then going to bed by ten o'clock with your nerves all shot! What fun is that for me? Of course I like a man like Archie Shenstone. I can't help but see the difference. He doesn't act like an invalid: but he goes out there every game and turns in a ten-goal game."

SHE glared at him to provoke retaliation. But he didn't look at her. Finally he said slowly:

"You couldn't understand it. There are three other men on this team besides me. And we agreed on this training rule. And as team captain, I suggested it. The army gave us this chance, and we owe it to the service to win this tournament. We're playing what amounts to the British international team. They're better players than we are. They are much better mounted. It's only our team-work and perfect physical condition that give us a chance to win."

There was quiet in the room for a time. Then: "You've that mare you call Miss Riley, by all accounts the fastest and best-playing pony in the world."

"Better go, Barbs," Shenstone said quietly. "What—what are you going to do?" she asked. Her voice shook.

"Yes. But she takes the very heart out of you. Two periods of her—it's like playing a wildcat. I'd like to see one of your drinking and dancing Britishers play her, that's all. It just takes more to play our ponies than theirs, Barb," he went on wearily. "The British are better at training ponies than we are. More patience. They spend years on them. I could go out after an all-night drunk and play most of theirs without taking a deep breath. But not Miss Riley or that Roman-nosed Buck of mine."

She smiled at him, and said with a great stress of humoring: "Oh, all right! All right! All right, little boy."

He had to grin at her. She walked toward him and laid a hand on his shoulder. "Come on, Bill: be a good boy tonight. Come on along. You can leave early. Just to please me."

He laid a hand back of her bright head. "I don't think so, Barbs."

"Look," she pleaded, "it's just an informal thing. You know the Graces—how you can go and come as you please. Stand-up supper. Good music. Cool there by the water. Leave when you want. You don't have to drink anything. And think—you can dance with me."

He smiled down at her. He was about to reach out and draw her to him. He saw that she wanted him to do that. Then he heard the sound of steps, and a voice from the porch: "Hello, in there!"

She drew away from him. "Oh, here's Archie now!"

Archie, eh? So that had been planned!

Bill Cochran didn't want to turn and see Archie Shenstone smiling into Barbara Randall's eyes. But he had to.

"Oh, hello, Captain Cochran!" The Englishman was very cheerful, friendly about it all. He gripped Cochran's hand warmly. Cochran's response was stiff.

They sat by the fire, the Englishman sprawling out his long legs comfortably.

"I'd have you a cocktail made," Barbara said, "only Bill, here, is off the nasty stuff. If you'd like one though, Archie—"

A look of quick concern came into Shenstone's face. "Stomach, Cochran?"

Barbara sniffed. "He's in training," she said.

"Oh!" Archie smiled warmly at Cochran. "Good boy! Well, then, I'll tag with you for the moment."

Bill Cochran didn't grin back at the Englishman. He thought of the day before, of that agonized hour of polo. There was no grin on this man's face then. His eyes were like those you sometimes see in the prize-ring, in the faces of top-notch pugs—the kind the sports-writers call killers. Killer eyes, he had; and a killer temperament. Fierce and vicious as a savage animal, he rode and struck at the ball. And when interfered with, those eyes blazed a personal hate. Cochran had seen that look several times, and with it the ugly jabbing of those big shoulders, and the sickening crash of the man's big ponies. Mild and easy-mannered he might be here, trying to make an impression on a beautiful girl. But tomorrow! It was the final game. The deciding game of the tournament. The result would proclaim the military championship of the world.

Barbara had been talking with Shenstone. Now she said: "I've been arguing with him. And you two can drive back together. Leave early."

Archie got up with Barbara. He smiled at Bill Cochran. "I do believe she's right, old man. Bit of a let-up and all. Do come along."

"He's really trying to be decent," Cochran thought. "And I a little nasty. Well, this once I will be a good sport."

"All right, let's go," he said aloud.

THE party was typical of California. Flanneled men and tanned girls in sports-clothes talking, shouting, laughing, all having a grand time under the giant pines. Dancing on the wide terrace, drinking and eating with healthy appetites.

But Bill Cochran didn't enjoy it. He admitted frankly to himself that he was jealous of the big guardsman, who hung over Barbara, insisted on getting her supper, handed her drinks—more drinks

than she should have had. Moodily Cochran sat in a small den he had discovered at one end of the house. Nobody else had found that yet. He felt a little disgusted. It was already later than he had intended to stay. But for some time he had not seen Barbara, and he felt it would be a little childish to run off, piqued, leaving her with Shenstone. He was just about to get up and go in search of her, when she and the British officer came into the room. They were in great good humor.

"Saw you through the window, you big stick!" Barbara said. "Mad! Come on out and shake a leg with me."

A SLIGHT disgust rose in Cochran. She'd been drinking—more than a young girl should drink.

Bill got up. His face was grim. "Sorry. Time I was pushing off."

She came to him. "You push right back in that chair."

"Oh, I say!" Shenstone protested. "Night's young. Jolliest time I've had out here. Whisky-and-soda'd fix you. What say?"

"No," Cochran said. There was ugliness in his voice. The Englishman looked surprised. He shrugged.

"I'll explain it all to you," Barbara said. Mockingly she quoted Bill's argument against drinking during a tournament. Shenstone listened, a puzzled look on his face. Barbara made her story facetious. She was trying to hurt Bill Cochran because he hadn't broken down to please her, in front of everybody.

But Archie tried to be decent. He sensed that pique and liquor were lashing Barbara Randall on. He said placatingly: "You chaps have a little different idea of sports than we at times. You take it all in dead earnest. All out for a win every time."

"Yes, we play to win," Bill Cochran answered coldly. "Anything wrong with that?"

"I'm not sure you're right," Shenstone drawled. "Sport's fun, we say. If not why go in for it? Especially if you can't have a good time when you're off the field. Don't know when I've had such a topping time as I've had tonight."

Bill caught the quick look of intimacy he gave Barbara, and her answering, deliberate smile. It enraged him. He said: "Maybe you haven't thought of the others on your team."

"He means when you get tight, you let the other three men down," Barbara explained dryly. "And the crowd who pay good money to see the game."

Shenstone laughed shortly. "My lads have all the fun they can stand. And as for the crowd, strikes me we've given them a jolly good show, eh what?"

Barbara laughed. "I didn't notice your play-boy activities hurting your side of the score yesterday."

Bill Cochran was silent, was raging inwardly at the attitude Barbara Randall had taken. But it wouldn't be sporting to say what he had said to her about the difference in ponies before this man on the other team. Barbara, however, had no such inhibitions. She was thoroughly aroused, and so she explained. She said: "Bill, here, says your people couldn't ride his horses. That after a night's drinking you'd be dead after a few chukkers. And that he could get as tight as all get-out, and play any of yours without taking a deep breath."

There was a dead silence in the room after those words. Alive with her subject, and a little tight as she was, even Barbara Randall felt a sudden shock of fright. She had been brought up in a sporting family, in a setting where a reflection on one's horsemanship is just a narrow point below a reflection on one's wife. And these two men were of the same type.

Now she conquered her first instinctive desire to placate. She realized that it was too late, that in her pique and selfishness she had done a harm that was beyond her undoing. She stifled a faint sob, her wide eyes going from one set face to the other. Then Shenstone said coldly and clearly: "I don't think that was a very sporting thing for you to say, Cochran."

Cochran's thoughts were bitter; he felt as though he were cheating his teammates.

"I think it's true, though." He looked straight at the Englishman as he spoke.

"And I," Shenstone retorted, *"don't think it is!"*

That killer-look was in his eyes; and in the eyes of Bill Cochran too. "Are you, by any chance, questioning my word?"

"Call it that if you wish."

They moved toward each other slightly, their hands preparing, their big bodies alert. In growing panic Barbara Randall tried to intervene. "Don't be a couple of fools," she begged.

"You'd better get out," Bill Cochran advised her.

She laughed tremulously. "No sense in having somebody's place torn up by a couple of fool elephants."

"Better go, Barbs," Shenstone said quietly.

The sense of intimacy in the man's voice sickened Cochran.

"What—what are you going to do?" Her voice shook. She moved between them, touching them each with a hand. That killer-look was there for even her to see. Nothing would stop them. Not even she could stop them. Their pride was outraged far beyond any possibility of a sop being thrown or a diversion being created. For the first time in her life Barbara Randall was really frightened. But she had to be calm. She laughed; she wanted to make them feel that their vicious intentness was not apparent to her. "What—what will it prove?" she asked.

Neither of the men made reply. She went on, shaky, rushing her words: "All you'd do is hurt each other so that you couldn't play tomorrow. And—and you weren't arguing who could knock the other out on somebody's best Chinese rug, were you?"

A THIN smile came to Archie Shenstone's face. He nodded slightly, his eyes watching Cochran. "Quite right! Sorry, Barbs. We'll—we'll leave." He turned his head, a quick flashing question in his eyes for the other man. The American nodded.

"No!" Barbara cried. Her fingers tightened on their arms. She could feel the tenseness of those muscles. "Please! You can settle it another way. Talk it out. Act like civilized men, gentlemen. Please, Bill!"

At that voice, using his name, pleading through sobs, Bill Cochran softened. He thought he saw tears in those lovely eyes—tears for him, maybe. "What, Barbs?" he asked. His voice sounded funny. It had a break in it like that of a young boy whose voice is changing.

Shenstone laughed shortly. "Maybe you're right, Barbs. Like civilized men! Like gentlemen, eh? I've an idea. More sporting, too. Settle this matter on its merits. What say? Are you on?"

"I don't get you," Cochran said.

Shenstone's smile broadened. "Simple! Tonight we go back, get tight as Billy-be-damned. Drink for drink. Best man wins. Swap our ponies in the game tomorrow. Fair?"

"Since you're being so sporting," Cochran said grimly, "I'll meet you halfway. I'll tell you you couldn't play my mare Riley, nor my dun, either."

Shenstone's eyes glittered dangerously. "And I—I rather think you can't finish a quart of Scotch tonight and outplay me tomorrow on *any* ponies!"

"I'll take that bet," Bill Cochran said.

COCHRAN sat on the sideboards and shivered. He pulled his heavy polo-coat about him. He hated himself. He felt as though he had lied, stolen and cheated his friends. He *was* cheating his friends, letting his comrades, his teammates, down. And all for a cheap false pride, for a girl! Alone now, away from her, it seemed utterly different. Insane. But it was too late; the damage had been done. If the team had possessed even a fair extra man, he would put that man in in his place to play the British today. He was the captain; he could do it. What matter if Shenstone did have the laugh, so long as the team came through? But there was no extra man. He'd have to play, though his stomach felt as though it were just holding a great weight. His head was swelling more every minute, it seemed. There were harsh thumping pulses just in front of his ears. He gritted his teeth as he thought of that night of horror just past. He could see Shenstone with that cool, superior smile as he poured drink after drink into his glass and hissed the soda into them. He could hear his steady, monotonously hateful "Cheerio!" as he downed the drinks. Never much of a drinker, Cochran had felt the stuff almost at once. He had had no dinner, and of course the stuff went right to his head. Well, he'd gone through with it, even if he had ended up violently ill. But that was just the beginning. The real piper was to be paid today.

If only the sun would come out and warm him! But the sky was overcast with low misty-looking clouds. A chill wind blew. The girls in the packed cars about the field and in the grandstand were snuggling deep into thick furs.

He could see now his own men warming up by the back lines. He knew them by the red-and-white-striped jerseys. Ah, he envied them! They felt good, were keen and eager. They had been in bed by ten o'clock. Their stomachs felt light and clean, their heads clear. He had avoided them. He'd slept, a heavy drunken useless sleep, until just an hour ago.

Well, he'd better get up. Agony as it was, he must at least feel out the British ponies he was to play. And he must drive this chill from him before that madness broke out there in earnest.

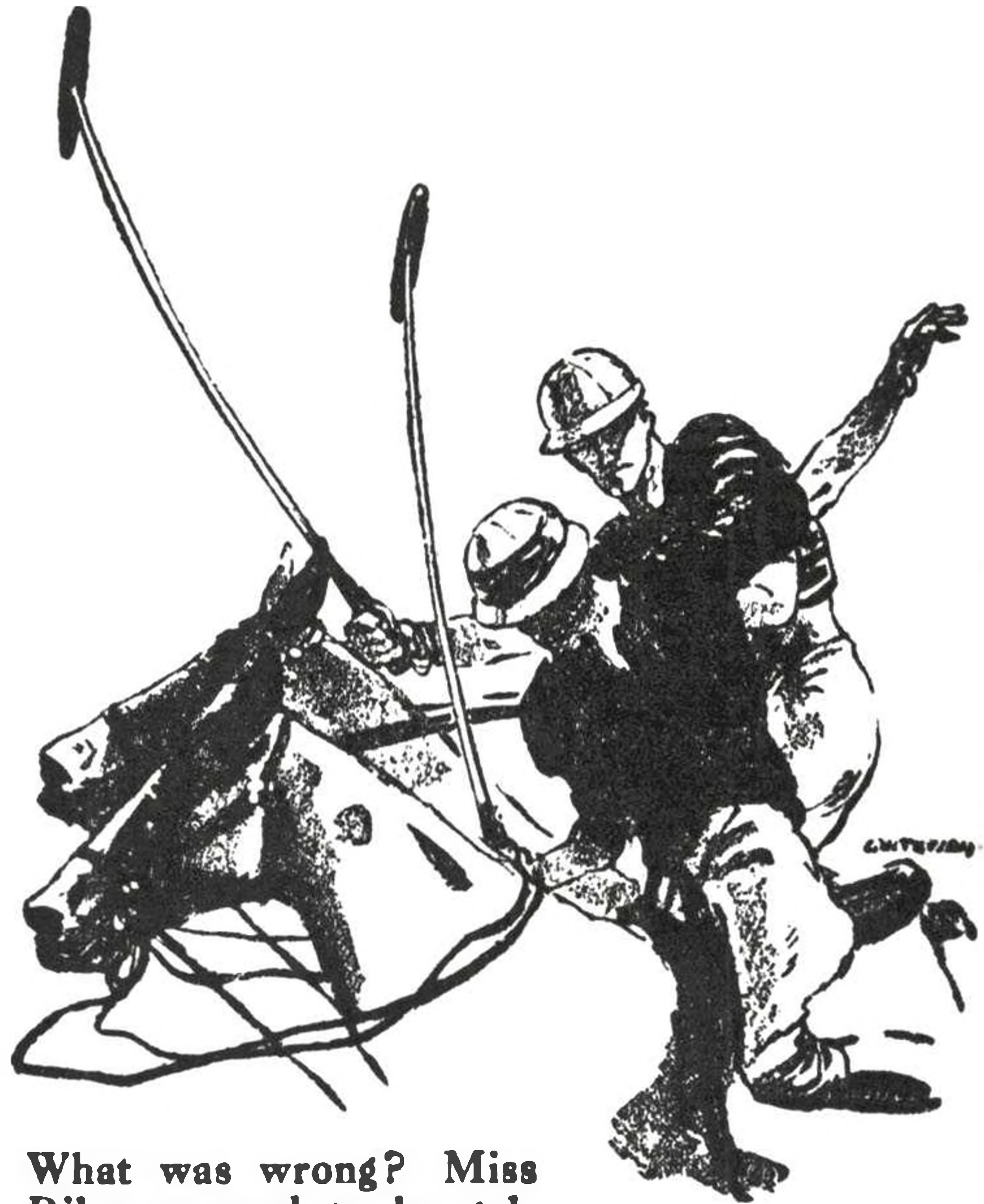
The sergeant in charge of the ponies came up, saluted. His rugged, seamed face was dark with doubt. Cochran felt guilty as he faced the fine old trooper. He had notified him by phone the night before of the change in horses at the time Shenstone had called his own man. The soldiers had been instructed to make the change quietly.

"Is everything all right?" Cochran asked wearily.

"I did like the Captain instructed," the sergeant answered dubiously. "I went over an' talked with that limey sergeant. He had an awful lot to say; but I shut him up *pronto,* sir. We done it just before comin' up. Like you said, sir; we left the bridles on they play in, and only changed the saddles so's each of you could ride your own. With our coolers over them, you wouldn't hardly notice the difference, because the British ponies are all bays. It's only that crocked-nosed Buck might be noticed—way his nose sticks out. Hadn't the Captain better try 'em out now?"

"Yes," Cochran replied, getting up. The sergeant walked along. He chuckled harshly. "I don't know what kind of a game the Captain and that English officer are up to; but believe me, sir, if he sits that Miss Riley mare one period and even hits a ball, my name aint O'Grady. An' that Buck—this here cold wind sure got him r'arin' to go. He thinks it's a Texas Norther, I guess, an' he's homesick."

"Let's have that mare," Cochran said; and he thought: "Serves him right. He brought it on himself. I think I'd die if I had to ride Riley today."



What was wrong? Miss Riley seemed to be galloping unheeded.

Briefly he tried out the four British ponies in the order the British sergeant had marked on the coolers. Badly as he felt, he thrilled at the smoothness and power each gave at the merest touch of his legs. Their mouths were like velvet; their pick-up unbelievably quick. They were delightfully steady to hit off. There seemed little choice between them. "He beat me out last night, but I'm ahead here," Cochran thought grimly. "If I only could see to hit a ball!"

He was, indeed, missing many of the practice shots. Everything seemed to be blurred. His sense of distance was off. He shook his head violently to clear it; and as he raised it, he saw Shenstone cantering easily on Miss Riley not a horse-length away. "He'd better not try any practice shots off her," he thought. There was no quicker way to upset the little mare before play, he knew. But Shenstone wasn't making any shots. He was quietly cantering her on a circle, his right hand gently stroking her neck. The mare was moving smoothly and without excitement. It made Cochrane feel even more bitter when he noted the graceful, beautiful seat of the other man. But he grinned as he got closer and looked into that face. The eyes were red, the face drawn and haggard. Bottle man he might be, but last night's grim boozing had left its mark. The odds weren't as bad possibly as Cochran had thought....

The bell clanged harsh and heart-stopping across the field. The Americans

won the toss and Cochran elected to drive with the wind. As he rode out onto the field abreast of his team-mates, the martial blare of the band stirred anew his guilty sense of disloyalty. The march was one they often paraded to, almost a regimental hymn. It sickened him, hearing it. And his turbulent stomach almost revolted. He breathed deeply, knowing that to get all the air he could manage into him would help his ragged nerves. He rode by Shenstone, and the Englishman nodded, smiling grimly. He was mounted on the Roman-nosed Buck, and Buck's ears were cocked up into the wind. "He'll think he's on a runaway freight in a minute," Cochran thought as he eased the mare he was on up to the front, close to the British Number One.

The ball gleamed white, rolling from the referee's hand smooth and true toward Cochran's stick. He swung at it viciously, missed it widely. He cursed, crashed the horse against him, and tore across its front to get well out. The ball came out, hit clean and hard by his Number Three. The British One hugged him, but he had the edge on him. He came up to the ball straightened for goal. He topped it; and like lightning, the British Three smashed it back. He looked over his shoulder, checking a little with the English One. But the play had turned. The British team was reversed, and Shenstone was on the ball.

BUCK could turn as fast as horses can turn. And on the path of a ball, he ran true as a sighted line. Stopping him was another matter, especially when he smelled that Norther. But Shenstone had no need to stop him yet. He had hit a long ball straight for goal; and now, ears back and tail flung to the wind, Buck flattened out on the sort of job he liked best. He had been a great quarter-horse on the border where there were miles of desert to stop him after his puny little run was over—and won. Now he was off!

Shenstone sat him easily and gauged his shot. Nobody was within ten yards of him, and he knew it. He struck cleanly and accurately. The ball rose in a long, graceful arc and flashed almost through the exact center of goal space. The flag waved. Wild toots came from the parked cars. A massed roar came from thousands of throats. Americans or not, that crowd was for the better team. And besides, the English army had been beaten in the last series, and they'd come a long way to play these three games.

There had been little to do for Cochran back at the end of the play. He cantered along watching his corresponding opponent out of a corner of his eye, but mostly watching the flying Buck. There was a fence some fifty yards behind the back line. All the room in the world within which to stop a proper pony. He could stop Buck in it—just about. But this stranger riding him couldn't; that was sure. "He'll take that fence," Cochran thought grimly, "martingale or no martingale. He may give friend Archie a bad toss."

Buck did take the fence—in his stride. But he made it clean. And when he landed, he cooled down at once and turned and came back, cantering. A wild yell of applause went up from the crowd. This was the sort of thing that gave color to a game.

Shenstone galloped back for the throw-in, almost too late. As he rode up, his eye caught Cochran's.

"Nice ride," Cochran said softly.

"Smart little pony," Shenstone said. The very tone of the man's voice infuriated Cochran. "He's just begun," he thought. "Wait until he gets on that little hell-cat Riley. He'll never even sit her."

The heat of the play, now become desperately furious on the part of the American team, drove all thought of Shenstone out of Bill Cochran's mind. Like a leaf in a hurricane, he was caught up and driven along by the momentum of the mass about him. Dimly he played his position by mere force of habit. The few chances he had at the ball he either missed or fumbled. His eyes were misty. His heart beat sullenly, heavily. His head was one mass of cruel pounding. He couldn't think. His stomach seemed turned inside out. Desperately he tried to collect himself, to think up a scheme of play that would make him of some value on the field. He thought of Barbara; and while he was thinking, he suddenly found himself beside Archie Shenstone, knee to knee.

THE British One had the ball, with Garner, the American back, fiercely fighting him off. He drove him off. Lunging far away from his mount, Terry, the American Three, drove a terrific back-stroke. Cochran had to duck to miss being struck in the head by it. Instinctively he turned, and he could hear

Shenstone's whip slashing as he turned away and with him. They came back and up to the ball together. Their ponies crashed shoulder to shoulder, and they fought one another over the ball. It clicked away under their ponies' racing feet. They fought one another down to and through the goal. The ball came in behind them, hit by the American Two.

The score was even. And before the throw-in, the whistle blew for the end of the period.

IN misery, Cochran sloshed his head with an icy sponge, his thoughts bitter. He couldn't meet his teammates' eyes; and least of all the worried eyes of his sergeant. Terry came up to ask: "Bill, wasn't that old Buck that Shenstone was on? What the hell—"

"Leave me alone, will you!" Cochran flashed back.

"You look sick, Bill," Garner said. "What's wrong, old man?"

"Not a damn' thing," Cochran replied. "Go on. Get out there!"

They all knew that something was wrong—something was dead wrong with Bill Cochran, the eight-goal man who wasn't hitting as well as a two-goal man this day. But they tightened their jaws and went out. They were soldiers. And there was a fight ahead of them. If they had to take it on the chin, all right. But not without a damned good fight. . . .

That attitude of the other three held the British. They played better polo than any of them had ever played before. And by the fourth period the British only led them by two goals. The score was five to three. Cochran's head had cleared some. He could see a little better; and a flash of his old brilliance came out now and then. One of the goals made he had cut in a seemingly impossible shot from far back along the boards. It had set the crowd in an uproar, but he knew it had been bad polo. He had done it out of pure hatred and desperation. He knew it should have been a place-shot out toward the center of the field, for his Two, who was waiting.

Now they rode out for the fourth chukker, and Cochran watched Shenstone come out on Miss Riley. She was dancing. Martingale too loose—a British trick. Well, he'd pay for it. And if he got on her mouth, if he had a heavy hand, or his hand had been made heavy by that boozing, it would be just too bad.

The ball snapped in. They were off. Almost at once he found himself flush against Shenstone and the ball well out in front. No other horse could outrun Miss Riley—no polo horse yet heard of. And Cochran cursed as he felt the English pony under him give way hurriedly to the little mare's impatient shouldering. She went after that ball like an enraged cat after a mouse that is almost escaping. She didn't even consider the other horse as an impediment. She had had her own way too long. But so swift was her going that Shenstone swung too late. He barely touched the ball, and Cochran, lashing on behind him, picked it up in its roll and hoisted it far and true through the goal. Before he turned to ride back for the throw-in, he caught Shenstone's eye. "Nice shot," Shenstone remarked.

"Thanks," Cochran replied dryly. . . .

For the rest of the period Shenstone was practically out of the game. The mare Riley bounded and leaped with him. Unless she was opened up, to top speed, he couldn't hit off her at all. She was upset, all right. "If he'd only tied her head down three inches more, he might have made it," Cochran said to himself. And he grinned. "But who can tell an Englishman how to ride a horse? Well, he asked for it."

SO for seven minutes Shenstone rode with both hands on the reins, and nothing but his superb seat kept him on the plunging mare at all. The few attempts at back-strokes he made were feeble things: a quick taking away of his mallet hand from the reins, and a hasty snap at the ball. Cochran, alert to his advantage, rode practically unhindered. Twice he got loose; and on one run, he scored. Garner scored from a throw-in, getting clean away from Shenstone, who was trying to bring Miss Riley down from far up on her hindlegs. And Duane, the American Two, picked one up from a cut shot in the center of the field, and slashed it down for another.

The period ended with the score six to five in favor of the American team. "And I'm through," Cochran groaned as he fell down onto a blanket and pulled his coat about him.

But he wasn't through. Never before had he realized what the human machine can take if basically it is sound. He was bruised and sick and beaten; there were great welts on his bare arms where whip and stick had landed. There was a purpling bruise on his cheek-bone. His thighs were so lame that it seemed impossible ever again to move them. His

fingers trembled and shook as they handed him his tea with lots of sugar in it. He could hardly lift the cup to his mouth, he felt so weak. He wondered dully how it would be possible for him to lift that heavy malacca mallet.

But lift it he must.

He watched Shenstone come out—on old Buck again. He didn't look like the debonair Captain Archie Shenstone now. His face was pale, his eyes sunken far back in his head. His blue jersey was slopped with water. But he sat erect on the dun horse, and his head was high. He never looked once to left or right as he rode at a walk into position.

Cochran was on his pony of the first period, just as was Shenstone. It was a good, easily handled mare. He noted that the English back was playing safe, well out; and he hung close, watching him. Only once in the chukker did he have a chance for goal, and Shenstone beat him to the ball and cut it far back out of danger. Buck was behaving better. His own mare seemed tired. It was a scoreless, listless period.

The sixth opened up fast, the British fighting fiercely to even the score. Shenstone was on Cinderella, an unusually handy and steady pony. Cochran's mount was a rangy bay gelding, a little stiff on turns to the right, and not quite up to Cinderella in speed. Time and again in this period the ball came up to him, but each time there was that broad back just ahead, that mallet sweeping up and down, the sickening smash of the ball going back. And finally, just at the end of the period, the British One got away for a long run and a goal. The crowd screamed hoarse approval. They were seeing polo such as never before had been seen on the Coast.

WHEN Cochran rode in to change, Garner, the oldest player on the team, came close. "Bill," he said between sucked-in breaths, "keep on Shenstone, will you? This next, just stay on him. Never mind the ball."

"All right," Cochran answered bitterly. A hell of a thing, this! An eight-goal man told to leave his stick at home, practically. It meant that the war-wise Garner, from his position in rear, had seen the whole show. That Shenstone was beating him to the ball too often, and that Shenstone's terrific back-strokes were making the opportunities for his forwards to score. And Garner wasn't the only one who was seeing this. That crowd out there—though most of them in the heat and speed of the game wouldn't notice. But there was one there who would, who was especially watching. Even gloating, for all he knew! Well, let her! Let her watch this next period. She'd see some riding, this seven and a half minutes.

BUT it is one thing to decide calmly on a course of action in polo, on the sidelines, and quite another when breaks of the game stir the blood into a frenzy, or a golden opportunity to score looms up out of nowhere.

For the first half of the period Cochran harried Shenstone mercilessly. Instead of watching him, alert every second to beat him to a ball, he merely hung like a bulldog to the man—never left him alone, had his knee ahead of him always, regardless of the play or the position of the ball. It got on Shenstone's nerves, that broad shoulder banging against him, and that hard knee beating at him. "What in hell!" he growled, and he freed his body and beat back at Cochran. "You'll get as good as you send, m'lad!"

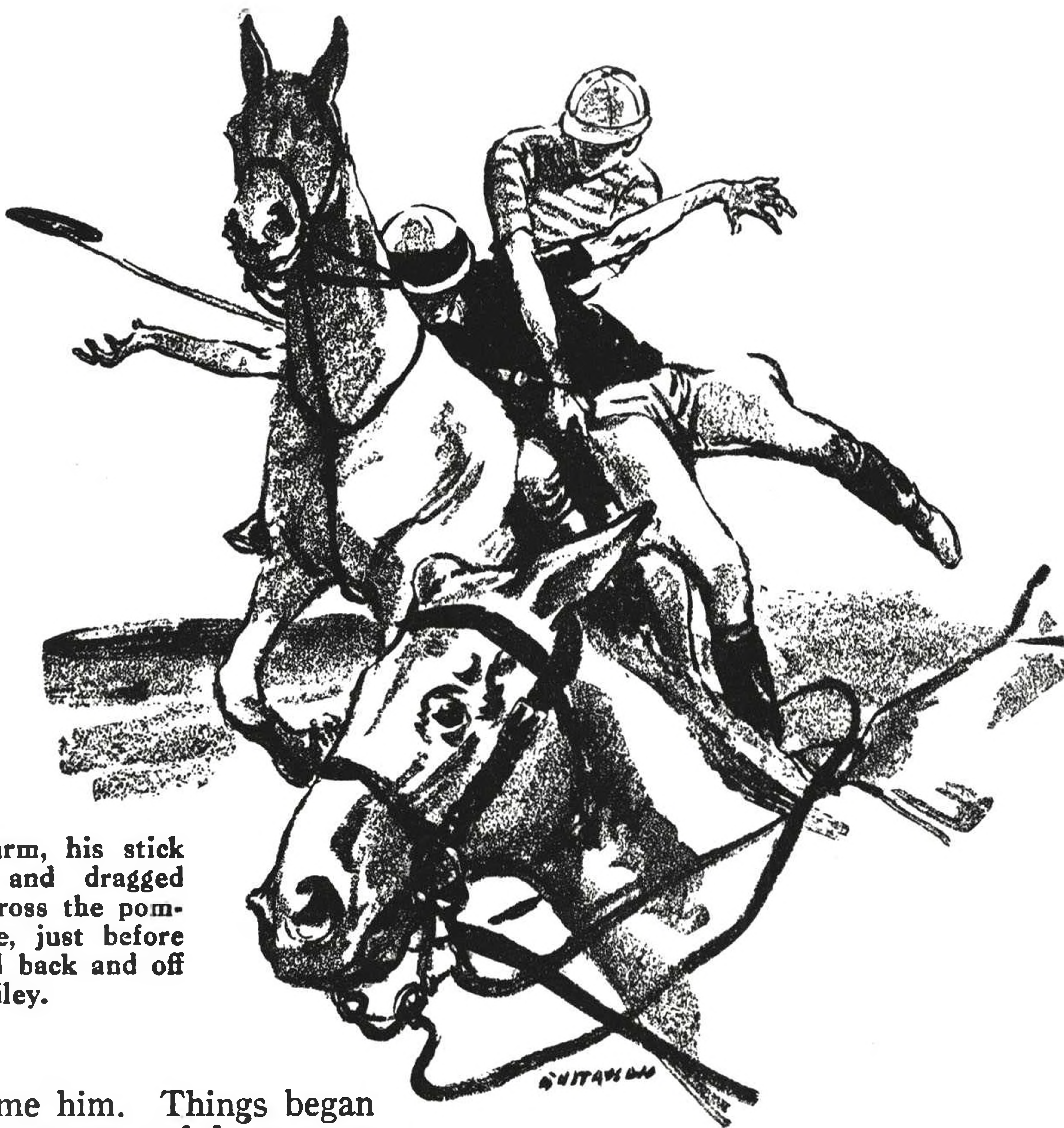
And so at top speed they lunged at one another up and down the field, the play boiling about them. Shenstone lost his head at last. Twice, in his preoccupation with Cochran, he missed back-strokes that he should have made. And the second of these, Charley Duane, coming up behind fast, turned into a goal, giving the Americans a lead of one: the score seven to six.

It was clear now how that game would go. It would go exactly as Shenstone and Cochran went; that was clear to anyone who had ever seen a polo-game before. And it was doubly clear to the men concerned.

"Nice work, Bill," old Garner said as they rode in for the last change of horses. "You've got his goat. Once get an Englishman sore—"

Bill Cochran grinned harshly. He felt of his body. Up and down his sides, his shoulders, his arms. Did he say *sore?* Well, they had the lead now, and only one more chukker. And Shenstone, the wonder, on Miss Riley! If they didn't win now, the British just had a decidedly better team. And he didn't think they had. That big win of theirs had been a combination of all the breaks of that one game. . . .

But when Bill Cochran dropped from his wet pony for the change, a sudden



Cochran's right arm, his stick arm, went out and dragged Shenstone half across the pommel of his saddle, just before the saddle slipped back and off Miss Riley.

giddiness overcame him. Things began to turn around, heave up and down, very slowly but very surely. He leaned against the pony the soldier attendant brought up. He put one arm across the mare's neck. Through a haze of queer sounds he heard the soldier call out. And then there was the feel of an arm about him. "Here," somebody said.

He was sitting on a blanket. From miles away he heard old Garner say: "We'll have to put Nelson up."

But Nelson couldn't keep that pace, or play that kind of polo. He was just a kid—a one-goal man.

"Drink this!" some one demanded.

He knew it. He knew the harsh odor of it. But he didn't want to take it. Somewhere in him a fierce voice cried out: "Not fair!"

And then old Garner said curtly to the others: "Come on. Get out. This isn't a rest-period."

COCHRAN got up. His eyes cleared. His head felt light. The army doctor smiled at him.

"Just sit there quietly," he said. "Be all right in a minute."

"The hell with that!" He pushed the man aside, got to his feet and took the bottle from the officer's fingers.

"Hey!" cried the doctor.

He grinned. "Won't hurt me, Doc. Heart's sound as a dollar."

"Well, I guess it is," the doctor said. "But you can't—"

Cochran drank deep. "Nelson!" he called.

The young lieutenant crimsoned. With desperate haste he was mounting Cochran's pony. The other three had ridden out. Already the referee was blasting sharply on his whistle as a warning. In a game like this, when the three minutes are up, the ball goes in, no matter how many players are late.

Then Cochran saw Shenstone. And at first he laughed: Miss Riley was doing her tricks, her dancing tricks before going out. As Shenstone tried to mount, she would rear up away from the soldier groom at her head. Again and again the Britisher made the attempt, only to have her swing her haunches away from him.

Bill Cochran took the pony away from Nelson. "Sorry, lad, but you don't get your chance today. Take this bottle. It's a nice aromatic-spirits of ammonia cocktail. Give it to the gentleman having trouble with the mare over there, eh?

And while you're about it, you might tell him that if he'd heave that dumb groom away from her head and 'cheeck' her, he'd have no trouble in mounting. Got it?"

Without another look Cochran swung up on his mare. In front he heard the sudden roar of hoofs, and the louder roar of the crowd. The game was on. The last period! American officers against British. Well, it was fair. It was the rules. If they couldn't get out, let them pay the penalty.

Cochran felt fine, more than fine. "I'm drunk all over again," he thought. "That A. S. A. cocktail fixed me fine. I feel like a ten-goal man." He shifted his stick, eyed the play, now far down the field, saw a mass of horses and men tear through the goal, and a red flag wave. "By God, they've scored! Scored because I was out of the game!" He tore across the field toward the throw-in. Wildly he thought: "It's tie. Seven to seven. Watch me go!"

NO one ever saw Bill Cochran play polo as he played that last period at Del Monte. Nor Archie Shenstone. The Englishman had tied the mare's head down, and he rode her like a whirlwind. The contagion of those two players' rivalry caught among their team-mates. The ball seemed never to be still. Up the field it went, and back down. The crowds had swarmed out of their comfortable motor seats now, and were pressing along the sideboards, shrieking.

Knee to knee Shenstone and Cochran rode, hugging each other like deadly centaurs. The hoofs of six other horses thundered ahead or behind. They never looked at one another. Grimly Shenstone fought, and Cochran felt the exaltation of effortless battle. He had no heaviness now—rather, an ethereal lightness. His big mare fought hard against the smaller Miss Riley, bruising and pounding her. But the little American mare with her incredible bursts of speed drove her off.

Cochran found that the English mare would stop straight quicker than any other pony he had ever been on while at top speed. And now that his head was light and alert, he began to think. He knew Miss Riley: a quick stop, with her, meant plunging.

And then from near the American goal a ball came back. Old Garner had pounced upon it in the nick of time. Cochran beat Shenstone on the turn because of Miss Riley's plunging; but the little mare forged up, and before they came to the ball, she had the edge on the British mare. Cochran shouldered Shenstone hard—hard enough to make him just top the ball on his back-stroke. The two tore on; and looking back, Cochran saw that his next man was free. It was Duane, and he hit short. Desperately Shenstone looked back, checked, but he wouldn't let Cochran by to pick up the shot Duane was so eager to hit up. Again Duane hit short, but now his opponent was coming up, and he lashed the ball out as far as he could. It came well up to the center of the field, and Cochran saw that Shenstone would have his shot at it, as Miss Riley just had the shoulder on the British mare. Now was the time!

Almost up to the ball, which was on Shenstone's left, Cochran fought him for possession. Then, just as the Englishman started his stick up for the stroke, Cochran pulled over to the right and checked hard. Miss Riley, leaning far over, had to go. The pair behind were well off the line of the ball, Cochran had noted; and now with his handy mare, he pulled her over sharply to the left, picked the ball up with a near-hand forward stroke; and before Shenstone could get on him, he was off, and in his next stroke smashed the ball through the goal.

Ah, that was one for the book!

Outplaying a man is one thing: outfooling him is another. Cochran caught a quick look at the Englishman's bleak eyes as he passed him going up the field for the throw-in, and almost he felt sorry for him. But that killer-look was there now for all the world to see. Shenstone wasn't going to take that.

THE period was half over. Only a few minutes now to play, and the Americans led by a goal. After a scrimmage from the throw-in, again Shenstone and Cochran came together. In the ensuing play the ball went over the sideboards near the center of the field. They lined up, and Cochran in front could almost reach out with his stick and touch the massed faces of the people watching from the bumpers of cars and from the sideboards. The referee was fumbling with the ball, muffed it. It struck the sideboards, and bounced back. At first Cochran was conscious only of a blurred mass of people, not distinct faces. But then he heard a voice—a voice that sent warm prickles up his wet back:

"Go to it, Bill!" it said.

There was only one voice like that in all the world. Bill Cochran unfocused his eyes from that referee's hand and looked. He saw her. She was sitting on the top of that big light-green car, bundled in gay rugs, and flanked by two curly-haired youths. Collar ads—rah-rah boys. Couldn't she have sat with a girl, or with a grown man? Now she turned, her mouth open, her eyes bright, looking at one of those ready-made men. He had an arm about her. The other one, a sappy smile on his face, was lighting a cigarette, ducking his head behind her warm hair to shield the flare of the match.

"BILL! Back it!" Garner's voice came to Cochran's ears.

Cochran snapped back to realization abruptly. He hadn't noticed that the ball was there at his feet—at his mare's feet. And sticks were slashing, tearing at it. He leaned down. He lifted the ball, springing it from his bent mallet. He tapped it along the boards, shouldering the other horses away. In the crashing and rasping of the sticks, he dimly heard old Garner. What was he saying? To hell with him! He'd take this ball along the boards himself, and whang it through those goal-posts that looked so near. He did get it well down, though he knew he should have backed it out hard. He cut it under the neck for goal—and right into Archie Shenstone's waiting mallet. Like a flash Shenstone spun Miss Riley away from the goal he was defending, hit long and true for the other goal, and was after it with more speed than any one else on that field had. His second stroke rose high and curving, and the ball went through and far beyond the goal.

What a shot! The greatest any of them there had ever seen. Impossible. Yet there it was: it had happened. And it had happened because Bill Cochran did not back a ball as he was told. Because he wanted to show off before a girl!

No one knew this but Bill Cochran. But he knew it, and he cursed as he rode back for the throw-in; for above the roar of yelling and the tooting of horns, came, more vociferous than any other, that peculiar French horn that he had learned to know and glow to. That horn from Barbara Randall's car sounding the accolade for Captain Shenstone of the British army, as so often before it had sounded for Cochran.

Through the roar of that applause came old Garner's pleading. "Bill! I know you're all in. But we can't stand another period. Score's tied now. We haven't the ponies for another. They have. Only about a minute to go. We've simply *got* to make one."

The stuff from that bottle had died now. Bill Cochran felt dead, just about dead. One minute! He could just last it. Have to last it. But another period! That would be impossible! He'd have to quit. And quitting was something he had never done in his life. It meant having this Englishman crow over him. He'd be out with Barbara Randall, all puffed up, tonight. He'd have won this crazy duel. And he'd know it, and she'd know it, even though nothing would be said. It would be the end of Barbara Randall for him. That wouldn't be so bad if it hadn't happened in this way. A matter of lost pride, of taking a beating.

They were forming up. He took a deep breath. He turned, and there was Garner, a harassed look in his eyes, lining up beside Shenstone. "Don't worry, Pop," he said to Garner. "Hit it out there, and I'll make your winning goal. I swear!"

SHENSTONE'S eyes met his as he turned away from Garner. Cochran expected a mocking look, after the spectacular goal the man had just made, and because of his own error. But Cochran was shocked at the haggardness there. The usually gay blue eyes were red and sunken. The cheeks were hollow. The cords in Shenstone's neck stood out like the worn, gnarled roots of a lifeless tree.

But Cochran had no time to wonder. A high-withered horse was pressing at him. The referee was drawing his hand back. He whipped his mare forward, swung at the incoming ball, couldn't reach it, and tore across the front and out toward the enemy's goal. Shenstone was a shade behind him, and as he came up, Cochran heard the swish of the fiercely hit ball pass by his head. Old Pop had hit it out. There it went, white and straight toward the British goal. And whipping, leaning far over his mare's withers, Cochran went after it.

No time to look behind. All there was in the mare he must have, because Miss Riley was thundering behind. One stroke was all that he would have. He knew that; and just as he felt the gallant little Riley coming hot on his flank, he leaned out and struck. True it went; but his heart sickened as he knew it

would not have the impetus to go through. Hurried as he was, he had not set himself for the powerful stroke that was necessary. But he meant to make a fight of it. He'd fight Shenstone right up to that next shot, praying to God that he would not back it, and that his following Number Two would have the advantage of his British opponent and could hit it through.

Going at top speed, his whip flailing, he looked back. The next Britisher had the fiercely fighting Duane ridden off. Without a doubt he would back the ball when he came up to it. Unless—unless the seemingly impossible happened: that Miss Riley was ridden off.

Shenstone was at his stirrup now. He was leaning perilously over. No chance to try that trick again. It wouldn't work again on a man like Shenstone. And besides, Duane and the British Three were hot on their heels and on the line of the ball.

Closer and closer that dying white ball came. Savagely Cochran beat his shoulders against Shenstone. But the Englishman had the knee on him now. And yet the ball remained on the right, in line for a shot from Cochran. . . . What was wrong? Riley seemed to be galloping unheeded. She was forging ahead of his own mount; yet she wasn't driving him off the ball. An exultant thrill came to Cochran. "She's running away!" he thought. "Out of hand! To hell with me—he's only trying to get her in hand."

THE ball came closer. Even above the thunder of hoofs, Cochran could hear the wild, steady roaring of the crowd. It sounded like a blood-mad fight crowd, in the last round when two gory heavyweights are slugging toe to toe for a final chance for a knock-out.

Cochran drew back his stick. A mere tap. The goal couldn't be twenty yards away. The ball was dying in its roll. Whatever was wrong with Riley didn't matter. But she wasn't driving him off. She seemed even to be slipping away. A mere tap, and victory and glory. . . . Shenstone was in his lap now, falling across his reins. "Get the hell off!" Bill Cochran yelled above the roar of following hoofs. "Get your elbow out of me!"

That elbow might mean a miss. And this shot couldn't be missed. It meant the game. It meant Barbara Randall. "Get off me!"

And then he saw Shenstone's eyes.

"Cinch broken. Sorry," said Archie.

Cochran never knew just what happened after that. One thing, his right arm, his stick arm, went out and dragged at Shenstone—just before the saddle slipped back and off Miss Riley. And in the cloud of dust and turmoil afterward, he still held Archie Shenstone half across the pommel of his saddle. Then the goal-post went down, and he saw the white, frantic face of the goal-keeper going down with it. And as he swung the flying pony off the line of play, he heard the terrific thundering of the three pairs of riders behind, clinging to each other like grim death. And then he heard a whistle, and his heart ached, and he dropped Archie Shenstone.

"YOU kept me from being killed back there," Shenstone said softly. He dismounted. The referee and the other players were grouped about, their faces anxious.

"Anybody hurt?"

"That goal-tender."

"He's just scared to death."

"What about it?" the referee said. The goal-tender just looked—a hopeless look. He still saw those eight horses tearing at him out of the dust-cloud. "I—I couldn't see," he said.

"There's the ball. Over the back line," the referee said. "I admit I couldn't see through the dust."

"It's another period, and hell," Bill Cochran said half aloud. "It's a beating for us."

Archie Shenstone laughed, a very shaky laugh. "I say, Mr. Referee, I saw it, you know. A goal. Straight through."

They all looked at Shenstone, wondering. He still leaned a little against Cochran. "Who made it?" the referee said officiously. A broad grin came into the Englishman's face. He raised a weary hand. Blood dripped from the knuckles of it. He pointed. A faint cloud of dust marked where Miss Riley was making her hasty way back to her own herd.

"Pony goal," Archie said. "By Miss Riley." He turned and laid an arm about Cochran's shoulders.

The others rode off all talking at once, shaking hands. Shenstone said, his eyes bright, not killer-eyes now: "Your lady'll be waiting, eh what?"

Cochran laughed. "If it's all the same to you, Archie, let's go try your bottle."

"It is all the same to me," Archie Shenstone said.

Illustrated by Peter Kuhlhoff

For the Good Work

A high-speed story of real and rough detective work.

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

CLIVERTON is a good-sized city, but it still has a small-town shopping district; and on Saturday night the folks jam into seven or eight blocks of Market Street, and push one another back and forth, and spoil shines, and make the cops sore, and fill the cash registers.

So Saturday nights were the best times for the Rev. Isaac (Pop) Smithson, who preached—and incidentally made the traffic situation a little worse off—from the Market Street gutters. I don't suppose he actually saved any more souls on Saturday nights, but he certainly took in more dough. Probably most people thought that was all he was after, really. But it wasn't; old Pop Smithson was perfectly sincere. I happen to know that he really lived on next to nothing, and spent most of his take on private charities he never said anything about.

He was a little old fellow, with a swell mop of white hair, fierce white eyebrows, and a white beard. As a soul-saver he belonged to no chain: he was an independent. He preached on the same corners night after night, but with different disciples behind him. Sometimes there were as many as seven or eight of these, not in uniform, but all wearing caps the old man had decorated himself; and sometimes there were only three or four.

On this Saturday night I got reference to, there were only three: Two scrawny women of almost any age you wanted to guess, with voices like scared geese; and the other one was me.

I was supposed to be a reformed drunkard, and my job was taking up the collection. Pop had wanted me to tote an old bass drum around, but I'd said absolutely no. A bass drum's nothing for a guy who might have to go for his gun any moment. But I didn't tell Pop Smithson that. He really thought I was a hunk of driftwood from the ocean of sin.

Well, Pop chalked four squares on the pavement, and in one of these he wrote

"Love" and in the others *"Salvation," "Godliness,"* and *"Clean Living."* He always did that—nobody could ever figure out why. He took off his hat, held it to his heart. He always did *that* too, but there was a reason this time: he was enough of a showman to realize what a swell selling-argument that mop of hair was. He squeezed his eyes shut and started to roar a prayer. I and the two women would yelp "Amen" every time one of us happened to think of it.

Pop quit that suddenly, and began to preach. The women were all ears and eyes, but I knew the thing by heart already, and I kept watching the crowds. Night after night, for six nights now, I'd been watching the crowds.

Some smart stick-up men were doing Cliverton: that was why. Three of them anyway, and maybe more. The Saturday night before, they'd knocked over five small places, and the week before that they'd knocked over four others. They were good. They'd clean up the whole flock of joints within half an hour, before anybody was quite sure what had happened. Lots of guys had seen them, of course, but they moved fast, and nobody was able to give a good description of them. They would go to a small store, cluster around the boss, stick guns against him, clean the register, and be out of that place almost before the customers knew anything was wrong. A few minutes later they'd be doing the same thing again, a block or two away. It looked like when they hit the sidewalk, they'd separate and lose themselves in the crowd, and then come together again on the next block for another job. They'd never even been chased. Smart boys, they were.

SO this third Saturday night Market Street was holding its breath. Not the regular shoppers, of course! They went on pushing and joggling back and forth, stepping on one another's toes, gawping into show-windows, gabbing, flirting, calling one another names. . . . No, not them, but the store managers, and the clerks, and of course the cops. Besides extra harness bulls, the whole detective force was on special overtime duty. But probably these dicks would be known by the stick-up artists, and avoided.

That was the reason for us outsiders being there, four "borrowed" cops. There were two from Richard City that were clerking in small shops; one from Marlboro, who was selling pencils and shoelaces behind a pair of smoked glasses; and I was the fourth, having been sent from Walterstown.

POP finished his blast and shouted "Amen!" and the women and me whammed our tamborines and shouted "Amen!" too; and then Pop yelled:

"Brother Johnson will now pass amongst you, asking for money wherewith to carry on the good work. Be generous, brothers and sisters!"

I said to myself: "Lord, what a life!" But out loud all I said was: "For the good work, brothers and sisters! For the good work!"

I took in seventy or eighty cents. I'd collected as much already, once before, earlier in the evening. I scooped this out, dropped it into a side coat pocket, and started back for my place in the line. I was going to hand the money over to Pop Smithson afterward, that being our regular arrangement.

But a drunk stepped down from the sidewalk and grabbed my sleeve.

"Hey! What're you going to do with all that dough? You say it's for charity, and then stick it in your own pocket!"

I tried to shake him off. Pop Smithson thundered:

"It is all used for the good work, brother. Brother Johnson does not keep this money. It all goes toward the good work."

I snapped: "Lay off me, guy!" Maybe it wasn't the way a saved soul ought to talk, but I was getting pretty disgusted with this assignment, and I was sore.

"Yeah? Well, first I'll see where that dough goes when you—"

Then came the shooting.

It was in a small shoe-store right in front of where we were holding the service. There were two shots, then another one. A woman shrieked. And the crowd went wild.

They went every which-way. Some people dropped to the sidewalk, with their arms over their heads. Some people threw themselves into the gutter. Some dodged into doorways. But most of them just ran—anywhere and everywhere, bumping into people, making an awful racket.

Even so, I saw one of the men come out of the shoe-store. He was holding an automatic, and for just the bat of an eyelash there, I had a clear view of him. I could have burned him down then and

there—and I would have, too—except that this drunk held onto my right sleeve, yapping about the dough.

I turned and smacked the drunk in the mouth, using my left. He fell back, spitting teeth and blood all over the place. I got my gun out at last.

But it was too late. That split-second had made all the difference. I went stamping back and forth, banging into people, looking everywhere—but I didn't get a thing. The guy was gone.

IT was after midnight when we had things out up at Headquarters, in the chief's office.

It wasn't proving a cheery little conference at all. There was the chief and a captain and two lieutenants. We were all sore, them at me, and me at the whole world. I'd known all along that these men didn't like me. Calling in outside detectives hadn't flattered them any; and they didn't like the prospect of splitting the reward money with visiting talent. There were three separate rewards, totaling eighteen hundred dollars.

The chief had just received a call from the Cliverton General Hospital that the shoe-store proprietor was dead. He'd never recovered consciousness.

"And we got no better description than we had before," Mahone growls.

I walked to a window, with my hands stuck deep in my pockets. I knew Mahone would have liked to pan me openly. As it was, he was relieving his feelings with sarcasm.

I said: "I'm sorry. That's the best I can tell you. I'm not even sure I'd know the man if I saw him again myself. His hat was pulled mighty low. . . . Remember, I only saw him for a flash there. And I had to turn to smack the drunk. It was the only way I could get rid of him. If it hadn't been for that damn' drunk—"

"You told us about that already."

"All right! I guess I've told you about all I can, if it comes to that. So what? Do I go off duty now?"

Mahone says: "Might as well."

"I suppose I go back to Walterstown tomorrow, huh?"

"I'll give your department a ring in the morning, and let you know. You certainly haven't been much use to us."

I started to say something, but then I shut my trap. What was the use? I'd got a tough break, that was all.

"All right." I went for the door. "Good night, then."

Nobody answered me. I could feel the four of them staring at my back. I could feel the reserves, and the two men behind the desk, stare at me the same way when I walked across the big room and out through the door to the street.

I heard somebody say: "Well, he got a cap out of it, anyway."

I'd entirely forgotten about the cap. Now when I remembered that I'd been wearing it all the time, I knew I must have looked like a damn' fool. Which didn't make me feel any happier. I snatched the thing off, and stuck it under my arm. The band was something Pop Smithson had made himself—a red linen band with *"Repent Ye"* in white letters. Imagine me arguing with Mahone and the rest of those local dicks with a thing like that perched on my bean! I'd have thrown the thing away, except that I knew how bad Pop Smithson needed them.

Market Street was like a graveyard. The movie crowds had gone, and the shoppers, and most of the cops. It was close to one o'clock, and Cliverton has a strict midnight-closing ordinance for saloons on Saturday nights. Just when I could have used a drink, too.

FROM behind me comes: "It is well to find you safe, Brother Johnson."

I turned, and there was the Rev. Isaac Smithson. I sort of liked the old guy, at that. He might have been a little goofy—personally I think he was; but he had the right idea. Practically everybody in town knew him by sight, I guess, but not many of them knew what I knew—about how he'd deny himself almost everything, living on bread and water practically, just so's he could carry on his work in the slums.

"Hello. I guess I'd kind of forgotten about you," I said.

"Forget me! Aye, forget me! But you must never forget the Lord's work, Brother Johnson."

"No, I suppose not. . . . Listen, I've got some dough here that belongs to you. I've got it all in this one pocket."

"The Lord's work must go on, brother."

I was beginning to realize that the old guy didn't know yet that I wasn't any reformed drunkard. In the excitement he hadn't noticed my gun or the fact that I drove off with Mahone. He still supposed I was a disciple.

"Even when the Lord's children are off the public places, brother, there is

work to be done. I am glad I found you; I want you to go with me to a place, a place so vile that it hurts a godly man even to think of it. There we must exhort the fallen."

"What kind of a place is this?"

To tell the truth, I was wondering whether a guy could get a drink there after midnight.

"An ungodly place, Brother Johnson! A place of drinking and dice!"

I asked: "Don't you ever get hurt, butting into dumps like that?"

"We must not think of ourselves. We must speak to these unfortunate ones, and try to wean them away from evil living. Come."

WELL, I went. There were several reasons for that. For one thing, it sounded as though it meant a drink, and it was a cinch he was going to go to this place, with me or without me; I figured you couldn't let a guy like that go into a dive like that alone—no telling what might happen to him.

So I went. "We probably won't get in, anyway," I told myself. On the way I tried to explain that I wouldn't be able to keep up the street service work; but Pop Smithson didn't listen.

The place was over a hardware store, in the back. It was like an old-fashioned speak-easy: a slide went open in the door, and one eye was there for a while. Then came a chuckle, and the door opened.

"If it aint the old tub-thumper himself! Come in, Pop! Want to watch the boys being wicked?"

The doorman was a little tight. I guess he thought it was funny to let the Rev. Smithson in. But he hadn't seen me at first, and when he did, he began shutting the door.

"I'm with this guy," I said.

"Hey, wait a minute! I don't know whether I ought to—"

I shoved past him. I walked down a long dark hall, following Pop Smithson, and we came out in a small room where five men were shooting craps on a billiard table. Their faces were white, and thin, and cruel, in the white light above the table. Nasty customers, all of them. They might be conversion material to Pop Smithson, but to me they were just bad eggs. Very bad eggs.

"What's the big idea? Do we have to have this guy around?"

"Aw, he's all right! This is old Pop Smithson. He's okay."

"Yeah? And what about his boy friend here?"

I'd slapped on the *"Repent Ye"* cap and was trying to look as churchy as I could. One of the men came around the end of the table and got up very close to me. He was a little wasp-like guy with dark hard eyes and a blue chin.

For that matter, though, they were all looking at me.

"I think it would be a good idea if you got out of here," the thin guy said.

Well, that was okay by me. I wasn't looking for trouble, I wasn't responsible for anything that went on in Cliverton, and I certainly didn't like the looks of these babies. But Pop Smithson was chalking his four squares on the floor, and writing in *"Love"* and *"Godliness"* and *"Salvation"* and *"Clean Living,"* like he always did, no matter where he spoke. I tapped him on the shoulder.

"I think it would be wise if we departed, brother."

It always made me feel foolish to call anybody brother.

The thin guy snarled: "I think it would be too."

But Pop Smithson wasn't a man you could elbow off the path of duty. He smiled, raised his thin old head, squeezed his eyes shut, and started to pray. His prayer was practically a bellow, as always.

I began again: "I think we'd better—"

Then I saw the face.

It was the face of a guy whose lips were puffed and blue where I'd socked him. Only he wasn't drunk at all now. And he was glaring at me.

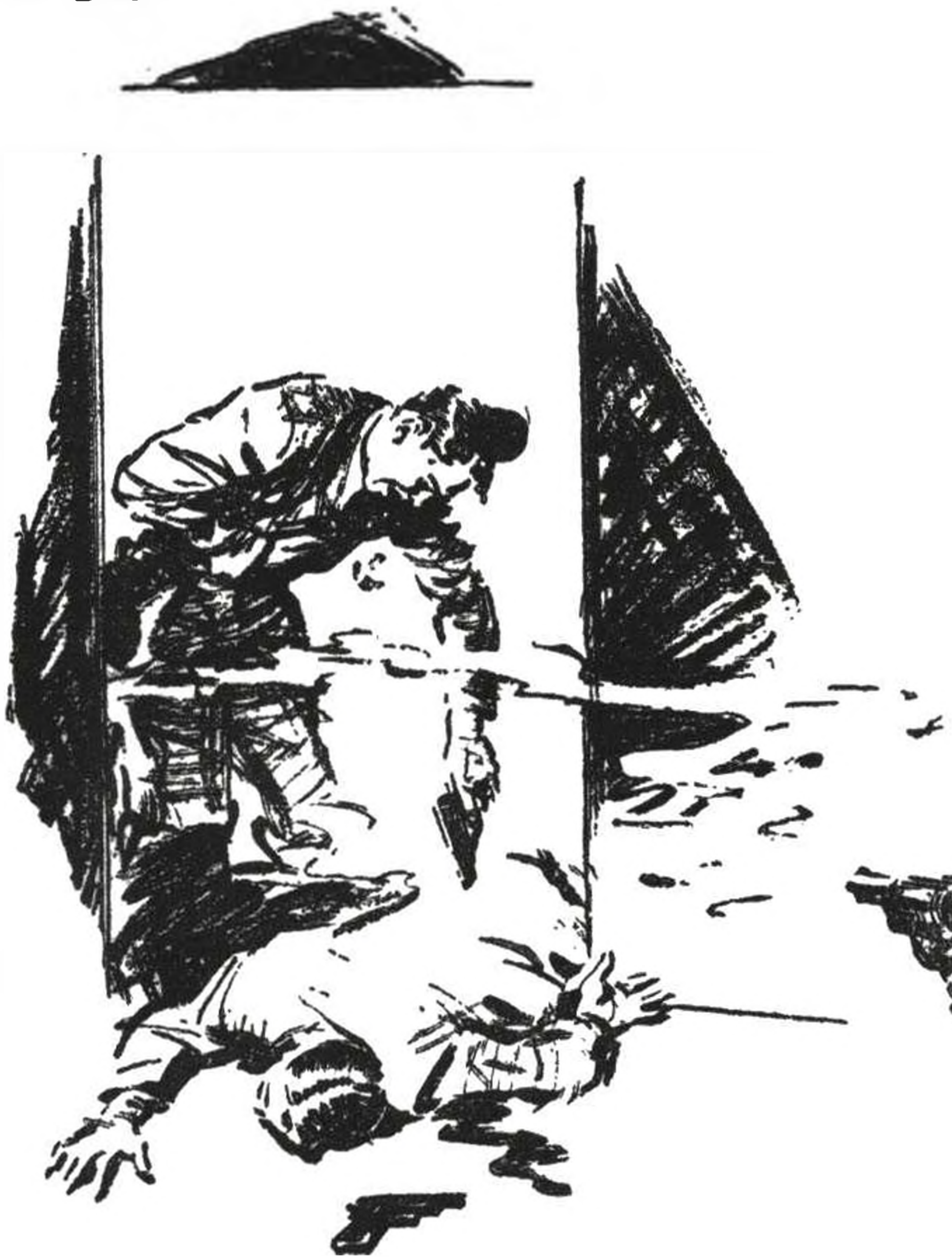
NOW the whole business was clear as a bell: The Cliverton cops weren't as smart as they'd thought they were, for there must have been a leak at Headquarters. The visiting detectives had been spotted; and that business of grabbing my arm hadn't been just a bad break for me, but part of a careful plan. I knew this the instant I saw the face of the man who'd grabbed me, the man who hadn't been drunk at all. At least three of the five men in this room, and possibly all of them, were members of the stick-up gang. I just knew that. I can't tell you how—I just knew it, that's all.

There were too many of them, and they were much too tough, for one man alone to handle. All I could think of was to get outside, call a squad, and

raid the place. Even a squad wouldn't have any walkover. These babies weren't likely to surrender easily.

"Come on, brother," I urged. "We can do no good here. We'd better go."

"You're damn' well right you better go," the thin fellow said. I didn't like that guy.



The room beyond was lighted, and the guy made a perfect target. I fired at him.

I took Pop Smithson's shoulder, tried to drag him back. But Pop was stubborn. He boomed on.

The man with the swollen mouth moved back away from the table, still staring hard at me. He had recognized me, but he was frightened. He wasn't a regular gangster; and just now, feeling the electricity in the air, his eyes were hot blobs of fear, and his throat was a mass of cotton close-packed. But any moment, now, he'd recover and speak his piece.

I might have got off, even then. I could have done it by deserting Pop Smithson. But the man with the blue chin spoiled everything by punching Pop.

"Beat it, whiskers! Who the hell asked you here in the first place?"

It was a choppy, nasty uppercut, not even well timed. It slashed past Pop's mouth, tearing the lips, and struck the under part of the nose.

Pop staggered back one step, but he didn't stop his sermon.

But I went absolutely nuts. I forgot where I was—forgot everything. I took one step forward, and swung my knuckles right into the fellow's belly. He went *"oo-oof!"* and his face turned a little green, and he sat down on the floor.

With my left hand I pushed Pop aside. With my right I went for my gun.

The man with the swollen mouth had started screaming:

"He's a cop! That's guy's a cop!"

The whole place seemed to blow up. The noise was something terrific. I jumped to the shelter of the hallway, and was on one knee, shooting past a corner. Lead thunked into the woodwork near my head, scattering big sprays of splinters that stung me in the face.

One fool tried to charge me around the billiard-table. I shot him in the chest, and he fell with a crash.

Then somebody grabbed my shoulders, from behind. I was yanked backward. I'd forgotten the doorman! Well, I rolled and kicked and jabbed out with my elbows, and all the time I kept the gun swinging so's he couldn't grab it away from me. I found a head, struck at it, missed, struck again. Suddenly there was no resistance.

I rolled up just in time to see a gunman appear at the end of the hallway. He shouldn't have done that. The hall was dim, but the room beyond was lighted, and the guy made a perfect target. I fired twice at him, and he went down as though his legs had been broken by a crowbar.

Then things got very quiet, while the little echoes scampered here and there as though they were looking for a place to hide.

I knew I couldn't run. I'd been hit. I didn't know where, because I couldn't feel any pain; but I knew I'd never reach the outside hall alive if I tried to make a dash for it.

I called through the silence: "You crooks didn't think I'd be dumb enough to come here alone, do you?"

There was no answer from the room where the pool-table was. I could only see a small part of that room. I was half-sitting, half-kneeling on the floor, my back up against a wall. I honestly figured that this meant curtains for Detective Johnson of Walterstown. But still it wouldn't do any harm to try to bluff.

"Had enough? If you have, toss your guns out and come one by one, all reaching. If not, you catch a flock of tear gas, see? And if you try to make a break for it, we turn on this machine-gun."

Not a sound. I was thinking: "If they rush me, I'm dead; and if they don't, they're screwy."

I yelled suddenly: "Coming?"

And then damned if the guns didn't begin to fall! Two of them fell. Three men came slowly out of that room, holding their hands high above their heads. The man with the swollen mouth, we learned later, hadn't had a gun.

When the cop on the beat came pounding in to learn what all the shooting was about, there I was grinning up at three men. Three others were horizontal, and not moving. As for the Rev. Isaac Smithson, he was on his feet again, still preaching. His four chalked squares, *"Love," "Godliness," "Salvation"* and *"Clean Living,"* were spattered with blood; his mouth was bloody too, and his nose; but little things like that weren't enough to keep Pop Smithson from his work. . . .

A great old boy! He visited me next day, at the hospital.

"Say, I never did get around to giving you that dough I owe you," I told him. "Ask the nurse for it when you go out, huh? It was a dollar fifty-two. I know, because I had it in a separate pocket by itself."

"No sum is too petty to be used for the good work."

"Well, if I have anything to say about it, you're due to get a pretty nice contribution soon. I'm going to cut you in on that reward money. You certainly deserve some of it, if anybody does."

"Praise be to the Lord, Brother Johnson, that you have been spared for the good work!"

"Praise be is right," I agreed.

The Yaqui Rose

A hard-boiled story of the Southwest today—of a tough ore-freighter, of a gal who packed an awful punch, and of many exciting events.

By

H. L. DAVIS

THE summer rains hit the mountain foothills of northern Sonora in late June, opening around two o'clock every afternoon, and closing about half-past three, with the result that the earth got muddy and the air close and sticky, and that nothing got the least bit cooler. People in the border-town had formed the habit of locking up and going to sleep during that part of the day, and of coming to only when it began to get dark. . . . The place, therefore, looked deceptively lifeless when Russ Waldron, packing ore from a little high-grade surface-mine up in the Sierra Madres, thumped his twelve mud-smeared horses between the line of locked saloons and dance-halls, and pulled up at the office of the Bavispe Mining and Development Company on the main street.

The door was open, and the manager in charge, Mr. Scrafton, looked up from a job of writing at the desk, fixed his nose-glasses, and directed Waldron to bring his freight into the front office and not to let the horses track mud on the clean sidewalk. He also inquired whether Waldron had at last got rid of his pack of useless hunting-dogs, and what had made him so late in arriving. "You had a fight in some dive up the line, doubtless?"

"Not this time," said Waldron, heaving canvas sacks through the door. "There

It was thus that trouble at El Ojo usually began: If a man drank all the drinks hospitably offered him, he got poisoned. If he refused. it was an insult.

Illustrated by
Peter Kuhlhoff

was two foot of mud down the mountain, there was a bunch of drunk *ganaderos* brandin' cattle and lookin' for a fight at El Ojo that I had to detour to git around; and that young pup I'm trainin' with the dogs stole a pair of chaps out of a *jacál* at Three Rivers, and I had to take 'em back. I left my dogs in El Porvenir saloon at the edge of town. This is all the load I brung this time."

Mr. Scrafton measured the heap of grimy canvas bags, and wiggled his neck disapprovingly inside his stiff white collar. He was a thin man, with thin hair, a thin voice, and stern notions of discipline; and he firmly believed that the way to make himself respected was to find fault with anything anybody did under his supervision.

"It doesn't look like much," he commented. "Scarcely enough to bother shipping out, in fact. And considering the wages we've been paying you to freight for us, I'm afraid we're going to have to try something else or quit business. We can't afford to go on with this. It's uneconomic."

Waldron unstrung one of the sacks and dug out a handful of dried mud and gravel. "The boss worked this over with a hand-rocker before he sacked it," he said. "These are the tailin's, and they'll run you about six ounces fine to the sack. What do you want in a week, anyhow?"

Six ounces fine to the sack was about three times as much as Scrafton had expected, but he concealed his gratification. "That's too valuable a load to send out with only one man in charge," he objected. "We can't permit any more of that. It's altogether too risky. Not businesslike."

"I had a man along with me to start with," Waldron said patiently. "He got a touch of sunstroke above Three Rivers, and he had to drop out to git over it."

"He got drunk and the *rurales* threw him in jail, I suppose," Scrafton corrected, disdainfully but accurately. "Let's see your manifest from the mine, and I'll pay you. Three weeks at fifty a week is a hundred and fifty dollars. This may be the last pay you collect for packing for us, Waldron. We're considering putting on a kind of transportation service that won't need guarding, with a man in charge that doesn't feel obliged to get drunk and paint the town every time he pulls in. Naturally, that lets you out."

The threat was not a new one, and Waldron exhibited no alarm. "Here's

The Yaqui Rose took the gong as a signal to finish; and she did so with two roundhouse swings that almost tore the Tigress' head off.

some vouchers for meat I killed for the mine," he said. "Nine deer, twenty some-odd *javelinas,* one *tigre.* Thirty-eight dollars, the boss figured it. What kind of transportation are you thinkin' of puttin' on this time—a steamboat-line?"

Scrafton paid the meat-vouchers reluctantly. It went especially against his principles to put out cash for a *tigre,* which was nothing really but a species of overgrown cat. But the native miners considered it a delicacy, and refused to be argued with. "It is not a steamboat-line," he said sharply. "It's an airplane. I chartered it from a carnival company across the line yesterday, and we're taking it on a trial trip Monday morning. If it works, you don't. Of course, you can continue your hunting for the mine if you need work. You'll be all right if you can keep away from bad company, I presume."

"I'll think it over," Waldron promised, and buttoned the wad of bills into his shirt pocket. As usual, the possession of so much cash made him difficult to get along with. "I'll think it over, but I'll tell you this much to start with: I've worked for your outfit a year and a half, and that's long enough. Put on your airplane. I've quit, to enjoy a well-earned vacation."

"In jail," Scrafton observed. "I know you. Well, if you want that hunting job when you get out, it'll be open."

"I won't be here long enough to git in jail," Waldron said firmly. "I'm pickin' up my baggage, and then I'm goin' across the border where I belong, and I'm goin' to stay there. If any Mexican jail gits me again, it'll have to run me down and squat on me."

WALDRON'S pack of hunting-dogs was a left-over from the days when he had worked in the Rocky Mountain states as a Government hunter and professional trapper and dog-trainer. Later, when hard times killed that business for him, he had come to Mexico on contract to clean up the predatory animals for a big hacienda. When that worked out, he'd headed for the border with close to a thousand dollars in cash, intending to go home and live on it until something turned up in his line of work. The attractions of the border-town had taken up so much of his attention that he forgot about crossing until his stake was about gone, and then the packing job for the mine had turned up and made it more profitable for him to stay where he was. The mining syndicate supplied him with horses, and paid him, for his packing and hunting, a liberal salary—which, owing to his natural gift for making friends with the wrong people and starting fights with the right ones, left him

as fast as he got hold of it. He had nobody to blame but himself, and he knew it, and envied a man like Scrafton, who never made friends with anybody, and quarreled only with hirelings who didn't dare to quarrel back.

That was the right system to follow, if a man could do it. Waldron had tried, but he couldn't. The whole organization of a border-town in a mining country was designed for the express purpose of separating men like him from their money, and it worked too fast for him. His safest play was simply to remove himself from it, and he took his pack-horses to the corral, called at El Porvenir saloon for his dogs, and took eight or nine slugs of a vicious decoction locally known as the Swinging Cradle, by way of dulling the pain of parting. He then shook hands all round, exchanged embraces with the proprietor and the two bartenders, shouldered his bed-roll, and proceeded on foot to the international boundary at the end of the street, where a set of alert young Customs and Immigration inspectors sat reading magazines, and waiting for customers.

They looked up with polite annoyance when Waldron dumped his load and stated his nationality, and one of them set languidly to work to convince him that he was not telling the truth, that he didn't belong in the United States and had no business asking to go there, and that he had better run away and give up the whole idea. In the middle of the argument, a young Customs official came out from the telephone, whispered in the Immigration man's ear, and hoisted Waldron's bed-roll through the gate. Waldron followed it, and the Immigration man followed him, looking expectant.

When the bed-roll was opened, Waldron understood why. The roll contained twenty-two small medicine bottles, each filled with a very strong and very cheap grade of El Porvenir tequila. Somebody in the saloon had planted them while Waldron was busy with his farewells, and had telephoned the Customs to look out for them. It might have been intended for a joke, and it might not. Smuggled goods were subject to a fine of which, according to rule, the informer was entitled to one-half.

The Customs inspector was thoroughly businesslike about it. "Running your tonic in right under my nose, eh?" he inquired genially. "Well, twenty-two bottles at five dollars apiece is a hundred and ten dollars. Pay over here at the desk, and I'll make you out a receipt."

Waldron threw him against a filing-case, which fell over on top of him. The Immigration man tried to mix in, and got rammed through the window-casing so hard he couldn't pull loose. Waldron threw his bedding back over the line and stepped back after it. "I didn't want into your country anyway," he informed the other inspectors. "You're welcome to that tequila. Have a good time on it."

THE failure of so important a feature of his plans made him uneasy.

Scrafton, he reflected gloomily, had sized him up pretty nearly right. There was a curse on that town when he was in it. Anything he attempted to do led him directly into some kind of trouble. He felt a momentary impulse to go back to El Porvenir and dust the joint off as a kind of warning, but he resisted it because it would lead to a fight, jail, and a complete fulfillment of Scrafton's prophecy. He strolled instead to El Amigo del Obrero, a resort which he patronized infrequently, having found it morbidly quiet and respectable. The fat bartender detailed a boy to take charge of his dogs, and mixed him an especially convincing version of the Swinging Cradle. He used a secret formula for it, and assured Waldron humorously that it was ordinarily reserved only

for men about to be hanged. "But it is much pleasure to see you in our city again, Mr. Waldron," he added. "You have come to attend the fight, is it not? A spectacle *muy emocionante,* I understand."

"If this town can put on a fight that I aint in, I'd like to see it," Waldron said bitterly, and downed his Swinging Cradle and five sharp-cornered pieces of ice without noticing that they weren't part of the effect. "Where's this *emocionante* business at, and what's it about?"

"Tonight at the Club Azteca," the bartender said. "Two girls who are prize-fighters. One girl, she is from the carnival company across the line, and the *yanquis* will bet money on her, *verdad?* And the other girl, she is a Mexican from the country, so our people will bet money on her. And there is music and dancing and singing. A beeg theeng for our town, Mr. Waldron. —Will you not have another Sweeng Cradlay?"

Waldron ordered another, with a little more bounce in the rockers. "A girl from the carnival where that airplane is, hey?" he queried ominously. "Who is this Mexican girl? Can she fight?"

"I do not know her," the bartender confessed. "She is called La Rosita Yaqui—the Leetle Yaqui Rose. But for sure, Mr. Waldron, all Mexican women can fight. Myself, I have bet on thees Yaqui Rose a hundred pesos, and thees *aviador* from the carnival, he say if I like to bet more, okay. But I say—"

"Shake up another one of them drinks," Waldron said. "I'll see that fight. When a country girl ties into one of these lipstick-and-kalsomine flibbertigibbets from a carnival outfit, she deserves to be backed up. Did I ever tell you that I was from the country myself? Yes sir, I'm right off the open grass, and proud of it. This here stiff-collared old digger-squirrel of a Scrafton, now, he's from the city. You can tell the difference!"

THE Aztec Club was a large barn of a place with a low ceiling, bad air, a two-dollar admission-charge, and a corps of bartenders who looked like a police round-up in an oil-town railroad-yard. A ring was roped off in the middle of the floor, and in it a perspiring orchestra in dirty shirts played alternately "Noche de Vera Cruz" and "Oh, We'll Kill the Old Red Rooster." A burly waiter with a broken nose attended Waldron to a table right against the ropes, and admitted that Swinging Cradles were not only a part of the house repertory, but had first been invented there. He advised against ordering them, however, pointing out that the house-rules obliged a customer to use up a drink every ten minutes, or leave; and that no human being ought to undertake to put down Swinging Cradles at any such rate of speed.

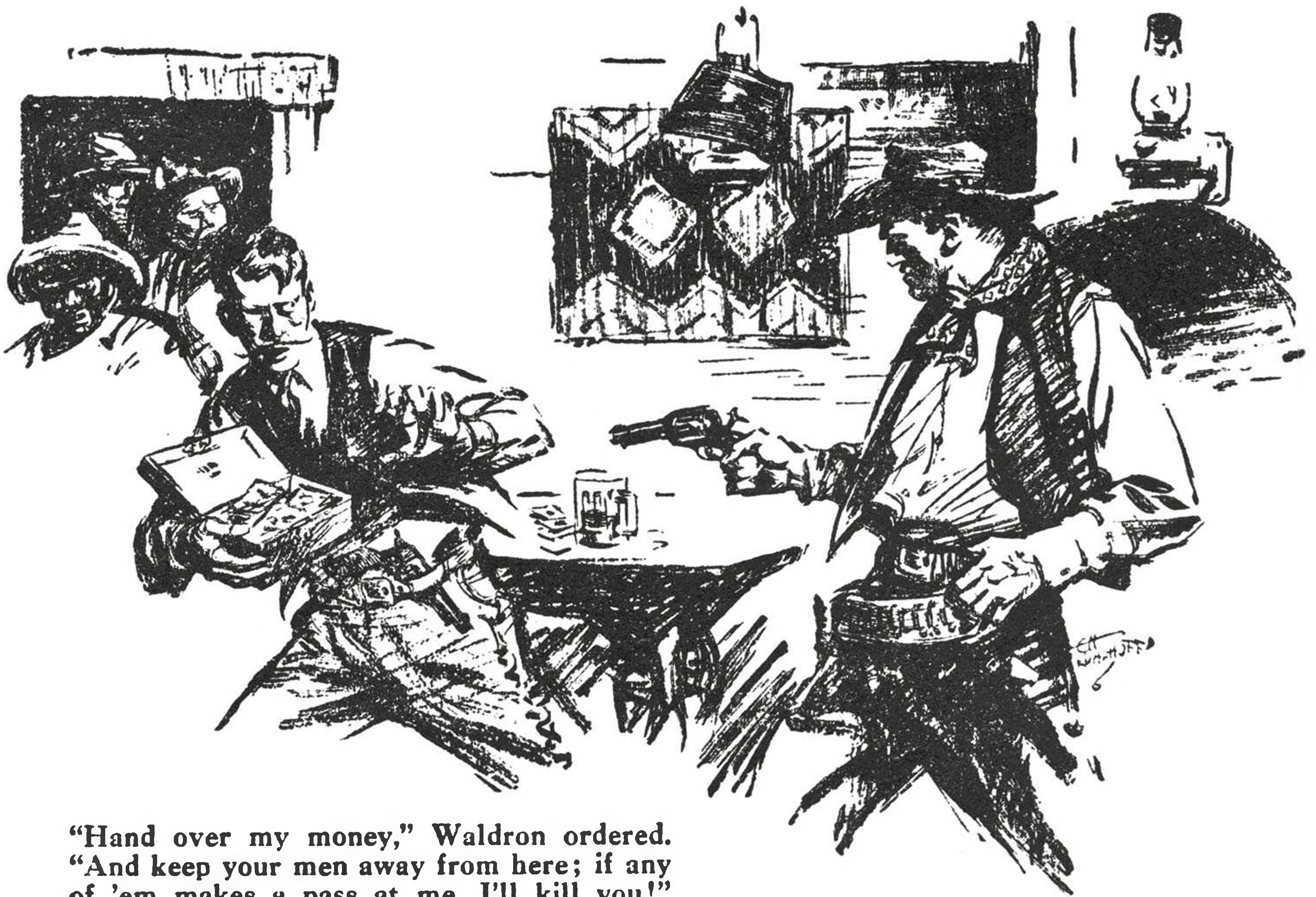
Waldron gave him ten dollars. "Bring 'em till that runs out," he ordered. "Don't tell me what I can hold and what I can't, and don't chisel on that ten dollars, or I'll wear this floor out with you."

The waiter departed, looking hurt. The orchestra mercifully stopped playing and cleared the ring. More lights came on; men began climbing on chairs to see what was starting; and an astute-featured young man in riding-boots mounted a table, flapped a fistful of money, and announced, first in Spanish and then in English, that his bundle was on the Nevada Tigress to cop. "Five hundred dollars open," he proclaimed, waving it. "All or any part of it, gentlemen, all or any part of it! You birds that claim to be patriotic about Mexico, come on and show yourselves!"

A FEW Mexican revelers edged forward and took part in the proffered speculation. Among these, Waldron noticed, were some of the *ganaderos* from the branding-camp at El Ojo. There seemed nothing crooked about it. The young man laid his money down as it was covered; the bartender tucked it into an envelope, wrote the bettor's name on the outside, and laid it in the back of the cash-drawer. Waldron watched the bookmaking for a space of time sufficient to down three Swinging Cradles; and then, as the young man continued to bray for lovers of the *patria* to come forth and ante, he got up and dug out what was left of his roll. The young man sized him up, and whisked through the money and tossed it to the bartender. "You're faded, *amigo,*" he pronounced, peeling bills off his own bundle. "A hundred and thirty-five dollars, eh? Write his name down, Charley!"

The bartender reached for a pencil, and Waldron reached for his wrist and wrung the money out on the bar. "A hundred and what?" he demanded, without letting go. "Count that again; and if you run any short-change racket on me, I'll bust the side of this building out with you!"

The young man climbed down from the table, searching purposefully under



"Hand over my money," Waldron ordered. "And keep your men away from here; if any of 'em makes a pass at me, I'll kill you!"

his left armpit. Waldron changed hands on the bartender and hitched his holster forward, and customers began to seek shelter behind tables and to pick out clean spots on the floor to flatten out on when the shooting started. Hostilities were interrupted by the cold, thin voice of Mr. Scrafton, who pushed between the disputants, carrying a glass of lime-and seltzer in one hand.

"I'll count this money for you, Waldron," he offered disapprovingly. "I warn you for your own good, though, you'd better not bet on this fight at all. You'll lose; you're drunk enough to start a fight about it; and you'll be in jail before morning without a cent. You'd better put it back in your pocket."

"Count it," Waldron ordered recklessly. He noted how instantly Scrafton's mediation cooled the house-men down, and his conscience jagged him for being too stubborn to accept advice from a man for whom people had such respect. What made it worse, was that the Nevada Tigress picked that moment to make her entrance into the ring, and she looked practically unlickable. She was large, blonde, pink and gristly, with muscles like a gorilla, and a face on which one could easily have ground down a brick. She wore trunks and a sleeveless undershirt, and she beamed dazzlingly down at the crowd, exhibiting a man-slaying dimple and a large quantity of gold teeth. Waldron felt an uneasy impulse to hide from her, in case she should decide to climb down and spank him for betting against her. He managed by an effort to stand his ground and take a ticket for the amount of his bet—which, according to Scrafton's recount, was an even hundred and sixty dollars. The bartender wrote the figure and Waldron's name on the envelope and flipped it into the cash-drawer, grinning derisively when Waldron warned him to be blamed sure and remember where it was.

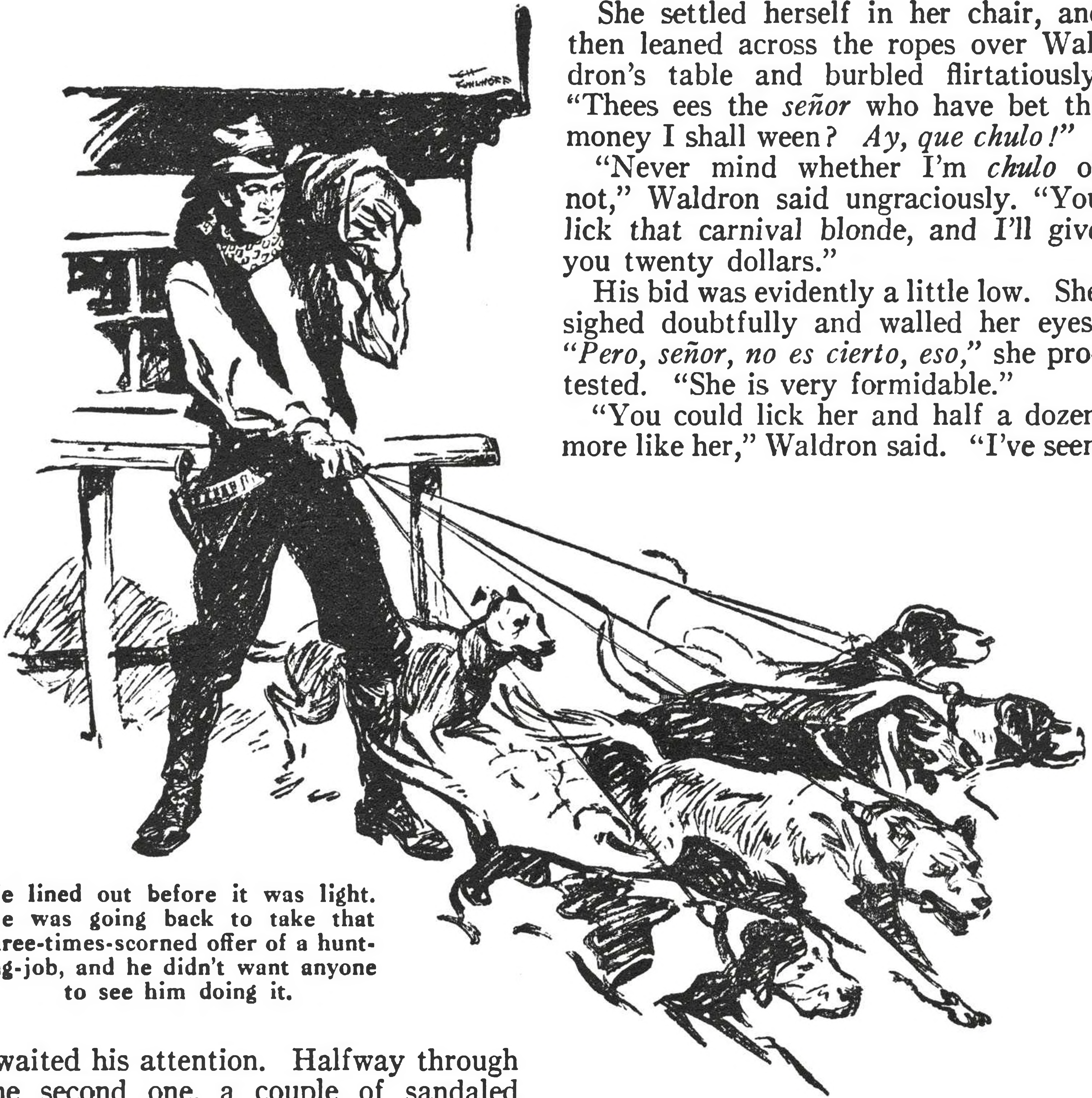
"You don't need to worry about that money any more, Jack," he said. "If you collect this bet, I'll buy you a horse and buggy to haul it home with. Go sit down and watch yourself go broke."

Waldron was about to make something out of that, but Scrafton held him back. "The man is perfectly right," he said. "You'll lose. Why make it worse by starting a fight with him? What are you going to do when you get out of here?"

"I don't know," Waldron said. "Buy an automobile, maybe. Come over and have a Swingin' Cradle?"

Scrafton ignored the invitation, which he probably didn't understand. "I'm going to the mine Monday by plane," he said. "You'll no doubt be out of jail by then, and if you decide to come out and go to work hunting, I want you to bring the pack-horses along."

He went back to his lime-and-seltzer, and Waldron returned to his ringside table, where five new Swinging Cradles



He lined out before it was light. He was going back to take that three-times-scorned offer of a hunting-job, and he didn't want anyone to see him doing it.

awaited his attention. Halfway through the second one, a couple of sandaled Mexicans appeared in the door, leading between them the Yaqui Rose, who feigned to be suffering from bashfulness and kept dragging them both off their feet in a coquettish pretense of running away. She was about a head shorter than the Nevada Tigress, of about the same degree of brassiness, and a build much like that of a skinned horse. In spite of her coating of mascara and lavender talcum-powder, Waldron recognized her instantly. During the early days of his packing-contract, she had been a barmaid in the saloon at El Ojo where the tough people came from. On one occasion, he had seen her settle a scuffle between three drunken *vaqueros* by knocking their heads together and throwing them, one at a time, across the patio into the manure-pile. She had not worked in El Ojo for some time, but she must still be claiming citizenship there, for El Ojo men were betting on her, and the two men who escorted her to her corner looked too mean to belong anywhere else.

She settled herself in her chair, and then leaned across the ropes over Waldron's table and burbled flirtatiously. "Thees ees the *señor* who have bet the money I shall ween? *Ay, que chulo!*"

"Never mind whether I'm *chulo* or not," Waldron said ungraciously. "You lick that carnival blonde, and I'll give you twenty dollars."

His bid was evidently a little low. She sighed doubtfully and walled her eyes. "*Pero, señor, no es cierto, eso,*" she protested. "She is very formidable."

"You could lick her and half a dozen more like her," Waldron said. "I've seen you fight up at El Ojo. Put her away, and I'll give you forty dollars."

From the way she looked him over, he realized that he had better make up his mind to wave his money good-by. She wanted his forty dollars, but she was afraid to promise anything. "I would be very scared to fight like at El Ojo," she confided, leaning down. "The men at the bar, they would be very mad. They would not let me go home."

"I'll see that you git home," Waldron promised desperately. "I won't let them men at the bar monkey with you. Listen here, you win this fight, and I'll—"

The timekeeper's gong rang for silence; the head bartender pulled off his apron and climbed into the ring to act as referee; and the two El Ojo thugs came forward with towels and a beer-bottle to attend their champion through the fray. Waldron sat back nervously, and the waiter brought him another Swinging Cradle, increasing his available supply on hand to six.

He could see from the way the first round went, that his efforts to influence the Yaqui Rose had done no good. She stalled, sidestepped, clinched, and slapped her gloves around with about as much combativeness as she would have shown in building a batch of *tortillas*. The Nevada Tigress didn't do much better; and the round ended with both battlers feinting gingerly at one another from opposite sides of the ring. The El Ojo rooters cheered loudly, not understanding that they were entitled to expect anything more unladylike; and the Yaqui Rose returned to her corner looking pleased with herself. "I was fight good, eh?" she murmured complacently to Waldron, while her two retainers flapped their towels and dosed her with water from the bottle. *"Muy cientifico,* no?"

"I guess so," Waldron agreed heavily. He saw further into the arrangement now. It was no use urging her to get out and fight, because there was no fight on the program. They would simply pat each other around for a spell, and then the referee would award the decision on points to the Nevada Tigress, who obviously did have a little the best of it as far as boxing was concerned. It couldn't have been worked on anybody but Mexicans, because they had no clear idea what a boxing match was about, and they would bet on anything that was put up to them as a matter of patriotism.

Waldron leaned back dejectedly as the second round began, and then noticed that the Yaqui Rose's handlers had deposited her water-bottle within reach of his table when they cleared the ring. He studied it for a minute, then picked it up, poured the water out on the floor, and poured three of his unused Swinging Cradles into it. How the decoction would work he didn't know, but it couldn't make matters any worse, and to judge from the effect it had achieved on him, it might make them better. The more he thought about it, the more certain he felt that it would.

TOWARD the end of the round, he got up, made his way past the young carnival aviator, who was still offering Nevada Tigress money, and buttonholed Scrafton, who, with his back turned to the degrading spectacle, was sipping lime-and-seltzer and enjoying the breeze from an electric fan. "I've decided I'll take that job huntin' for the mine," he said. "Loan me a hundred dollars on my pay, and you can take it out the first of the month."

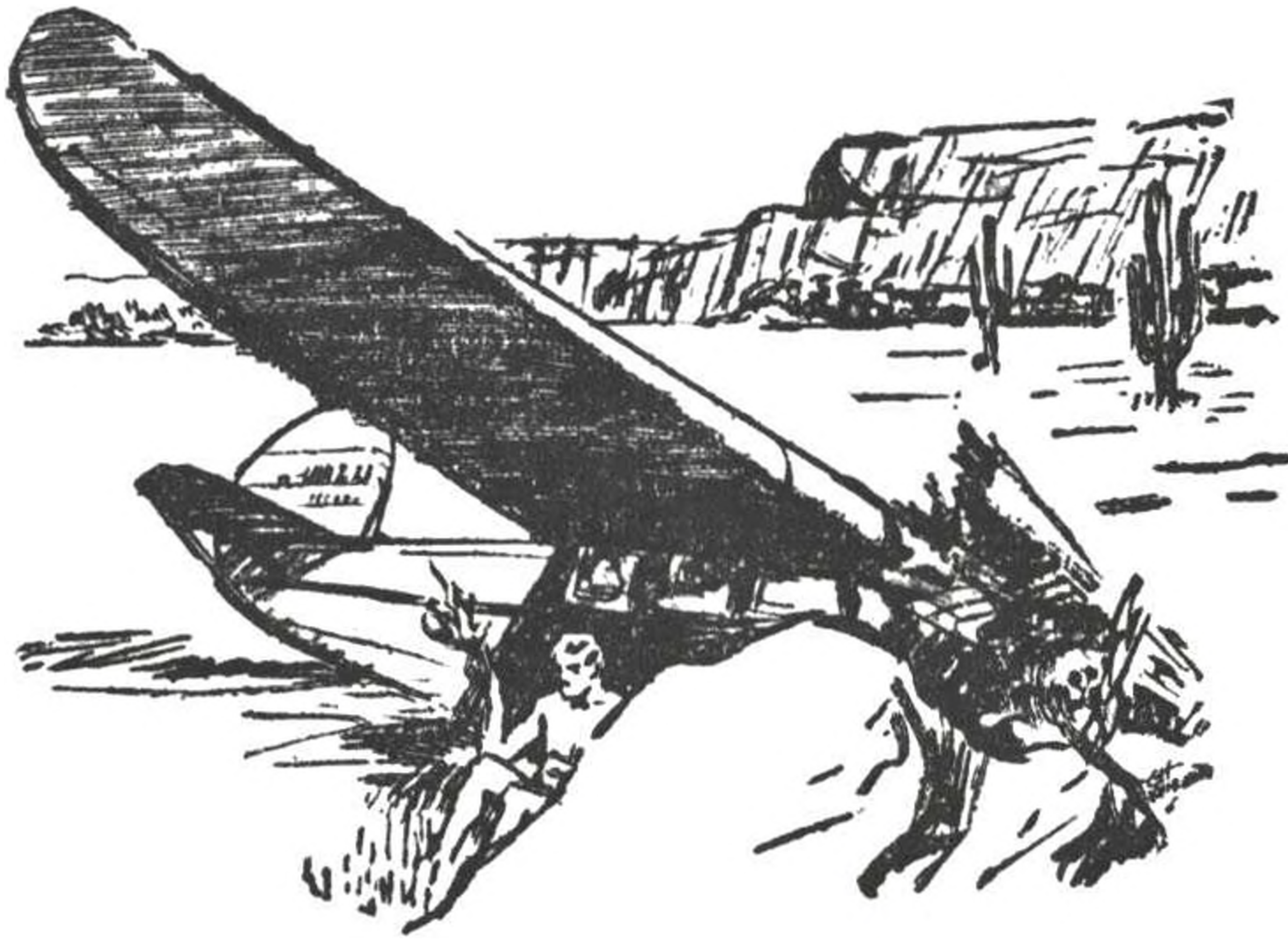
"You want to bet it, I presume?" said Scrafton. "Well, I'll do you a big favor: I won't lend you a cent. Go sit down."

"Suppose you set down for a while yourself," Waldron suggested quarrelsomely, and hauled back to knock Scrafton into a spittoon. In time, he remembered that he was out to avoid foolish brawls. His weakening resolution was, of course, the effect of too much to drink, and encouraged by that reflection, he went back to his table in time to see the second round draw to a peaceful close. The Yaqui Rose sat back in her chair, smiled, and sipped delicately from her beer-bottle with an expression of surprise at the unexpected richness of its contents. Waldron winked reassuringly, and indicated the glasses in front of him, and she nodded an arch thanks and tipped the bottle for a good big swig. She had it almost empty by the time the third round opened; and Waldron, feeling that he had shot his last cartridge, sat back prayerfully and waited.

HE had a nerve-racking wait, but he was rewarded. Coming out of a clinch in the middle of the round, the Nevada Tigress caught her fair opponent an accidental swipe on the nose with her elbow. The Rosita let out an involuntary yelp; the crowd snickered; and the Tigress built up the laugh by slapping her a couple across the nose. The Rose stood flat-footed for a half-minute, feeling her nose and figuring things out. Then she lowered her head, cocked both hands, and trod forth to war.

The Tigress backed, sparring, and she followed grimly, not even blinking when she got smacked three more times in the face. She walked the Tigress all the way back to the ropes, reached out and grabbed her firmly by the back of the neck, and began a steady, businesslike lambasting, speeding each individual wallop home with a vengeful grunt. The referee tried to break her hold, got kicked, and retired to the opposite side of the ring. The Tigress tried to fight back, to fall down, to climb through the ropes, to shed her gloves and pull hair, and to argue the matter out sensibly. Nothing did any good. Her beating proceeded as solemnly and unstoppably as the tides of the sea.

She began to cry and bleed at the nose, and the carnival aviator closed his betting-stand, hurried to the ringside, and



"It's a wonder them *ganaderos* left enough of you to draw flies," Waldron said.

jangled the gong. The Yaqui Rose took that as a signal to finish, and she did so with two roundhouse swings that almost tore the Tigress' head off, and then grabbed her and threw her halfway to the door. The referee came out of his retirement and opened his mouth to deliver an announcement, but she started after him, and he ducked between the ropes and went hastily behind the bar.

She looked perfectly willing to go after him, but her two handlers persuaded her to sit down and cool off, and her El Ojo admirers crowded into the ring around her to tender congratulations. Waldron was not among them. He kept his eye on the referee-bartender-stakeholder, who put on his coat, scraped loose papers out of the cash-drawer into a tin dispatch-case, and hit for the back door.

But Waldron caught him as he started through it.

"Hand over my money," he ordered. "Keep your hands in sight, and keep your men away from here. If any of 'em makes a pass at me, I'll kill you."

The bartender put the dispatch-case on a shelf, laid his hands carefully together on the bar, and said he could pay no bets on La Rosita Yaqui. "She broke every rule in the book in that fight, and there aint a referee in the world that would call it anything but assault with intent to kill. You lose your bet on a foul, and if you shoot me, you won't live through it. You can't work this Wild Bill gag around here."

A couple of hard-looking assistant barmen stopped work to follow the argument, which they appeared eager to be invited into. Worse, the Yaqui Rose decided to go outside, and her backers all went trooping out after her, in a spirit of hero-worship that was commendable but badly misplaced. One of the floor-men locked the door after them so they couldn't get back, and Waldron was left to urge his cause alone, with bartenders in his front and house-hustlers in his rear and on both flanks. Even the frosted-glass windows were guarded against forcible entrance by iron bars on the outside. "You'd better let me take that gun," the bartender advised, though without moving his hands. "Then we'll let you out of here, and you'd better stay out from now on. Come on, lay it down."

He made the mistake of supposing that he was addressing a sensible man. "I'll leave here when I get that money," Waldron stated, and hooked his foot into a chair and kicked it through a frosted-glass window so the crowd outside could get a load of what was going on. For their benefit, he lifted his voice and repeated the sentiment in Spanish. *"Si no me paga mi apuesta, te mato!* Fork it over, because I'm in a hurry. —Scrafton, stand out of my way. This aint any fight of yours."

"I'm not claiming it," Scrafton said, rather loudly, because the men outside, enchanted to learn that bets on La Rosita were really due and payable, had started to yell and thump on the door. "Pay him," he advised the bartender. "That crowd is getting worse every minute, and they'll tear us all to pieces if you run any smart business now. Pay 'em all, and be careful who you take bets from next time. —Waldron, that girl claims you promised to see her home. You'd better go do it. I'm leaving orders with the Chinese grocery to give you what supplies you need when you start for the mine."

"Don't bother," Waldron said haughtily. "I've got money enough in this envelope to last me for three months."

He stuck it in his shirt-pocket with a flourish.

Scrafton smiled coldly, cynically. "It'll last you about three hours. I'm not a betting man, but I'll bet anything you like that you're broke before morning. The girl's waiting outside for you."

DESPITE his bravery in the saloon-rumpus, Waldron felt a distinct uneasiness about trusting himself with the Yaqui Rose. She had exceeded his fondest expectations in the ring, but he still didn't like her. The one reassuring thing about seeing her home was that nobody would attempt to tap him for his roll while she was along. He found her,

steered her through the cheering crowd, and walked her rapidly out of the saloon section and out among the small adobe cottages that lined the road to the hills. A large female cat got down from a gate-post in front of them and rubbed effusively against the Yaqui Rose. She let go Waldron's arm, petted the disagreeable brute, and announced that she was home. Waldron gave her forty dollars, grudging her every cent of it, because he knew blamed well that the entire credit for her victory belonged to him.

"You weel not come een?" she urged hospitably.

Waldron hated to be rude, but that was one thing he didn't feel equal to. "Some other time, if you'll allow me," he said gallantly. "I got a lot of business downtown."

"But you must not go without something!" she protested, holding him firmly by the sleeve. He felt a good deal as if he had accidentally got his clothes tangled in a truck. "Something you must take for a *recuerdo* of me, no? What should it be?" She pondered, supporting her chin with an arm that looked like the hind-leg of a horse, and announced that she knew the very thing. "How do they say with geefts in your country? Open your mouth and shut your eyes!"

Obediently, Waldron closed his eyes and hung his jaw open. He hoped earnestly that the foolery would not last long, and he got his wish. The Rosita Yaqui stepped back, sighted her horse's hind-leg of an arm, and laid a four-foot punch on the point of his chin so hard that his neckbones cracked. He keeled over in the road as cold as a wedge. She extracted the envelope of money from his shirt-pocket, dragged him out into the moonlight where he could be seen, and retired, accompanied by her cat.

THE municipal *sereno* found him an hour later, tried unsuccessfully to revive him, loaded him on a burro and took him to jail, where he remained for the legal detention-period of seventy-two hours. His head was still sore and his neck stiff when, along in the dark hours of Monday morning, they turned him loose, and he set immediately about his preparations for leaving. He collected his dogs and bed-roll, woke up the Chinese grocer and stocked up with provisions for the road, and lined his pack-horses out of the corral toward the mountains before it was light enough to see clearly.

The low visibility suited him excellently. He was going back to the mine to take Scrafton's three-times-scorned offer of a hunting job, and he didn't want anybody in that town to see him doing it. He didn't even want to see himself.

His plans for an inconspicuous departure were harder to realize than he had expected. He left his dogs unyoked so they wouldn't squabble and wake people, and out at the edge of town, they jumped a cat from behind a fence and lit out in pursuit. They chased her across five lots, luckily going so fast they forgot to bark, and ran her in through the open window of a house which Waldron, with a pang of distaste, recognized as belonging to the Yaqui Rose. He managed to whistle the dogs back without rousing anybody. Bunching them to lead, he discovered that his half-trained pup had, as usual, considered it improper to give up a chase without fetching back something to show for it. This time his plunder was important and liable to be troublesome, for it was nothing less than a full suit of man's clothes.

AS well as Waldron could judge in the dark, they were well-made, and the owner must have thought a good deal of them, for they were neatly draped on a wooden hanger, with the trousers carefully folded in creases. Probably they had been hanging out the window, or else the cat had clawed them out climbing in. Due to the pup's handling, they were badly muddied and chewed up, and Waldron went through considerable travail of mind deciding what to do with them. He couldn't return them, because he didn't have any money to pay for having them cleaned. He couldn't leave them in the road, because the owner would identify him by his spread of dog- and horse-tracks, and probably come after him with a posse. As the handiest way of settling the whole problem, he rammed the suit into one of his pack-sacks and drove on with it. A man who would hobnob with the Yaqui Rose until all hours of the night was lucky if he lost nothing but his clothes, anyway. . . .

Waldron shoved along fast, and when well up into the hills, unyoked the dogs to pick their own road and save their feet. Climbing the mountain into El Ojo, they bayed a *javelina*—the vicious little native wild boar that ranges most of the American Southwest—and almost got a couple of themselves killed before Waldron could catch up and shoot him. He

skinned the brute, took out the scent-gland, and hung the carcass on a horse, —forgetting, in his stew over the delay, to make his customary detour around the cattle-branding camp at El Ojo. He rode square into the middle of it about noon, and all the *ganaderos* mobbed around him, yelling and brandishing bottles as an invitation to taste their medicine and get rid of what ailed him.

IT was upon that hospitable wise that trouble at El Ojo usually began. If a man drank all the drinks that were offered him, he got poisoned. If he refused them, it was taken as an insult, and the fight was on. Waldron cast loose the lead-rope of the pack-horses, got ready to run for it if he had to, and declined, mentioning as a counter-attraction that there were certain canned provisions in his packs that he would be glad to donate to help the festival along. "There's peaches and corn and tomatoes," he enumerated, salesmanlike. "Unload what you want."

Usually the offer of canned goods was enough, in such an assemblage, to kindle the wildest enthusiasm. This time nobody acted interested. A couple of men started apathetically to unbuckle the pack-bags, but the boss *ganadero* drove them back with his eye. "We are rude men here, señor," he said modestly. *"Muy brutos.* But we would not impose confiscations upon the señor who carried himself so courageously in the Club Azteca three nights ago. No. We are men of heart, and the señor gained us a quantity of money. And besides, we have much canned provisions of our own. You would honor us with your company to eat?"

"I can't spare the time," Waldron apologized. "Gotta be on my way." He was itching to know where the canned goods had come from, but he didn't ask. Inquiries of such a nature were apt to be taken personally, and it was not advisable to crowd one's popularity too far with these people. "Some other time when I'm down this way maybe you'll invite me again."

"Claro que sí," the boss said politely. "Only, if it could be today, we could make a big barbecue with your *javelina.* You are the *arriero* for the mine some more now, eh?"

Waldron cut the *javelina* loose and dumped it off as his contribution to the barbecue.

"I'm the hunter, now, for the mine," he corrected. "No mule-driver out there any more. They put on an airplane. *Un avión,* see? To fly like bird. Like this."

He flapped his arms and made noises to illustrate. The boss got the idea and shook his head regretfully. *"Ahóra no,"* he said. "It flew, *claro.* But then it stopped flying and fell down on the ground in the mountains. It was an emotional spectacle. *Estupendo."*

"The hell you say!" said Waldron. If the plane was down, the branding-camp's plethora of canned provisions was explained. They had looted the wreck, and it must be somewhere close. Waldron resisted the impulse to put his questions baldly and tactlessly, and asked instead which direction it had come down in.

"Can a man git there with a horse?" he inquired.

The boss said cautiously that he wouldn't know about that. "Me, I have not been. Nor my men either. Because maybe things might be missing from the *avión,* and we would not be suspected of stealing. But, there are some horse-tracks that turn off to the left of the road, a little over the hill, and if you would follow them—"

Waldron spurred his horse and pulled his pack-train into motion, trying to figure what sense there was in the theory of compensation for human rectitude. He had fought, he had got drunk, he had gambled, he had let a woman make a fool of him, he had been rolled for his last dime, he had spent three days in jail. Here he was, safe, hopeful, and, except for a stiff neck and a sore jaw, healthy, while Scrafton, who had lived temperately, given good advice, and done nothing unwise or unbusinesslike in his life, was lying out on a sidehill in a smashed airplane that had been plundered by a bunch of half-savage drunks. It was unlikely that he was still alive, because he would never have taken a load of groceries out while he was unarmed, and he would never have given them up without some kind of fight.

WALDRON left his horses in a thicket when the going got hard, and hurried on afoot. He found Scrafton in the shade of a broken airplane-wing fanning himself with a willow-branch to keep the flies off. He was apparently uninjured, and he was entirely naked except for his nose-glasses and his stand-up collar, which for some reason

the looters had spared him. "A couple of hours more, and these flies would have had me skinned alive," he remarked, without getting up. "I've a notion not to give you that hunting job after all, the way you've monkeyed around about getting here."

"It's a wonder them *ganaderos* left enough of you to draw flies," Waldron said. "Didn't you try to stand 'em off? What happened to your aviator?"

THE account of what had happened to the aviator included pretty much everything that had happened to everybody.

The Nevada Tigress, returning to the carnival grounds after the fight, had decided that the management had played a mean trick on her, and she evened up by emptying all the gas out of the main tank on the airplane. Naturally, it came down before it was supposed to, and smashed a wing. The aviator volunteered to go for help while Mr. Scrafton stayed with the ship, and after he disappeared it developed that he had taken both the guns along with him. Then the El Ojo contingent turned up, helped themselves to the cargo and to Scrafton's clothes, and were only dissuaded from shooting him by the threat that Waldron was on the road with a rescue-train, and that he would resent it deeply if they didn't leave him something to rescue. The El Ojo colony appeared to have conceived a high opinion of Waldron.

"On account of that scene you staged after the prize-fight, I presume," Scrafton explained distastefully. "Then I waited, and I was beginning to doubt whether you'd show up. I've been let down abominably by people I trusted lately. Four times in the last three days. I didn't know but you might take your turn at it too."

Waldron mentioned briefly that he had been in jail. He expected Scrafton to sneer at him for it, but Scrafton was occupied with brooding over his wrongs, which he enumerated with considerable frankness.

"There was that prize-fight, to begin with," Scrafton commenced heavily, quite forgetting that Waldron hadn't known about his partnership in the enterprise. "It didn't turn out as we'd anticipated, and we had to pay out all the gate-receipts on bets on account of you. Then that blasted woman prize-fighter swiped all the gas out of the airplane, and then the aviator skipped out and left me here unarmed. And then I was robbed this morning of a considerable sum of money when I was getting ready to start out. The only thing I've been able to depend on was that you'd make a fool of yourself and have to start looking for a job. You can have your packing contract back when we get to the mine. Have you got any extra clothes that I can put on?"

"I'll bring you some," Waldron said, and went down to his horses to get the chewed-up suit that his pup had stolen out of the Yaqui Rose's window. He dug it out, and ran hastily through the pockets to remove all signs of identification before Scrafton got hold of it. They were all empty except one, which contained a wadded-up envelope. His name was scrawled on it, which was something of a surprise, but not an unpleasant one, because it contained two wads of money—one of forty dollars, the amount of his donation to the Yaqui Rose, the other the balance of his winnings on the prize-fight.

Not to keep Scrafton waiting, he rammed it hastily in his shirt-pocket and brought the suit back, trying to preserve an impassive countenance about it. He hated to tell Scrafton any of his adventures that had a flavor of extra-legality about them, and his common sense told him that he had much better keep this one to himself. He tried to, but it was too blamed good to hold in.

"It's a funny thing, the luck I have with money," he began, tossing the suit into Scrafton's lap. "I left that prize-fight with three hundred-odd dollars, and when I got out of jail, I didn't have enough left to buy the smell of a second-hand drink. Well, I headed out of town with the dogs trailin' along, and that fool pup I'm trainin'— What's the matter?"

SCRAFTON had one leg down the trousers, and he looked as if he had run it against a scorpion. He dug frantically through all the pockets before answering, and then looked off at the sky and swallowed a couple of times to get his voice under control.

"Nothing particular," he said coldly. "I merely happened to notice that this is a suit that was stolen from me this morning. There was an envelope with some money in one of the pockets, but I suppose it's no use asking you what became of that. I hope you had a good time on it. What about that pup you're training?"

The Fourth

A stirring novelette of desperate adventure with Tiny David and the State police, by the author of "The Border King" and "The Wild Man of Wolf Head."

Illustrated by Monte Crews

"THIS makes three," declared Captain Charles Field, commanding officer of the Black Horse Troop of the New York State Police. "And that is just three too many." His thumb stabbed a printed form headed, *"Missing Person."* "Where is Lieutenant David?" he asked.

Max Payton, the top sergeant, hesitated a moment before he replied. Then he indicated an open window behind his superior officer.

"Lieutenant David is out on the parade-ground, Captain, sitting under a tree."

A dull flush stained the face of the commander of the crack police outfit that patrols the northern counties of New York State.

"Didn't you give him this when it first came in?"

Again Sergeant Payton hesitated.

"Yes sir."

"What did he say?"

The top sergeant pondered his reply. His natural impulse was to shield Lieutenant Edward David, better known as Tiny, who had a firm place in the hearts of all the members of the troop. He knew, however, that the same question, addressed to Tiny David, would bring forth a truthful reply. Therefore he decided that the truth would best serve the purposes of all parties concerned.

"He took the complaint-slip, Captain, and he showed mild interest, at first. Then he yawned, and said this guy had picked out a nice day to do his disappearing. He told me if anybody asked for him, I was to tell them he was out under that tree, sitting and thinking, or maybe just sitting."

All this, Sergeant Payton realized, was doing little to pacify Captain Field; so he hastened to add:

"But he took copies of all three complaint-slips with him, Captain."

Captain Field glanced out the open window. Reclining at full length beneath a tree, was a tall, broad-shouldered man. His gray tunic had been removed, neatly folded, and now did service as a pillow. His revolver and cartridge-belt, which evidently had interfered with the process of sitting and thinking, were suspended from a lower branch of the tree. Every now and again the reclining man would arouse himself, and glance at one of the papers held in his left hand. But these brief periods of motion were only occasional, and for the most part the man resembled a huge recumbent statue, the face of which bore a rather vacant but complacent stare.

"Did you say he was sitting and thinking?" demanded Captain Field. "There are no beds in here. Send him in."

"Yes sir," said Payton, whose lower lip was trembling slightly.

Alone in the office, Captain Field devoted his attention to the form the top sergeant had placed before him:

Name—Homer T. White.
Age—Thirty-four.
Address—Smithville, N. Y.
Occupation—Lawyer.

The commanding officer glanced up as the huge man who had been reclining beneath the tree entered the office. The tunic, much the worse for the use that had been made of it, had been replaced. The broad face above it wore an expression in which resignation, weariness and boredom blended.

"Payton gave you the slip on White

Missing Man

By ROBERT R. MILL

"The tires left their tread-mark in the dirt," Crosby reasoned. Suddenly he gave a whoop of excitement.

two hours ago," snapped Captain Field. "Getting anywhere on it?"

"Yes, Captain." Tiny David sank into a chair. "I've been thinking."

"Thinking or sleeping?"

"Thinking, Captain." There was a plaintive note in his voice. He explored the depths of his pocket, and produced three crumpled slips of paper. "Here are three missing-persons cases in less than three weeks. All three are men." He spoke with a drawl, which became more pronounced as he continued: "That's too many to be normal; and it's more than mere coincidence. They are hooked together in some way. I have been trying to dope out that link."

He paused, giving the impression of a man recovering from great effort.

"Take the dope from the slips: Morton is thirty; Johnson is twenty-eight; White, thirty-four. All men in the prime of life. The descriptions show they are husky. Our check shows they all were in perfect health. They aren't the type of men to submit to attack without a struggle."

Again weariness seemed to overpower the speaker, but after a pause he continued:

"Morton is a contractor, Johnson a professional bridge-player, and White a lawyer. In other words, they are men supposed to have a little more than average intelligence."

HE sorted the slips, which appeared absurdly small in his great hands.

"All these men are fairly well to do. Yet none had large sums of money, or any quantity of jewelry on his person. That eliminates the robbery theory.

"There have been no demands for ransom. That kills the snatch theory.

"None of these men made preparations for an extended absence. Surely at least one of them would have done that if the going away was voluntary.

"As close as our check can get us, each one of these men was alone in his automobile, bound for a destination within sixty miles, when last seen. Not one of them arrived at the planned destination. We have been unable to locate the automobiles. And I can't get away from those cars, Captain: It is a hard job for a man to do a good job of disappearing; it is even harder to keep a car out of the way when all our patrols are looking for it. Yet here are three men and three cars, all missing—and staying missing."

Some of the boredom and laziness disappeared as he continued:

"None of these men had financial difficulties. None had family troubles, or unfortunate love-affairs. None had business that required his absence for an extended period. None feared exposure of any sort. Here are three perfect disappearances, and without a single motive."

He fumbled in another pocket, produced a map of the Adirondacks, and unfolded it on the desk.

"Morton, who lives in Charter, had an appointment at Ranac Lake the day he disappeared. Johnson lives at Tranquil Lake, and he was supposed to have gone to Malton the day he vanished. White stepped out of the picture on his way from Smithville to Doane. We are positive about White, because an attendant at a gasoline-station in Carter remembers him."

Tiny David lighted a cigarette.

"That means something happened to all these men on the Ranac-Malton Highway."

Captain Field leaned forward, stabbing the map with eager fingers.

"It means more than that, Tiny. White gives us north and south boundaries for the danger zone on that road. We know he reached Carter safely. It is a safe bet nothing happened to him within a mile north of the settlement there. That places the probable southern boundary of the danger zone at least one mile north of Carter."

His finger moved north along the highway on the map.

"White was headed for Doane, which is south of Malton. He didn't get there. That gives us one mile south of Doane as the probable northern boundary of the danger zone."

"I was coming to that, Captain." Tiny David's tone was reproachful. "No use rushing things like this! I like to work slow when I am thinking." His finger indicated a shaded area on the map. "Part of that danger zone is the logical place for what must have happened. I mean the dirt road through the Lake Beech woods. It is a lonely sort of place. I have driven through there hundreds of times, and when you meet another car it is an event. There are lots of turns, so you can't see far ahead. The woods grow right up to both sides of the road, and they are plenty dense enough to hide almost anything."

CAPTAIN FIELD stood up, the light of anticipation in his eyes.

"You have something, Tiny. Now we can dig in."

Tiny David grinned.

"I have something more important than that: I stumbled on it just when the Captain looked out the window and was kind of sore because he thought I was sleeping. That was when I was doing my very best thinking."

He turned to the complaint-slips again.

"Here is the order of disappearances: Morton, the sixth; Johnson, the eleventh; and White, the sixteenth."

Again the light of anticipation gleamed in the eyes of Captain Field.

"Exactly five days apart!"

Tiny David's drawl was pronounced.

"Every five days, for the last fifteen days, something has happened to a man who drove alone through the Lake Beech woods. The White case gives us the time, fairly late in the afternoon. The three cases tell us that the man who has something happen to him must be in his early thirties, husky, healthy and fairly intelligent."

Captain Field was deep in thought.

"Today," he said, "is the eighteenth."

"The twenty-first," Tiny David suggested, "will be the fifth day."

THERE was a silence. Then Tiny David struggled to his feet, a painful operation that required a full minute.

"I think I can promote a car that has the right license-plates, and looks right."

Captain Field made no answer.

"I am thirty-six," the big man continued, "and plenty husky. I am so healthy it hurts. I look fairly intelligent, except days like this when I haven't had my right rest. I am tailor-made for these guys."

Captain Field played with a pen.

"How do we know this outfit didn't put the finger on the men before they started?" he objected.

Tiny David draped his form over the back of a chair.

"Not likely," he asserted. "We had the devil's own time finding out what plans the three men had for the day they disappeared, and everybody was trying to help us. It is my bet the game is played with whatever fate sends along that is eligible."

Captain Field nodded.

"Probably. But what is the game, Tiny?"

"It is a new one on me, Captain. I can't even guess. But I'll know on the twenty-first—if everything goes right."

Captain Field walked toward the man standing in the doorway.

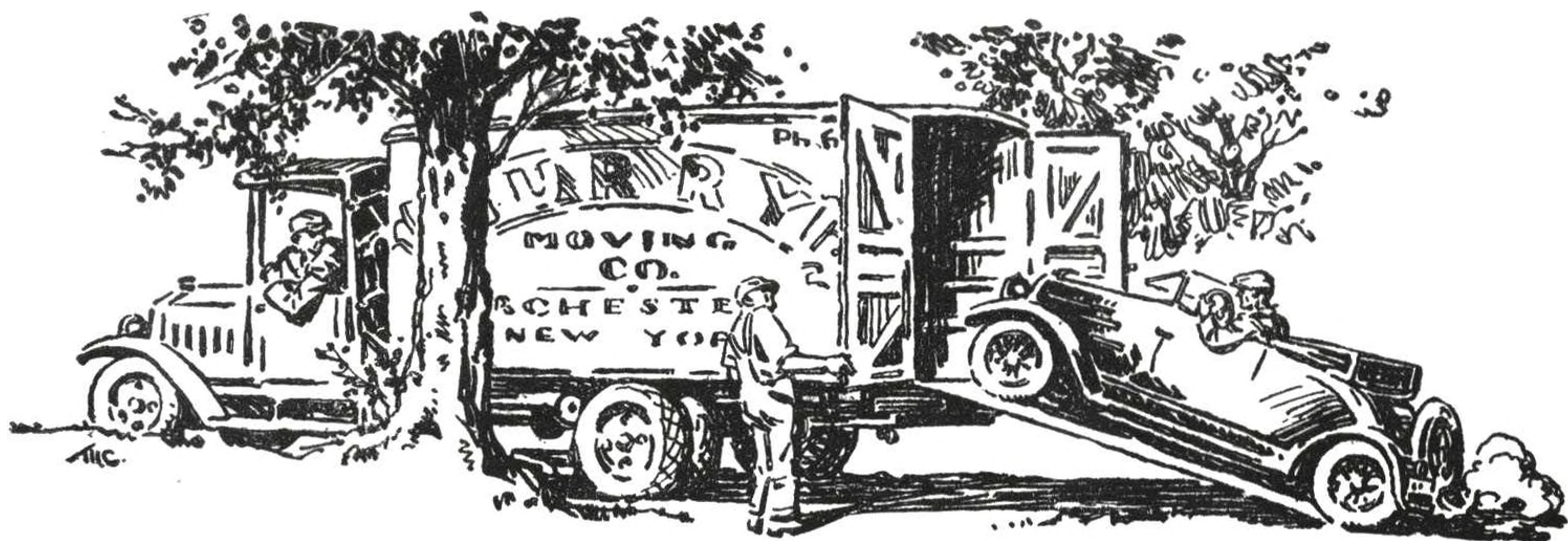
"And if you are alive," he added. "You are to play this as safe as you can every foot of the way, Tiny. I'll be on the floor of that car—just in case."

Tiny David shook his head emphatically.

"That would complicate things, Captain. Even if they bit on me, they would drop me cold if they found out I had company. We might nab one or two, but I doubt if we would get the works, and the real puzzle would remain unsolved. I want to play along with them, all the way. That should bring me to where Morton, Johnson and White are."

Captain Field made a last protest:

"But my hunch is that you're dealing with maniacs; and maniacs that may be killers. Only a maniac would plan and carry through a deal like this."



With the car in low gear, the man at the wheel drove it into the truck.

"I am counting on that, Captain," said Tiny David quietly. "I always got along right well with lunatics." He studied a calendar on the wall. "Besides, I have three or four days to practice in. I am sort of counting on the Captain letting me dash up to Montreal for a spot of leave, as our British cousins would say. No place in the world like a night-club, if you want to brush up on how to deal with lunatics."

A SMART roadster,—seized with a load of narcotics some four months before,—had been driven to a little garage in Dalefield, a small village just across the line in Canada. Tiny David, clad in tweeds, brogues and a brown felt hat with a snap brim, picked it up there.

"Who is she?" asked the garage attendant.

"Swell girl," Tiny David told him. "And she has a swell dad. He got a prize for minding his own business."

The roadster made short work of the miles that separated Dalefield from Malton. Tiny David throttled it down as he passed through the village. Traffic was light between Malton and Doane. It lacked three minutes of four when he pulled up beside a gasoline-pump in the latter place.

Two attendants rushed forward, evidently racing for the pleasure of serving the new arrival, and the little group of loungers gathered about showed interest in this break in the monotony.

"Fill it up, and check the oil," Tiny David ordered the man in the lead. "You are new here, aren't you?"

"Yes sir," the man answered. "Just started yesterday."

Gasoline poured into the tank, and Tiny David stood at the pump, apparently superintending the operation.

"Get it full," he ordered. He lowered his voice. "Bottle both ends of the road at four-thirty," he ordered. "If I don't show up at Carter by five, send patrols in from both ends."

The man nodded.

"Can't hold another drop," he said. . . .

It was very quiet driving through the woods. The only sound came from the smooth motor. A fox scampered across the road ahead of the car, and disappeared in the undergrowth. Around another turn, a deer stood in the dirt highway, gazing at the oncoming car, and waiting until almost the last moment to lope gracefully to shelter. In the first fringe of trees at the side of the road the animal paused to stare with wide eyes at the intruder. Only once did a car appear from the opposite direction. It was an ancient coupé, driven by an elderly man, and headed toward Malton.

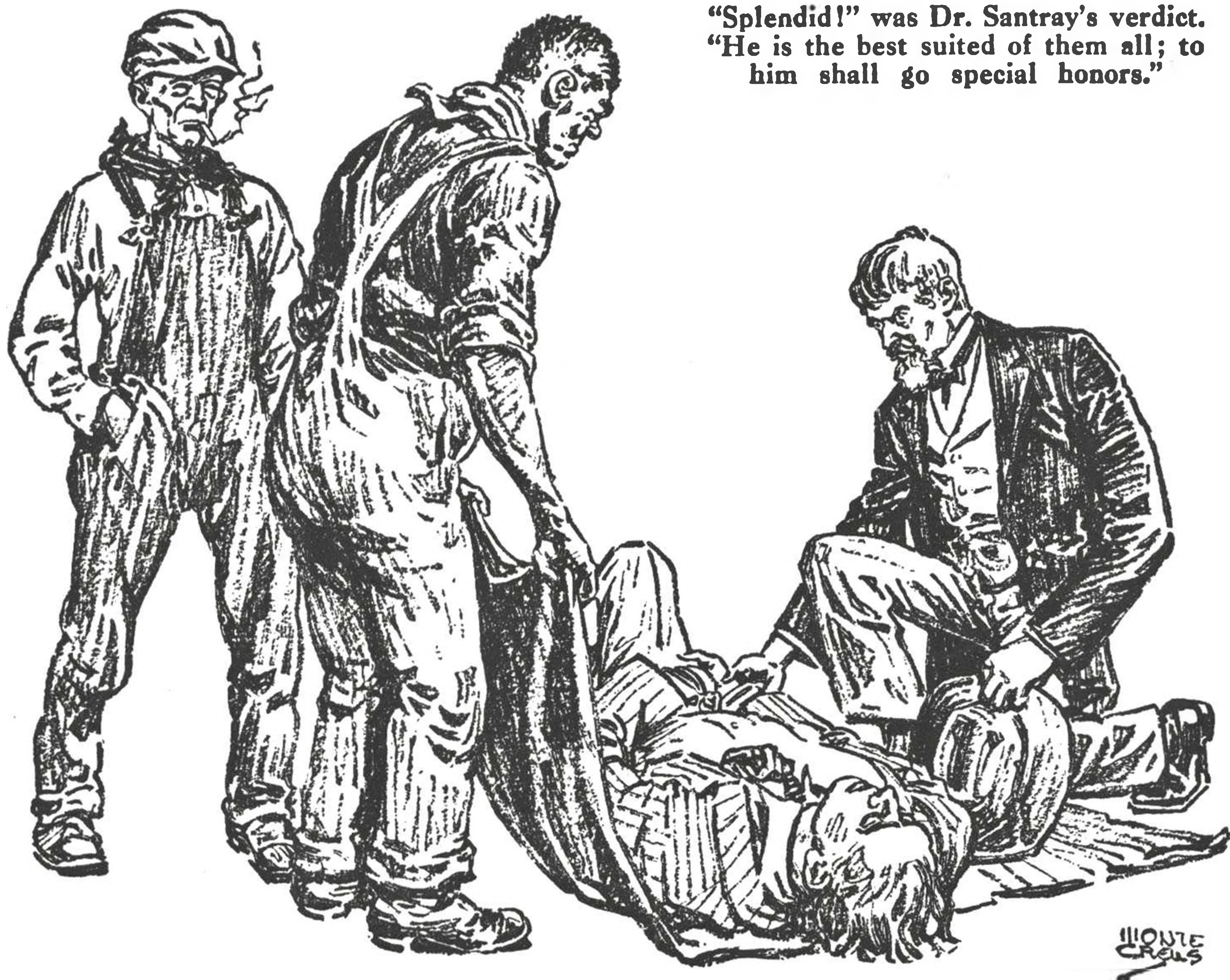
"He got through," Tiny David mused. "Hope I don't draw a blank."

The car rounded another turn. From the depths of the woods came the hoot of an owl, clear and loud. A like call sounded from the south.

"So they have owls in here," Tiny David muttered. "And they hoot in the daytime. The game is on!"

His muscles stiffened. Outwardly, however, he presented the picture of a casual motorist enjoying a ride through a section rich with natural beauty. He glanced to the right, and saw the butt of his revolver protruding from the pocket in the door of the car, ready for instant use.

The roadster rounded another turn, and Tiny David automatically applied the brakes. A short distance ahead, what appeared to be a huge moving-van was pulled up on the opposite side of the road, headed toward Malton. Three men were grouped about the double rear wheels on the side toward the center of the highway, evidently changing a tire. The van occupied almost all of the road.



"Splendid!" was Dr. Santray's verdict. "He is the best suited of them all; to him shall go special honors."

Tiny David drove slowly toward the truck. The men, apparently, were engrossed in their task. The roadster came to a halt a short distance away. One of the three men stood up.

"Think you can make it?" he called.

Tiny David estimated the distance. There was nothing about the appearance of the truck or the men to arouse his suspicions, but a vague fear crept over him as he replied:

"I think so."

The man stood on the running-board of the truck, his hand upraised as he signaled the driver of the roadster to go ahead. Tiny David started his car, and drove slowly forward. The clearance was a matter of inches.

"All clear!" the man called.

His hand flashed forward in a gesture of finality. The moving fingers were only a few feet from the face of the driver of the roadster when a stinging, blinding, acrid fluid struck Tiny David in the nose and eyes. Involuntarily his hands left the wheel and sought his burning eyes.

He was blind, choking and gasping, and quite helpless when the three men piled upon him. They pulled the roadster to a halt. A damp cloth was pressed to the driver's face. A new odor, sweet and nauseating, vied with the fumes that first struck his face. He gave one mighty lurch. Then a wave of weakness swept over him. Stars seemed to be exploding before his eyes. He fell quiet. Only his labored breathing showed that he was alive.

The three men worked quickly and efficiently. Two of them bound and gagged the unconscious man, fastening his legs and arms with deft knots. The third man produced a hypodermic syringe, tested it, bared David's right arm, grasped the flesh between thumb and forefinger, inserted the needle and pressed the plunger.

"Just for luck," he muttered.

They placed their victim on the floor of the roadster, and threw a blanket over his head and shoulders. One of the men seated himself behind the wheel of the roadster. If a motorist had passed at that moment, nothing would have appeared to have been amiss.

The second man entered the cab of the truck, and the motor came to life. A lever clashed. The huge body of the truck slipped back on the chassis, giving it clearance from the cab. The body of the truck moved upward, pausing when it was above the top of the wheels. Then it revolved slowly. It came to a grinding halt when the end of the van that had fitted against the rear of the cab became the rear of the truck. That rear was wide open. The man who had used the hypodermic reached in the van and

pressed a lever. A gangplank emerged from the rear of the body, slanted downward, and came to rest upon the road.

Meanwhile, the man at the wheel of the roadster had turned it around. With the car in low gear, he drove it on the gangplank, and into the truck. The driver gave a casual glance at the figure under the blanket, stopped the roadster, and climbed to the road.

THE gangplank slid up, out of sight. Again levers clashed. . . . The body of the truck revolved once more. It slid backward, and then dropped down upon the chassis. Now the open end, through which the roadster had been driven, fitted tightly against the solid rear of the cab. From the rear of the body, chairs, tables, beds, and part of an upright piano, all bound tightly by ropes, protruded.

The two men made a quick inspection and found everything in place. Barely five minutes had elapsed when they climbed into the cab beside the driver.

From off to the south came the hoot of an owl. One of the men answered it. The same call sounded from the north. Again it was answered. The truck moved forward, northward bound. . . .

When a sedan containing three men and two women pulled beside the truck a mile beyond, the truck-driver signaled them. The coach came to a halt.

"We headed right for Charter?" asked the truck-driver.

"Yes," said the driver of the coach. "Keep on through Malton."

"Thanks," answered the other driver. "We had a long shag." He pointed at the side of the truck, which bore the legend:

HURRY MOVING COMPANY
SYRCHESTER
NEW YORK

The driver of the coach grinned in sympathy as the cars pulled apart. It was near Doane when a ringing command startled the three men in the cab:

"Halt! State police!"

"Jeeze!" muttered the driver.

"Shut up!" ordered the thin man. "Keep your head."

Sergeant James Crosby jumped upon the running-board.

"Driver's license," he directed.

The driver produced a license made out to *"Jesse Clark, 211 Riverside Drive, Syrchester."*

Crosby returned it. "Your registration-card," he requested.

The driver handed over a form bearing the name of Julius Menton, owner of the Hurry Moving Company, 2341 North Twenty-ninth Street, Syrchester.

"Good enough," admitted Sergeant Crosby. "Where are you going?"

"Charter."

"Whereabouts in Charter?"

The driver scratched his head.

"Damn' if I know. I never was there before. You show him the papers, boss."

The thin man took off his hat, removed a sweat-stained bill-of-lading from the leather band, and handed it to the sergeant. It bore the name of Peter Girabualdt, of Charter, and there were penciled directions how to locate a farmhouse on the outskirts of that village.

Crosby returned the bill of lading.

"Say," the thin man demanded, "what's it all about?"

"Nothing much," Crosby answered. "We got a tip that somebody was trying to smuggle some rugged individualism into Canada." He calmly reached above the three men and tapped the partition behind them. "Sounds as solid as your heads."

"Wise guy, aren't you?" sneered the thin man.

"No," came the unruffled answer. "Just a journeyman cop, trying to earn a day's pay." His trained hands darted over the bodies of the three men. "You boys got any hardware?"

He turned aside from his unsuccessful search, to face Trooper Henry Linton, who had approached from the rear of the truck.

"Any luck, Hank?"

"No," was the answer. "Looks like a solid load of furniture. I poked about halfway through it. Think we better pull it all out, Jim?"

Crosby hesitated. The time was seventeen minutes of five, and until that hour, all this was routine. The truck and its occupants looked harmless enough. Their credentials were all in order. Despite those facts, he was about to order the search, when the whine of a racing motor, approaching from the south, caused him to change his decision:

"No. Get that car!"

"How about us?" demanded the driver.

"Beat it!" Crosby called back.

FOUR hours later, Sergeant Crosby sat in a corner of the living-room at the barracks, his chair turned to the wall, and his face buried in his hands. Both ends of the road had been bottled, according to schedule. Promptly at five, patrols went in from both ends. When

they met, they had nothing to show for their journey. Reserves were rushed to the scene, and the woods on both sides of the road were combed. But Tiny David had vanished. There was no trace of the roadster. The trail ended at the gasoline station in Doane, where Sergeant John King, working in plain-clothes, had filled the tank of the car. Barring black magic, there was only one solution—the truck.

Captain Field did not believe in black magic. So for the last two hours the wires had been flooded with descriptions of the truck and the three men in it. Grim Federal men at the border were on the lookout for it. Off to the north, tight-lipped Canadian Mounties threw themselves whole-heartedly into a search, upon the outcome of which the life of a brother-officer might depend.

Below the border, every patrol of the Black Horse Troop was out. Captain Field was on the road, taking personal charge of the hunt. The troops to the south and the west were holding solid lines across the roads that entered their territories. The police of a score of cities were on the lookout.

But the truck, apparently, had vanished from the face of the earth. There were only discouraging reports as routine procedures were tried and discarded. The reports were received at the barracks by the top sergeant, a few clerks, and the crestfallen Sergeant Crosby, who constituted the entire home guard.

Charter could find no trace of Peter Girabualdt, or his farm. . . . Syrchester could not locate a Hurry Moving Company. . . . The Motor Vehicle Bureau declared the license and registration-card were forgeries.

Sergeant Crosby clenched a heavy fist, and drove it into the palm of his other hand. "And I told that truck to beat it!" he moaned.

DR. JULES SANTRAY was nervous. His uneasiness was very apparent as he walked back and forth before a group of buildings. The buildings were in a clearing, three sides of which were surrounded by a stone wall, while the fourth side, which was unguarded, faced a large lake.

Heavy trees surrounded the wall on all sides. Along the top of the wall, at regular intervals, were stone towers, some of which were occupied by armed men. Two of these towers guarded a massive, barred gate, upon the other side of which was an unimproved road, almost a truck-trail, which wound its way through the woods.

As the physician walked, his unusually long arms were constantly in motion. His deep-set eyes, unnaturally bright, shifted frequently, darting keen glances at the various buildings, and at the barred gate.

Back and forth he paced. Then he turned abruptly and walked to the rear of one of the smaller buildings. Three huge dogs, beasts of a breed not easily determined, bayed a fierce chorus as he advanced in their direction. The hate and menace faded from the canine chorus as he drew near enough for recognition. He stooped and patted the head of the fiercest.

"Bide your time, little brother," he murmured. "Soon I may have need of you. All that I have accomplished, all that I have dreamed, may depend on your vigilance. Who knows? Perhaps your names may be written in history."

HE straightened abruptly, and faced the gate at the sound of an approaching motor. He walked toward the garage, which was unusually long, and threw open the double door.

The gate swung open. A huge moving-van passed through it. The gate closed. The van crossed the clearing and entered the garage. Three men stepped from the cab. The thin man, he who had used the hypodermic in the woods, faced the physician.

"You were successful, Mokus?" Dr. Santray asked.

"Yes," said the thin man. "But—"

The upraised hand of the physician halted him.

"You have succeeded. That is what matters. You have brought me a suitable subject?"

"Yes, Doctor, but—"

"Good! One thing at a time. We have work to do."

As if in response to his words, the mechanism of the truck came to life. The front of the body became the rear. The gangplank descended. One of the men backed the roadster down it. They lifted the unconscious form of Tiny David to the floor of the garage.

Dr. Santray bent over him.

"Splendid," was his verdict. His eyes glowed with unholy affection. "You have done well, my good Mokus. He is the best suited of them all. To him shall go special honors. I must take great care with his name." He felt the pulse of the

The roadster disappeared from sight. "So convenient!" murmured the physician.

inert man. "Strong and steady as a clock, despite your ministrations, Mokus. He has the constitution of an ox, this one. But that can come later."

The driver of the roadster backed it from the garage, and drove slowly to the shore of the lake, where a little dock was built. Tied to the wharf was a broad, flat-bottomed barge. The roadster was driven on the barge. The three men, with the physician beaming approval upon them, fitted large oars into place, and rowed toward the center of the lake.

"This," said Dr. Santray, "should be a suitable place."

The men stopped rowing. The barge drifted slowly forward.

The thin man sat behind the wheel of the roadster, put it in gear, and stepped out just as the car plunged over the side of the barge. There was a great splash. The roadster disappeared from sight. Only a few waves marred the surface of the placid lake.

"So convenient!" murmured the physician. "Nature provides many things."

They rowed the barge back to the dock, and made it fast. Then they entered the garage. The truck was restored to its former state. Two of the men picked up Tiny David and carried him toward the largest building. Dr. Santray and Mokus stood watching them.

"What has happened, Mokus?" asked the physician. He closed the garage door, and stepped outside. "I can see that you are vexed by trivial, inconsequential things. They have no place in the scheme of greater things." He sighed. "It was always this way. The smaller minds have no meeting-place with the great. Pasteur, because he could not perform supermiracles, felt the fury of the mob. Koch was denounced as an impostor. Even in this country, the science of dissection brought on what we now call the Medical Riots."

He passed a hand over his forehead.

"My brain should not be hampered with these petty things. But it is written that genius consists of the infinite capacity for taking pains. So tell me your troubles, Mokus."

The thin man, talking rapidly, told of the halting of the truck.

"It means just one thing, Doc," he concluded. "They got wise to the way we was working. They planned to knock us off. Only the truck fooled them. And it won't work again."

Dr. Santray smiled with approval.

"The truck fooled them, Mokus. And why shouldn't it? It is the creature of my own brain, designed to cover just what they were looking for. I dreamed that truck, and put the dream upon paper. Skilled craftsmen—a few of them I trusted—created my dream for me."

The thin man ignored the digression.

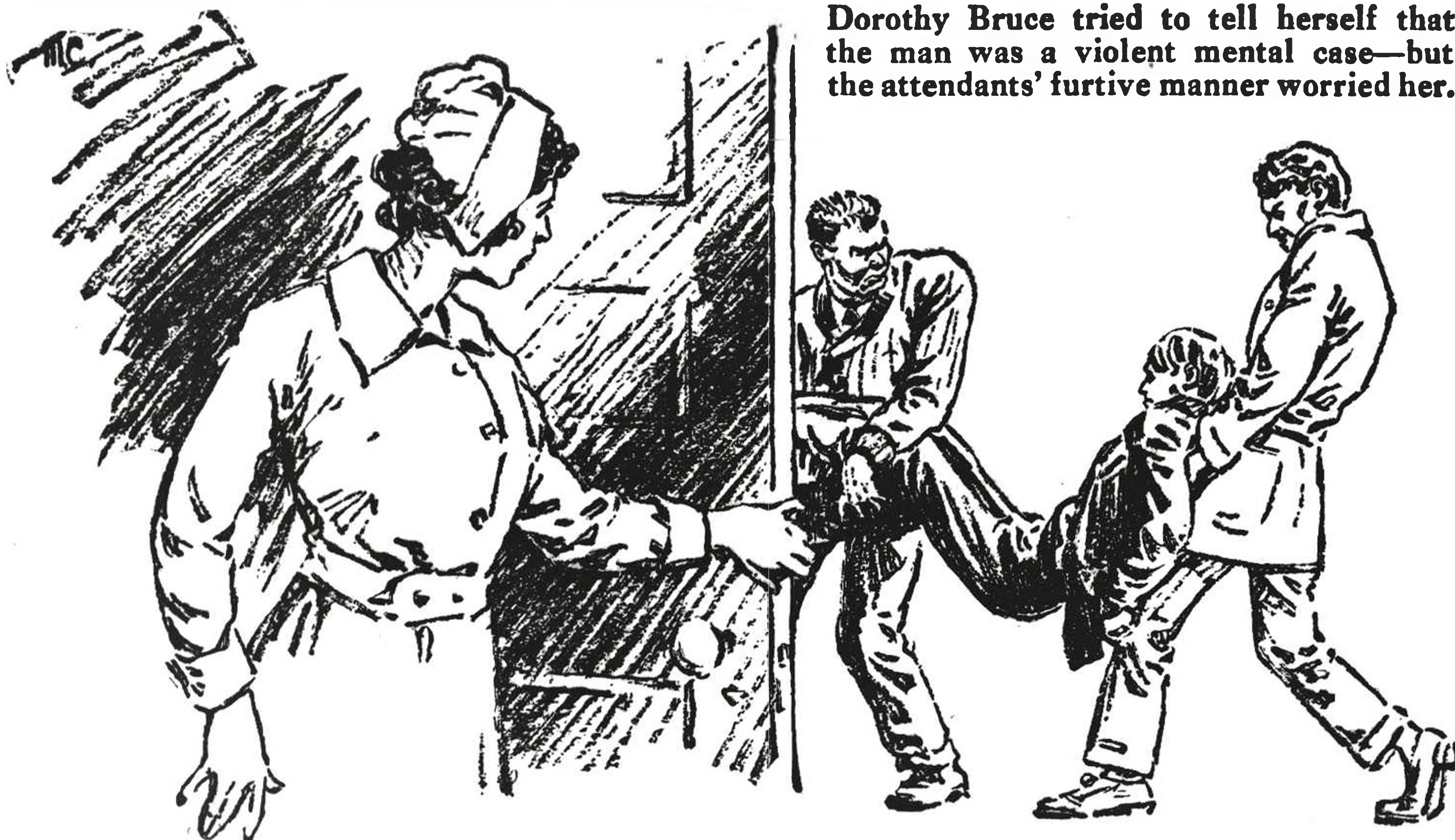
"Right now, Doc, that truck is the hottest thing in Northern New York. They know they've been fooled, and they know it was the truck. Every State cop is after it. And when those babies start, they never stop. The truck has to go."

Dr. Santray nodded.

"Yes, it must go. A pity. But enough of that. No sentiment. Reason must rule supreme. The truck has served its purpose. It must go."

He started toward the large building.

"And another thing, Doc." The thin man dug at the ground with his foot and averted his glance as he spoke. "This set-up is getting on my nerves." He gained courage as he went on. "The show-



Dorothy Bruce tried to tell herself that the man was a violent mental case—but the attendants' furtive manner worried her.

down aint far off. This is worse than murder. It means mobs, and mobs is worse than cops. Me, I am checking out, and I am checking out tonight."

A cruel gleam appeared in the eyes of the physician, but he controlled himself, and when he spoke his voice was soft.

"I must be calm, Mokus. I must treat your objections in an impersonal and scientific manner. What is murder, Mokus? A general sacrifices a thousand lives to gain an objective. That is strategy. A dictator liquidates the lives of a hundred unfaithful followers. That is statesmanship. A scientist takes a life here and there in order that the life-span of countless thousands may be increased. Is that murder? No; murder is the purposeless taking of human life. And my hands are quite clean."

His manner was unruffled, judicial, as he continued:

"I shall ignore your references to showdowns, mobs and State policemen. Those are remote possibilities, all of which I have prepared for. But one part of your statement cannot go unanswered. That was your announced intention of checking out, as you so quaintly phrased it."

His voice became purring, feline and dangerous.

"Need I remind you, my good Mokus, that for many years I was chief medical examiner for a great city. During my tenure of office the police brought me many scientific problems for solution. Bound up in my findings were the guilt or innocence, and the lives of many men. I worked exactly, fairly, and impartially, as a man of science should.

"But now and again, I held in my hands the fate of men who, despite the revolting nature of their crimes, could not fail to arouse admiration for their daring and cleverness. Some of these men I saved. Not for money, but because it was such a senseless waste to allow the State to snuff out such brilliance. I claimed their lives instead. I bound them to me with the knowledge that if I spoke, angry mobs would tear them limb from limb."

A note of steel crept into his voice.

"Have you forgotten the Halstead murder and kidnaping, Mokus? I doubt if the public and the police have. As I recall the case, a certain man wore a shirt which was stained. I decided those stains were not human blood."

Ignoring the confusion of the man before him, he continued:

"I have been more than fair with these men whose lives I have claimed. I have paid them well. I have demanded only one thing—their undying loyalty."

His voice became even more sinister.

"Even death cannot break the power of my hold on these men. So banish from your mind the thoughts I can read so plainly. A vault in a certain city holds my secrets. If I should die by what our friends the police call violence, the contents of that vault become public property. . . . Have you reconsidered your decision to leave me, my good Mokus?"

The thin man leaned weakly against the garage.

"I'll stick." He managed a wry smile. "Sink or swim together. But have you been feeling well lately, Doc?"

The physician laughed aloud.

"That, I assume, is your delicate way of expressing the belief that I may be insane. I shall be quite frank with you, Mokus. My mind has been grappling with facts and problems that might well unbalance the normal intellect. Conceit must give way to facts. So I have applied every known test of sanity to myself. I am sane, Mokus—so sane that the rest of the world is mad by comparison. After all, what is sanity? But I forget. Despite your many good qualities, I fear you would be lost if we followed that line of reasoning. Is there anything else, Mokus?"

The thin man hesitated.

"Yes, Doc, there is. You say you have a hand-picked outfit. Well, one of 'em is ready to take a run-out powder!"

"You mean?"

"That damn' nurse!"

DR. SANTRAY'S smile was bland. "You reveal a blunted sense of the esthetic when you refer to the charming Miss Bruce in such a fashion. But what prompts your fears?"

"She's wise, Doc. She knows this aint no regular joint for sick birds. She got in the rooms at the end of the hall this morning. I came in just as she was bending over one of those guys. She straightens up when she sees me, and draws back as if I was a snake. But she has guts, that dame. She pulls herself together, and looks right through me as if I wasn't there. As she goes out the door she makes the crack that if the bird on the bed was an industrial accident case she is the little mother of all the Russias. I tell her to see you about it. She cracks right back that she would rather see the State police."

Dr. Santray was deep in thought.

"So that is why the lovely Miss Bruce remains in her room. And I attributed it to a slight indisposition. She is clever, this delightful feminine thing. Escape would be difficult during the day. She is waiting for night. Night is almost upon us. I must work fast, Mokus."

He rubbed his hands in anticipation.

"Miss Bruce has been a not unpleasant cog in our machinery. But when a cog fails to fulfill its functions it becomes a detriment to the machine. Miss Bruce is no longer a member of our staff."

A smile, chilling and unmirthful, crossed his hawkish features.

"Miss Bruce, Mokus, is about to become one of our patients."

"YOU sent for me, Dr. Santray?" Dorothy Bruce, brunette, petite and clad in a trim nurse's uniform, stood facing the man at the desk. Outwardly she was calm and composed. Inwardly she was terrified.

All afternoon, face to face with a horror she only dimly understood, and refusing to believe the only logical explanation of what she had seen, she had considered flight. The knowledge that the place was patrolled by armed guards had restrained her. She had fought back the impulse to telephone for help by recalling that the telephone switchboard was presided over by an undersized youth, who was the particular *protégé* of Dr. Santray.

These things had caused her uneasiness when she had arrived at the sanatorium to take up her duties two weeks ago. They had added to the vague surprise she had felt when the head of the registry, which offered her the position, told her that she must agree to cut herself off from the outside world, with no visitors and no letters, either incoming or outgoing.

But Dr. Santray had offered an explanation: The armed guards, he said, were necessary because of the mental cases housed at the sanatorium, some of whom were placed under the girl's care. The explanation also covered the ban on letters and visitors.

"We know comparatively little about treatment of disorders of the human mind," Dr. Santray said. "But we do know that the nurse must submerge herself in her patient, with no outside interests. It means a sacrifice. Perhaps you are not prepared to make it?"

AND Dorothy Bruce, filled with exalted ideals of her profession, had assured him she was. But, as the days passed, doubts had formed in her mind. They had been strengthened one afternoon when two attendants carried an unconscious man through the hall. The man's hand and feet were bound. She tried to tell herself that the man was a violent mental case, but the furtive manner of the attendants worried her.

The two men had carried their burden to the east wing of the building, a section from which the girl had been unobtrusively but effectively barred. Dorothy Bruce was a girl of courage. She resolved to visit that wing at the earliest opportunity. The first chance had come this morning.

The hasty visit, interrupted by Mokus, had justified all her fears. It had increased them a thousandfold. Just a few minutes before she had been summoned to the physician's office, she heard shuffling footsteps in the hall. She darted out in time to see two attendants with a limp burden. The hands and feet of the man they carried were bound, and a gag covered his mouth. Her horror was intensified. It reached the breaking-point when she heard that Dr. Santray requested her presence in the office. Now she was forced to exercise every ounce of self-control she possessed as she waited for the physician to speak.

"Miss Bruce," he began, "we have been playing a pleasant little comedy. It was staged to save a girl, young in her calling, from facts which, to say the least, might prove unpleasant. You rang the curtain down when you stepped out of character. Now the play is over; we are face to face with reality.

"I am conducting a series of experiments so important that no living man or woman can be allowed to stand in their path. Ponder that well. And then consider this."

He leaned forward, his eyes glowing with the fire of fanaticism.

"Miss Bruce, I have conquered the age-old enemy of man—death!"

SHE drew herself up. Her worst fears were realized. She was afraid, mortally afraid. But she hurled her accusations full at him:

"You are a madman, Dr. Santray! You have conquered death? You have taken normal, healthy men, and killed them. You have brought them back to what *you* call life—but what any sane person would recognize as a wretched, depraved travesty upon human existence."

She drew a full breath, and continued her indictment:

"You have done with human beings, what a real scientist did with a dog. Science may justify his act, but even that is a debatable point. And the account of what he did, and the results he obtained, caused thousands of persons to shudder to the depths of their beings. There is no justification for you. You are a cold, inhuman monster, a menace to all that is sane and decent in the world."

She fell back in the chair exhausted, the full force of her fury spent. In its place was stark fear, which gnawed at her very heart.

The booming voice of Dr. Santray ended the silence.

"Bravo, Miss Bruce! What an actress the stage lost when the nursing profession claimed you! You read your lines with the fire that belongs only to youth. Now listen to age, experience, knowledge and reason."

HE picked up a volume of bound case records.

"It is a simple process, really, and quite painless. First the nitrogen gas. An immediate injection of hepatin to prevent the coagulation of the blood. A brief period in the land from which none of us have returned—none until I began my magic. Then adrenalin, injected into the muscles of the heart, and artificial respiration to restore circulation. . . . A small price to pay for the results that have been obtained, and the greater results that are to come."

"I have seen the results!" All the horror and repulsion she felt were in the exclamation.

He tapped the volume before him impatiently.

"Seen them with the eyes of a woman, rather than as a scientist," he objected. "There have been three subjects. The first I named Zeus, for Zeus was the first of his line. The second was called Helios, in honor of the sun-god, who was the personification of life, and all life-giving power. The third subject is known as Aïdes. He was cringing and morose. It was fitting that he should bear the name of the monarch of the lower world."

He turned a page in the book.

"Zeus was the victim of a slight accident. Helios, however—"

She leaped from the chair.

"You mean the man you call Zeus was murdered!" she cried. "And spare me the rest of the recital. I have seen the results of your work." She controlled herself with a great effort. "Brain-tissue, unlike other bodily tissue, cannot regenerate itself. That undisputed fact robs your revolting experiments of any possible value."

"Nonsense!" He brushed the objection aside. "I have perfected my technique. The new subject, who joined us today, shall benefit. I have taken great care with his name. He shall be known as Phœbus. The name is apt, for Phœbus was the god of light and prophecy, and our Phœbus shall be the prophet of greater accomplishments. By the day after tomorrow he will be completely re-

stored, despite the effects of—let us say his journey."

The keen glance of the physician was trained upon the nurse.

"Miss Bruce, you cannot leave us. The world—the very fools who stand to benefit most—would not understand. Work like this must go on. So you are confronted with two alternatives: Will you be the loyal nurse, who comforts Phœbus through his temporary disorders, or will you be a fellow-patient?"

The girl was silent. A dozen conflicting thoughts flashed through her mind.

"Escape," said Dr. Santray, in a conversational tone, "is impossible. There are the watchmen. There are the dogs. Both very effective. Regardless of your decision, you will be given the run of the building. It is quite safe."

He folded his long, tapering fingers, leaned forward, and began an impassioned recital. His words, apparently, were directed to the girl. But in reality, the physician also was trying to still vague doubts forming in his own mind.

"Experiments with dogs? Interesting, but not conclusive. Merely a prologue to the greater drama. Sacrifice has a part in all great drama. Engineers weigh the life of a workman against a few feet added to the top of a towering building, and the steel pushes on toward the sky.

"Our own field of medicine is filled with similar examples: Walter Reed, and his fellow-heroes, who made possible the conquest of yellow fever; the two convicts in the Denver prison, who paved the way for success in the fight against tuberculosis. Some day, when the world understands, Zeus, Helios, Aïdes, Phœbus—yes, and I, their master—will take our rightful places beside them."

The ringing assertion seemed to still his doubts, for he gave his entire attention to the girl.

"Come, Miss Bruce, what is your decision?"

Dorothy Bruce thought rapidly. She must humor this maniac. Only one ray of hope appeared in the darkness of her plight. Time. Time in which something—she had no idea what—might happen. She made a great effort to make her voice sound sincere.

"It is a beggar's choice, Dr. Santray. You and your work are revolting to me. But I am a good bit of a coward. I'll be the nurse; not the patient."

He nodded, with every evidence of delight.

"Wise girl," he approved. His hand indicated the door. "No doubt you want to look in on your patient."

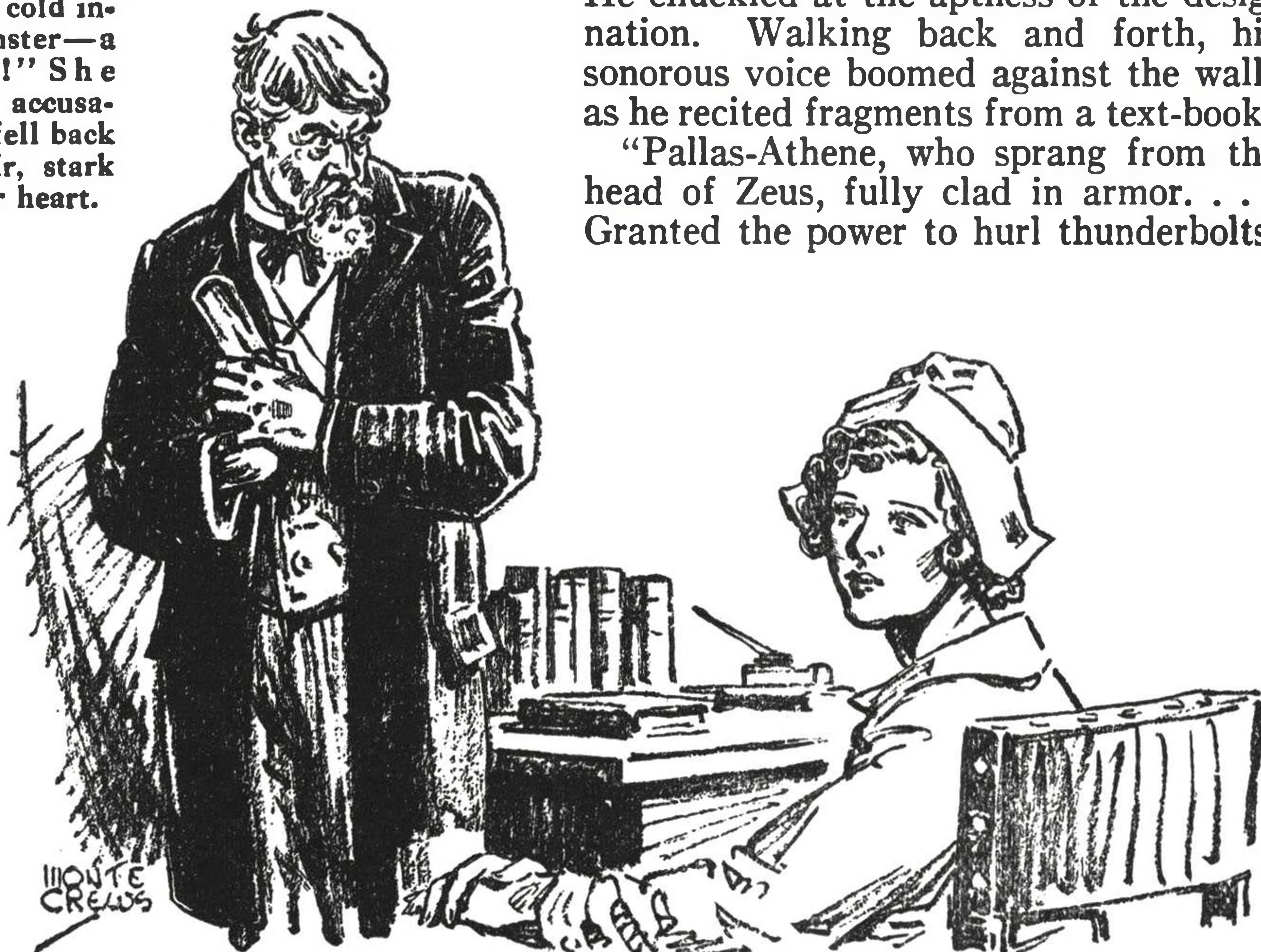
ALONE in the office, Dr. Santray laughed aloud.

"She is clever, that one. She thinks she has deceived me."

He picked up a printed form, and wrote a name on the first line.

"She shall be Pallas-Athene, the goddess of wisdom and armed resistance." He chuckled at the aptness of the designation. Walking back and forth, his sonorous voice boomed against the walls as he recited fragments from a text-book:

"Pallas-Athene, who sprang from the head of Zeus, fully clad in armor. . . . Granted the power to hurl thunderbolts.



"You are a cold inhuman monster—a madman!" She hurled the accusation—then fell back in the chair, stark fear in her heart.

. . . Vested with the gift of prolonging the life of man—"

He halted abruptly. "I wonder—"

THE night was nearing an end. Faint traces of dawn, in the form of pink glow, crept through the barred window of the little room. Dorothy Bruce sat upright in the chair beside the bed, where she had napped fitfully throughout the night. The hoot of an owl sounded from one end of the grounds. It was answered by a like call from the opposite direction. Two more similar signals were exchanged, as the various watchmen reported that all was well. One of the dogs gave a short, menacing bark, which subsided into a ferocious growl. The girl shuddered; then turned her attention to the bed.

There, the lower part of his body covered with a blanket, lay Tiny David. He was clad in a white gown, held together in the rear by tapes, the type of garment hospitals furnish a patient about to undergo an operation. His hands were unbound. Covering his injured eyes was one of the bandages the girl had replaced at frequent intervals during the night.

The nurse took one of the large hands in her own, and felt for the pulse. It was then that Tiny David struggled back to consciousness.

"Water!" he moaned.

The girl dropped the wrist, stepped quickly to a table, and returned with a bowl filled with cracked ice. She placed a fragment of the ice in the man's mouth, and held a bowl near by.

"That will help." Her voice was low, soothing. "But don't swallow it. It will make you sick if you do. They gave you chloroform."

He rolled the ice about in his mouth.

"Better," he gasped.

"Much better," she assured him.

His right hand groped toward the bandage over his eyes.

"Don't do that," she warned him. "They squirted ammonia in your face. We will let your eyes rest all day, and take the bandages off tonight in the dark."

Her words brought back his memory.

"Where am I?" he demanded.

Dorothy Bruce hesitated.

"In a private hospital," she told him.

The lips below the bandage moved in a smile.

"There must be a new administration in Albany if a State copper rates a private hospital and a private nurse." He moved his arms and legs experimentally. "Haven't any of the boys from the outfit dropped in? They did a swell job getting me out of the mess after I bit on that truck. And did you hear if they nabbed the three guys in the truck?"

She resorted to professional brusqueness in order to avoid a direct reply.

"Miss Bruce," said the rat-faced man, "too much interest in the welfare of a patient often changes the status of a nurse to that of a patient!"

"I think you have talked enough for the present."

But she sat in the chair, her heart pounding wildly. So the man on the bed was a State trooper! Hope surged high. Second thought killed it. He was alone, unarmed, and surrounded by barriers that could not be passed. His words indicated that his companions had taken part in the operation that resulted in his capture. But they, too, must have failed. The presence of the man on the bed proved that.

"There is no rule against your talking, is there?" Tiny David asked. "I like your voice. I am using it to get a picture of you."

She stalled for time, while she debated what to do.

"Is it a nice picture?"

"Swell."

There was a moment of silence.

"My full name is Lieutenant Edward David," he said, "but all my friends call me Tiny."

"My name is Dorothy Bruce," she answered.

He chuckled.

"Almost as formal as a Junior League dance. And you sound as if you'd lost your last friend. It can't be worry over little me, because I am beginning to feel like a million dollars. Guess the boy-friends didn't push me around too much. —What's on your mind, Miss Bruce?"

Dorothy Bruce hesitated a moment, then burst forth with the revelation:

"Mr. David, just a few hours ago they offered me the choice between nursing you through something worse than death, or going through the same thing myself."

Tiny David sat up in bed.

"What's that?" he demanded. "Say that again."

SHE complied; then, urged on by his eager questions, gave a full explanation of the nightmare. Her fears lent her eloquence. Her relief in having some one to confide in, some one to turn to, made the recital of the madness that lay ahead less terrible. But there was a sob in her voice as she completed the story.

"There, there!" David's deep voice soothed her. "Keep your head up, Miss Bruce. We'll get out of this yet. There must be some way. But first let me get the whole thing straight. Just where is this place, this private hospital?"

"About fifteen miles off the road between Malton and Wolf's Head. You leave the road about one mile before you come to Wolf's Head, and take the trail to the left. It is a rough trail, and it is almost impossible to locate it unless you are familiar with the country. After you leave the road you drive over grass for about three hundred feet. Then the trail really begins, and leads across a short field to the woods. From that point on you are in the woods the entire way to the gates."

The man nodded.

"I see. But tell me, how long has Dr. Santray been here? How has he been able to get away with it? And what does he claim to be running?"

"The place has been established about five weeks," the girl said. "The buildings were here for many years. I understand they once were used as a camp, or school, for boys. I have been here about two weeks.

"Dr. Santray told me he was running a sanatorium for persons with mental and nervous disorders. He actually has some patients of that type in one section of this building. But I had been here only a very short time when I realized that all these patients were unable to sense what was going on around them. And all of them, apparently, were quite deserted by their families. At any rate, they never have visitors, and never receive mail."

"How did he explain things to you?" Tiny David asked.

"When I first inquired about this wing, he told me it was used for industrial accident cases. He said the government had quietly established a nitrate plant near Malton, and that their accident cases were to be treated here with absolute secrecy."

Her voice faltered as she continued:

"It all was plausible until I saw them carrying a man through the hall. His hands and feet were tied. That made me determined to see for myself what was going on here. When I did see, it was too late. You were brought in right after that. Then I had the session with Dr. Santray. I told you about that."

"Yes," he said. "But there is one thing I still can't understand: How does he keep his organization together? These men must know what is going on here, and what the penalty would be. Santray must trust them implicitly."

"Apparently he does," Miss Bruce answered. "They all act as if they are afraid of him. When he issues even the most unimportant order, they fall over themselves to obey. And I imagine he

pays them very well. My salary is unusually high, and the men here all seem to have plenty of money. I have seen them gambling with five-dollar bills."

Tiny David leaned forward.

"Any chance of getting to one of them? We need some things badly, including a gun."

The girl shook her head.

"I don't think so," she stated. "I wish you could see one of them."

AS if in answer to her words, a knock sounded. A tall, rat-faced man, wearing the uniform of a male nurse, entered. He placed a tray on a table.

"Dr. Santray's compliments, and breakfast for two." His voice was impersonal; his face expressionless. "Dr. Santray is much concerned regarding your patient's eyes, Miss Bruce. He will examine him in the operating-room tomorrow morning at eleven. This treatment is to be given one hour before that time." He handed a form to the nurse. "Dr. Santray will be here to superintend it. . . . And you may have your meals either here, or downstairs."

The girl faced him calmly.

"I'll have them here with my patient, thank you."

The rat-faced man bowed.

"Very good. . . . And meanwhile, Miss Bruce, Dr. Santray told me to inform you that too much interest in the welfare of a patient often changes the status of a nurse to that of a patient."

He glided from the room, closing the door softly behind him.

Tiny David whistled.

"Nice, cheerful customer!" was his verdict. "I didn't have to see him; just his voice told me there was no use propositioning him." He turned in bed. "So tomorrow I become one of the Greek gods. Where is the operating-room, Miss Bruce?"

"At the end of this hall," she told him, anguish in her voice.

The big man chuckled.

"Cheer up, Miss Bruce. This is going to work out fine. Will you by any chance be in the operating-room when I join the immortals?"

She pondered before she replied:

"I don't know for sure, but I imagine he will make me go there. That would conform with his idea of cruel humor." Her eyes flashed, and her fists were clenched. "But if I'm there, they won't be able to go on as long as I am able to stand."

Tiny David's big hand groped about until it found and held the hand of the girl.

"You are even better than my mental picture of you," he told her. "But don't worry. The dear doctor doesn't know it, but that operating-room is going to be the scene of Santray's last stand."

He leaned forward, still holding the small hand in his own.

"It will fit together like a puzzle," he assured her. "Santray will drop in here to make sure I am ready for my little journey. He will be expecting resistance, but we will fool him. I'll be led in to the shearing like a lamb. That will throw him off his guard. He won't want to be interrupted while making a god of a human being, so it is a safe bet that the door of the operating-room will be locked from the inside. It is an equally safe bet that those present won't include more than one or two men besides the dear doctor."

He dropped the girl's hand, raised his thick arms, and flexed them.

"At the worst, three to one. And that isn't counting any little help you may contribute in the form of well-placed kicks, scratches and other forms of girlish violence. We'll win, Miss Bruce. We have to win. We'll be in a locked, barred room. Santray will be out of the picture. That will make it possible for us to talk business with the other gentlemen present. And if we can sell them a bill of goods, we can hold the others off almost indefinitely."

THE hope his enthusiasm had kindled died as the girl stared at the form she held in her hand.

"You forget this, Tiny." The nickname slipped out. It seemed natural to use it. She waved the blank before him, forgetting his bandaged eyes. "The treatment you are to receive one hour before the operation is a hypodermic injection of morphia. It will put you in a stupor. And Dr. Santray will be here to see that you get it."

Tiny David's lips contracted in a wry smile.

"That's out," he admitted. "But we aren't licked yet." He recaptured the hand he had surrendered. "Where is the medicine-room, Dorothy?"

She gave no sign of surprise at the use of her first name.

"Right across the hall."

"Perfect," was the verdict. "Now assuming that you are carrying out San-

tray's instructions to the letter, what would you do?"

"Why," she answered, "I would walk across the hall to the medicine-room, fill my hypo with morphia of the prescribed strength, and return with it."

"Exactly," he declared. "That is just what you are going to do. You are going to wait until Santray is here before you do it. And you are going to leave the door wide open, so he can watch you every minute. When you get back, you are going to ask Santray if he wants to administer the dose. If he wants to, let him. If he doesn't, you do it. Simple, isn't it?"

"But I don't understand," the girl protested.

He laughed aloud.

"There is one little thing I forgot to tell you, Dorothy: Between now and tomorrow morning we are going to visit that medicine-room. We are going to fill the morphine-bottle with nice, clean, harmless salt-water."

He stretched luxuriously, apparently without a care in the world.

"It's a great life," he declared. "A comfortable bed, and nobody to order you out of it. A swell girl to talk with you. I can hardly wait until tonight, when I will get a chance to look at her." He attacked the food she had placed before him. "Good old Dr. Santray!"

SERGEANT CROSBY was in tough shape, outwardly and inwardly. He was a living violation of that regulation which provides that troopers shall at all times be clean-shaven and neatly dressed. And the violation was a thorough one.

Two days' growth of beard concealed his face. His hands might have belonged to a stoker. Mud covered his shoes and puttees. His knees were stained with grass and dirt. The lavender band of his hat had assumed a darker hue at various places, said spots being due to perspiration.

His mental state was equally deplorable. The fact that the top sergeant had written the letters "A.W.O.L." beside his name on the roster for two consecutive mornings weighed heavily in his conscience. The knowledge that he had his troop car with him, and that troop car, from a technical standpoint, was stolen property, added not at all to his peace of mind.

In fact, the casual motorist on the Malton-Wolf's-Head highway, who encountered him, might have been justified in doubting Sergeant Crosby's sanity. He was down on his hands and knees in the soft dirt of the right-hand side of the road, facing Wolf's Head. He appeared to be examining every foot of that dirt as he pulled himself slowly forward.

At irregular intervals he would climb to his feet, mutter softly to himself, walk back to the troop car, drive it a short distance ahead of where he had been crawling on the ground, and then resume his strange quest.

That quest began late in the afternoon on the day he had checked the three occupants of what appeared to be a huge furniture van, and waved them on. Humiliated by his carelessness, weighed down by his anxiety regarding the fate of Tiny David, and stung by the failure of Captain Field to include him in the roving patrols that rushed out on the chase, Crosby had left the barracks without the formality of checking out with Max Payton, the top sergeant.

Taking his car from the garage without putting the required signature in the book of the stable-sergeant, he drove at breakneck speed to Doane, halting at the approximate place where the truck had been checked.

"It is a big truck with double wheels in the rear," he reasoned. "They pulled away over on the side of the road when they stopped. The tires left their treadmark in the dirt there, where regular traffic won't rub it out, and I am going to find it."

Using his flashlight, he dropped to his knees and began the search. Suddenly he gave a whoop of excitement.

"Hold this light, son!" He thrust the torch into the hands of a boy, who had been watching the proceedings with amazement. "Here—hold it like this."

The boy obeyed. The finger of light came to rest upon the pattern of double tires stamped in the dirt. Crosby produced paper and pencil, and made a careful tracing of the marks. Then he snatched the flashlight from the hands of the boy and raced toward the car.

DRIVING toward Malton, with a heavy foot on the gas, he argued it out with himself:

"They told me they were bound for Charter. I didn't pay particular attention, because that other car was roaring down, but I think I would have noticed if they had turned right on the branch road leading to Wolf's Head. They didn't get to Charter, but I figure they

did have time to get as far as Malton before the general alarm went out. They may have stopped off between here and there, but I doubt it. Next stop is Malton."

When he arrived there, he parked his car in a public garage and began a tour of inquiry along the main street. He talked to merchants, clerks, customers, pedestrians and corner loafers. Everywhere the answer was the same. The big truck had not been seen.

He was sick at heart, and ready to give it up as a bad job, when a man standing near the clerk he was questioning, walked toward him.

"Was you looking for a big furniture-truck from Syrchester?" he asked.

"I am."

"I seen it."

"Where?"

"On my way to town late this afternoon."

"Where were you when you saw it?"

"The other side of Gap Falls."

"Which way was the truck headed?"

"Toward Wolf's Head."

"How far out of Gap Falls were you when you saw it? Try to be exact."

"I can make it exact enough. We was due opposite Lem Parker's house. That is just one mile from the village line."

"Were there three men in the truck?" Crosby asked.

"I didn't notice. Be they wanted for something?"

"No—just late getting in, and their boss was worried. Thanks a lot."

Crosby was elated as he walked away from the little group that had formed. His enthusiasm prompted him to take up the trail at once. Reason told him little or nothing could be done at night. He rented a room in a cheap hotel, and went to bed.

That was the first day—the day on which Lieutenant Tiny David became the fourth missing man.

SUNRISE of the second day found Sergeant Crosby on hands and knees in the dirt at the right-hand side of the road opposite Lem Parker's house, one mile beyond Gap Falls. His heart hammered as he sought the telltale markings. This was the test.

"I know they had to turn out about here to let that farmer pass," he reasoned. "That truck is so wide they have to run on the soft dirt every time they pass another car. Marks that far over aren't apt to be rubbed out by other cars. If this works out here, I will have a trail to follow. All that I will need is time." He smiled ruefully as he recalled his status at the barracks. "And I guess that from now on my time will be pretty much my own."

A FEW minutes later he knew his reasoning had been correct. The soft earth at the side of the road held the prints made by the tires of double wheels. He compared them with the tracing. They checked.

Sergeant Crosby will never forget that day. He passed most of it on his hands and knees. His progress was slow and painful. For some distance, he would find the markings frequently, each marking representing a passing car that had forced the truck to turn out. In other sections he would continue for more than a mile without finding them. Each crossroad or entrance meant additional delays. If he could find no marking beyond that junction, it would appear that his quarry had turned.

But if his progress was slow, it was continuous. Just before dark he found the marks of the tires in the dirt about two miles from the little settlement of Wolf's Head. He staggered painfully to his feet, made his way to the nearest farmhouse, and begged a room. In bed that night, he attempted to work out the plan followed by the three men:

"If they had turned to the right in Doane, we would have doped out where they were headed for. Instead, they went on to Malton, and then used another road to double right back to the same territory, the safest place to be when the alarm went out. No danger of bumping into roving patrols trying to surround the area. All they need is a good hide-out."

He paid grudging tribute to the cleverness of the men he was hunting, then dropped off to sleep. That was the end of the second day, the day on which Tiny David removed a bandage from his eyes, looked upon the face of a girl, and found it even fairer than he had thought.

Now came the morning of the third day, the day upon which Tiny David had an appointment with a madman of a doctor, who used the names of Greek gods for mortal men who died, and then came back to a limited life. And on this morning Sergeant Crosby was back in the road on his hands and knees, painfully approaching the outskirts of Wolf's Head.

"Hello! What's this?"

Crosby bent over a set of the familiar markings. The wheels had swung to the right, then turned abruptly to the left. The prints, just before they were lost in the paved surface, were proceeding directly across the road.

Sergeant Crosby stood up. On the opposite side of the road was an apparently unbroken plot of grass. He crossed the highway, and knelt in that grass. There were no ruts, no patterns formed by tires, but close examination showed crushed and broken grass. Slowly and carefully, for the trail was old, he followed the tracks across the grass, through a clearing, and into the woods. Foliage, that seemed almost solid, screened the entrance to the forest, even when the Sergeant was almost upon it. Then scratched bark and torn leaves showed him where the truck had passed. And once inside the woods, the trail became clearly defined.

No need to search for tire-tracks now. There was only one direction a vehicle the size of the truck could have gone—ahead.

Leaving his car parked beside the main road, Crosby continued to follow the truck-trail. He walked warily, his right hand resting upon the butt of his revolver. This seemed to be a needless precaution, for rabbits, birds and other creatures of the woods were all he encountered as the trail wound on mile after mile.

Then the trail swung sharply to the right, and instinct rather than reason caused Crosby to slide into the foliage at the side. Straight ahead, somewhat screened by the leaves, were two massive stone pillars. A heavy steel gate was suspended between them. Above each stone pillar was a cupola, surrounded by an iron platform. On each platform was a man, and each man had a rifle cradled in his arms.

"Isn't that nice!" was Crosby's unspoken comment.

BEHIND him somewhere, a branch snapped. His muscles stiffened. But before he could turn, a solid object prodded him in the back. He heard a voice, low and ominous, say:

"Put up your hands!"

Crosby hesitated. The pressure in his back increased. He obeyed.

A lean hand crept around his waist, found his revolver, detached it from the lanyard, and removed it.

Crosby heard a voice, low and ominous: "Put up your hands!"

"Turn around!" came the command.

Crosby wheeled, and faced the thin man, who had been in the truck. There was a sneer upon his cruel face.

"This is a private road," he said. "I am patrolling it." His voice became more ominous. "I do a better job than you. Maybe you didn't see the signs, but this is a one-way road. There is no outbound traffic."

TINY DAVID, his eyes free from the bandage, sat up in bed.

"What time is it, Dorothy?" he asked.

Dorothy Bruce, who was standing at the window, walked toward the bed. She glanced at her wrist-watch.

"Five minutes after ten, Tiny." She dropped into a chair beside the bed. "I guess I am just plain yellow. Right now, I know I won't be able to go through with it."

The man smiled reassurance.

"Yes, you will. You will come through with flying colors. This is the hardest part, the waiting."

She shook her head.

"I'll flunk it," she insisted. "I'll never be able to walk across that hall and back."

"Yes, you will," he repeated. "You'll take it in full stride, the way a thoroughbred goes over a jump."

"But I won't be natural," she protested. "He will notice it."

David shook his head.

"The less natural you are, the better. And you'll be swell."

Their hands met. They sat very close. Several minutes passed.

"Quarter after ten, Tiny."

They sat tense, waiting. There was no sound. The minutes ticked on.

"This isn't my idea of fighting-togs," said the man. He indicated the gown he wore. "But it will have to do."

The girl laughed, a strained unnatural laugh.

More minutes; minutes that seemed like ages. . . . The girl gave a convulsive sob.

"Steady, Dorothy," the man counseled. "This is being done with a purpose. Refined cruelty."

Still more minutes. They talked of inconsequential things.

Dorothy Bruce looked at her watch.

"Thirty-five minutes after ten, Tiny. Why doesn't he come?"

They heard a knock. The door opened. Dr. Santray entered. . . . .

Captain Charles Field was at the wheel of a troop car headed toward Wolf's Head. Lieutenant Charles McMann rode at his side. Three troopers occupied the rear seat.

Captain Field was angry; he also was puzzled. It wasn't like Jim Crosby to desert; there must be some rational explanation.

Earlier that morning a perturbed citizen had called the barracks. A trooper, acting like a crazy man, was on his hands and knees in the road near Wolf's Head. Didn't the Captain want to do something about it?

He did. He picked a crew and started out. The logical theories that Crosby was crazy, or drunk, had been considered and discarded. Captain Field knew Sergeant Crosby. He could only guess at what this business meant, but, firmly planted in the back of his mind, was the knowledge that all this, in some unseen way, was directly connected with Tiny David. So he pushed the car to the limit.

They found the troop car at the side of the road, where Sergeant Crosby had left it.

"Maybe he is in a house near here," was Lieutenant McMann's offering.

They inquired at the neighboring houses, without success.

IT was Captain Field who stood staring off to the left.

"There's a queer sort of a place about fifteen miles in there. Fellow used it to run a boys' camp. Built the place like a fort, and formed the boys in a cadet company. I went out to review them. But it didn't go over, and they moved out about three years ago. As far as I know, the place has been unoccupied since then. I wonder—"

They were silent.

"Crosby may have gone in there," Captain Field continued. "But maybe he didn't. And it's a good fifteen miles of tough going."

He fumbled in his pockets, and produced a coin.

"Heads we go in; tails we don't."

The coin flashed through the air. He caught it deftly. They pressed about him. It was tails.

That should have settled it, but not a man moved. Lieutenant McMann broke the silence:

"Hell, I am going in. And God help Crosby, if this is monkey-business!"

"GOOD morning. I am a trifle late. For that I apologize."

Dr. Santray stood just inside the doorway. He shifted warily from foot to foot. His long arms were swinging constantly.

"Good morning, Doctor." Tiny David's voice was a drawl.

"You have recovered from—from your journey to us?"

"Yes, Doctor." David shifted his position so he could face the physician. This was to be an interlude, an impromptu interlude, and one for which the girl had not been coached. It would come as a surprise to her, even as it would be a surprise to Santray.

"Dr. Santray,"—the trooper spoke as if he were dealing with a sane man,—"we don't need to mince words. I know your plans. I can't say I relish them. Hardly any man would. But I have seen enough to know resistance would be useless."

The physician nodded.

"That statement," he admitted, "shows logic and reason."

Tiny David caught his cue.

"You will find an equal amount of logic and reason in this proposal: Resistance, even when useless, is inevitable when a man in a desperate position feels he has nothing to lose. I am a big man, powerful, and trained to defend myself. I can give you and your men some bad moments."

Santray laughed.

"Admitted. Go on!"

Tiny David's tone grew persuasive.

"You can avoid those bad moments. Simply give me your word of honor—your word of honor as a physician—that as soon as it can be done safely, you will return this nurse to her home, unharmed. If you do that, I will give you my word of honor that I will submit without resistance."

"No!" The girl shouted the word. "I won't—"

The booming laugh of the physician silenced her protest.

"Delightful!" Dr. Santray purred. "A little cut-back to the days of chivalry. The gallant knight, to save his lady fair, throws himself upon the lances of the enemy. His fair lady, refusing the sacrifice, bares her virginal breast to receive those lances. No, chivalry is not dead! But enough of that. You are waiting for your answer."

He walked across the room, keeping beyond the reach of the man on the bed.

"That answer came from the lips of the charming Miss Bruce. Surely, you heard it."

That was that. Tiny David relaxed. His effort to shield the girl from a fight against unequal odds had failed. But he had one more card, one other brief interlude, before the drama that was soon to be staged.

"Dr. Santray, I am a lieutenant of State police. I belong to an outfit that has a long record of accomplishment. Right now, every man in that outfit is looking for me. Sooner or later they will find me. When they do, I wouldn't care to be in your shoes; I doubt if your case will ever reach the courts."

AGAIN the laugh of the physician filled the room.

"Threats? What idle things they are! One of those threats arrived a short time ago. It was quickly and easily disposed of."

Tiny David sat upright.

"Who was—"

"Silence!" thundered Santray. His fiery glance was directed at the man on the bed. "You are no longer a police lieutenant. You are Phœbus. I have named you, honored you, and am about to make you immortal. One week from today this girl will become Pallas-Athene. But meanwhile—"

He turned to the girl.

"Meanwhile, you are my nurse. Have you given the treatment ordered?"

"Not yet, Doctor." The girl's voice was lifeless.

"Do so at once," he directed.

The girl glanced at Tiny David. His eyes flashed her encouragement.

Dorothy Bruce, moving mechanically, walked from the room.

"Hurry!" commanded Santray. "It is late. The gods should not wait."

SERGEANT CROSBY made an unsuccessful effort to slip from the ropes that were cutting into the skin of his wrists and his ankles. He was lying on the floor in a room shrouded in darkness. Mokus stood near the door, an evil smile upon his face.

"I took a lot of wise-cracks from you, trooper," said the thin man.

Crosby made no reply. His heart was filled with bitterness, caused by the knowledge that he had failed again.

"I'll be back," Mokus promised. "But first we got a little work to do on the other guy. Then we will take care of you."

The door opened and closed. Crosby was alone. He struggled with ropes that failed to yield. And as he struggled his bitterness was tinged with grim foreboding.

DOROTHY BRUCE fought for self-control; then returned to the room. She placed the syringe on the table. Then she turned to the physician.

"I—I can't do it, Doctor."

Santray smiled.

"And your letters of recommendation cited your efficiency! But there are extenuating circumstances."

He picked up the syringe, touched the plunger lightly, and allowed a drop of the contents to fall to the palm of his hand. Tiny David and the girl watched him breathlessly.

"Good!"

He removed the drop of fluid with a wisp of cotton picked up from the table, and approached the bed.

"Resistance would be so futile. Within the sound of my voice, there are five men, headed by the good Mokus, who brought you to us."

He wheeled suddenly, faced the window. Involuntarily, they followed his glance.

"Did I hear a dog bark?" He turned again, and walked to the bed. "No, I was wrong. Even I am a bit unstrung. But now I have recovered. See how steady my hands are." He extended them. "I shall devote myself entirely to the task at hand."

He worked swiftly and expertly. First he sponged a small area of skin on the arm of the man in the bed. The needle bit into the flesh. The physician stepped back to survey his handiwork. His smile was broader.

"Just so," was his verdict.

He addressed the nurse:

"Miss Bruce, a doctor treats a hypodermic syringe as a personal possession." He spoke very slowly. "He regards it with almost the affection that a layman holds for his horse or his dog. You very generously offered me yours. It was a delicate situation, was it not?"

The girl stared at him with wide-open eyes. Invisible icy fingers of despair were clutching at her heart.

Tiny David made a great effort to sit up. A great and overpowering weakness doomed that effort from the start. Dark clouds floated before his eyes. He tried to speak, but his tongue was thick, lifeless. His desire to struggle surrendered to a growing feeling of lassitude.

"I think I met the situation diplomatically," Santray continued. "While you devoted your attention to the dog that did not bark, I substituted my syringe for yours." An expression of mock concern crossed his face. "I trust you are not offended, my dear. It was the treatment prescribed; you, as a nurse, should rejoice in that."

He pulled a second syringe from his pocket, and tossed it on the table.

"Yours, my dear. Unload it at the first opportunity. Water has no value as a sedative. That has been tried and proved. And we must deal with established facts here."

CAPTAIN FIELD halted his car some distance from the bend in the trail, beyond which was the barred gate. He stepped out, and faced the men who gathered about him.

"I don't know what we will find here, but it is no use to advertise our arrival. You will follow me through the woods in single file. There is a wall around this place. We will strike that at the lake, and walk around it."

He paused.

"This is just a hunch on my part, but I feel we will find something very wrong here. If we do, go in fast—and go in shooting." He surveyed the little group. "Everybody understand?"

They nodded grimly, tugging at cartridge-belts, and fingering their weapons. Then, with Captain Field in the lead, the thin line moved quickly and quietly through the woods. . . .

Mokus and the male nurse wheeled a stretcher into the room.

"Phœbus," said Santray, "is waiting. He is calm, as befits a god."

They placed the unconscious form of Tiny David upon the stretcher.

Dorothy, who had been leaning weakly against the bed, leaped forward. She was a kicking, scratching, biting creature, bent on only one goal—self-preservation, and the preservation of a man who faced the same danger.

The male nurse stepped back. His arm flashed upward. The palm of his open hand struck the girl upon the chin, knocking her to the floor. Santray, standing to one side, watched the scene with an air of detachment.

Dorothy Bruce struggled to her knees, then regained her feet. She swayed uncertainly. But again she leaped upon them. The male nurse struck out once more, this time with his clenched fist. The girl fell hard, and was still. Mokus gave an exclamation that might have been sympathy or alarm. But Santray ignored the proceedings.

"Hasten, my good Mokus. The gods must not wait."

The stretcher was pushed from the room to the hall. Dr. Santray walked behind the two men who pushed it.

Bruised and battered, Dorothy Bruce pulled herself upon her knees. She tried to stand; found it impossible; used her arms to drag herself to the hall. There, slowly and painfully, she followed the moving stretcher.

The door of the operating-room opened, swallowing up the stretcher. Dr. Santray stood in the doorway. Then—a shot rang out, loud and clear. The physician stood there, listening and undecided.

Dorothy Bruce, crawling along the floor of the hall, reversed her direction. She headed for the stairs and the ground. There was more shooting. A hoarse command carried up into the building.

Off in the distance, the girl heard the voice of Dr. Santray:

"We must hurry, Mokus."

The door of the operating-room slammed shut. The sound brought new strength to the girl. Now she was upon her feet. She ran downstairs and out the front door.

Before her she saw a line of gray-clad men. That line moved rapidly and relentlessly toward the house.

They leaped over the Lieutenant, charged into the room. Dr. Santray held a hose in his hand as the door crashed to the floor.

WADING in water that reached their knees, Captain Field and five troopers had rounded the wall when a watchman sighted them. He opened fire at once. The shots went wild.

An answering fusillade sent the watchman tumbling from the tower, a grotesque figure that failed to move after it struck the earth. Three great dogs, their fangs bared, raced toward the men on the beach. Bullets halted their savage charge.

The five men quickly formed a miniature skirmish-line. The shrill blast of a whistle sounded. The line moved forward. There was a steady stream of fire from invisible defenders. The line ignored it.

Near the center of the advancing line a trooper stopped abruptly; swayed, and then fell forward, face-downward. A second trooper bent over him. The harsh voice of Lieutenant McMann carried above the din:

"Leave your wounded!"

The trooper straightened. He took a quick look at his fallen comrade. Then he crossed himself, ducked his head, and ran forward to take his place in the advancing line.

That line was barely twenty feet from its goal when the door of the main building was flung open. Four guns were trained upon it. A girl, her hair disordered, and wearing a torn white uniform, staggered out.

"Cease firing!" roared Captain Field.

The command came just in time. One man, unable to check the motion of his trigger-finger, hastily jerked the barrel of his revolver upward.

Dorothy Bruce ran forward on leaden feet. Her arms were outstretched. In her eyes there was mute appeal. Captain

Field raced toward her. She staggered. His left arm encircled her shoulder, and supported her.

"Second floor!" she gasped. "Left wing—operating-room! For God's sake—"

Her eyelids fluttered, then closed. Captain Field eased her limp form to the ground. Then he straightened, and sprinted toward the open door.

"Come on, troopers!"

His command was a growl. But the men in gray needed no orders. They were close on his heels. And from their lips, as they raced after their commanding officer, came an answering growl. It was a sound such as is made by primitive hunters closing in for the kill. . . .

Dr. Santray closed the door of the operating-room. He locked it. Then he turned to face Mokus and the male nurse, both of whom showed signs of fright and indecision.

"We must work swiftly and well," purred the physician. He glanced at his associates. His voice became sinister. "There are worse things than death. Remember that, Gonyea; and you too, my good Mokus."

Driven by their greater fear of the madman, they moved Tiny David from the stretcher to the operating-table. Gonyea fumbled with the tapes that held their victim's gown in place, then pulled the garment away.

Dr. Santray glanced at the nude form with satisfaction.

"A body that the first Phœbus might have envied," he murmured. "And fools would stop this work!"

He turned to his associates.

"We must work fast, and well." His voice became like steel. "And if you bungle this, you will crave the boon of death."

The purring quality returned to his voice:

"And now, Gonyea, the nitrogen!"

THE troopers charged up the stairs, and down the hall. Doors were flung open in their frantic quest. Then the barred entrance to the operating-room halted them.

There was barely a second of delay. Lieutenant McMann crouched, tense. Six feet two inches of solid bone and muscle were flexed for action. Without a word of command, they fell back to give him room.

A human battering-ram, weighing close to two hundred pounds, against which no lifeless wooden object could stand, hurled itself against the door. The sound of bruised flesh blended with the crack of breaking wood. The door, torn from its hinges, fell inward. Sprawled upon it, in the shape of a great human cross, was the motionless form of the Lieutenant. They leaped over him as they charged into the room.

Dr. Santray held a hose in his hand as the door crashed to the floor. He stepped aside, but not quickly enough to avoid a bullet that crashed through his diseased brain. Gonyea, the male nurse, died with his left hand grasping the valve of the nitrogen-tank, while his right held a revolver he had no time to use. A trooper slammed the valve shut.

Mokus, fumbling for a gun, made a dash for the door. A bullet, traveling faster than human legs, entered his back. He was alive and conscious when a little group of grim-faced men gathered about him.

"Mercy," he begged. "He aint hurt—only morphine."

He saw their faces relax a trifle. He tried to voice another plea. Then he was beyond the need of human mercy.

They stood about uncertainly for a moment. Then the sharp voice of Captain Field recalled them to the present:

"Get Tiny out of here. . . . Find Jim Crosby. . . . One of you, call doctors from Malton. . . . Then we will finish mopping up this joint."

They went to work at their appointed tasks. The sound of desperate kicks led them to the room where Crosby was imprisoned. He fired frantic questions at them as they cut the ropes that bound him. Then he ran to help carry Tiny David from the operating-room. He was almost incoherent as he bent over the unconscious man.

"I didn't mean to throw you down, Tiny! I muffed the truck. . . . Then I pulled another boner when I found this place. But I didn't—"

"Steady, Jim," came the quiet voice of Captain Field. His hand fell upon the shoulder of Sergeant Crosby. "You led us here. You did a swell job."

CAPTAIN FIELD sat at the desk once used by a lunatic who thought he had conquered man's greatest enemy—death. Outside the open windows, the sinking sun painted the Adirondack landscape with tints of gold, purple and pink. The commanding officer of the Black Horse Troop studied the scene for a moment, then snapped on the lights.

It had been a hectic day. There had been sharp fighting after Tiny David had been rescued from the operating-room. Reserves and physicians, who came in answer to telephoned summons, had found plenty to do.

LIEUTENANT DAVID had recovered quickly.

His first question had been of Dorothy. Then, forcing a reluctant trooper to loan a uniform replaced by hospital overalls, he went in search of the nurse, who was under the care of a physician, but recovering rapidly.

Specialists, who had been summoned by the physicians, took over the victims of Santray's mad dream, and promised to use all their skill in effort to undo what had been done.

The telephone-wires had served to fit missing links into the grotesque puzzle: Dr. Santray had been a physician and surgeon of remarkable ability. He had served as chief medical examiner for years, declining any salary, and directing that the money be used for charity. A change of administration had forced him out of office.

He always had been considered eccentric. Grief over the loss of his post had magnified that side of his nature, and the mad dream had been conceived. His wealth, and his control over men he had saved from the electric chair, made it possible for him to operate until the State police devoted their attention to him.

These and many other details gradually fitted into place. There were the regular patients of the sanatorium to be cared for, unfortunates Santray had collected to act as a blind for the real purpose of the institution.

All day Captain Field had been the nominal head of the institution. It was a strange job for a policeman, but he had tackled it in a workmanlike manner. Now, as the worries of the day subsided, he picked up a book on the desk and read a few pages. Soon he put the book aside and referred to the volume of case records kept by Santray. Then he chuckled softly.

"Max!" he called.

The top sergeant entered the room.

"Yes sir."

"Where is Lieutenant David?"

Sergeant Payton hesitated, then told the truth.

"Lieutenant David is out on the grounds, Captain, sitting under a tree."

"Is he alone?"

"I don't think so, sir. I could see a little patch of white over one of his shoulders."

"Tell him to do his sitting in here," Captain Field directed.

It was some time before Tiny David, walking with a decided slouch, entered the office. He examined the chairs, selected the easiest one, and sank into its depths.

"You wanted me, Captain?" His drawl was very pronounced.

Captain Field looked up, apparently seeing him for the first time.

"Good evening, Phœbus." His face was serious. His manner was brusque, and professional. "I have been considering your case." His finger indicated a page in the records. "There is a whole chapter devoted to you in this book." He tapped the book lying open before him. "I have also considered the case of Pallas-Athene. It's just too bad about both of you."

"Say—" began Tiny David, a flush crossing his broad face.

The upraised hand of the Captain halted him.

"If you were Zeus, things would be different. He had all kinds of wives among the gods, and any number of what the book delicately refers to as mortal consorts. But there isn't a single mention of a husband for Pallas-Athene, or a wife for Phœbus. And we have to go by the book. Tough, isn't it?"

"WHAT'S all this about the book?" They looked up to see Dorothy Bruce standing in the doorway. Her uniform was fresh and spotless. Skillful application of make-up had erased all traces of the conflict of just a few hours before. She made a picture that brought an involuntary tribute into the glances of both men as they stood up from their chairs.

"What's all this about the book?" she repeated. "I am Pallas-Athene, the goddess of wisdom and armed resistance. Tiny is Phœbus, the god of light and prophecy. It says so in the book."

She flashed an adoring glance at Tiny David, then wheeled upon the man behind the desk with mock fury:

"We are the gods. We will settle our affairs without help from any mortal!"

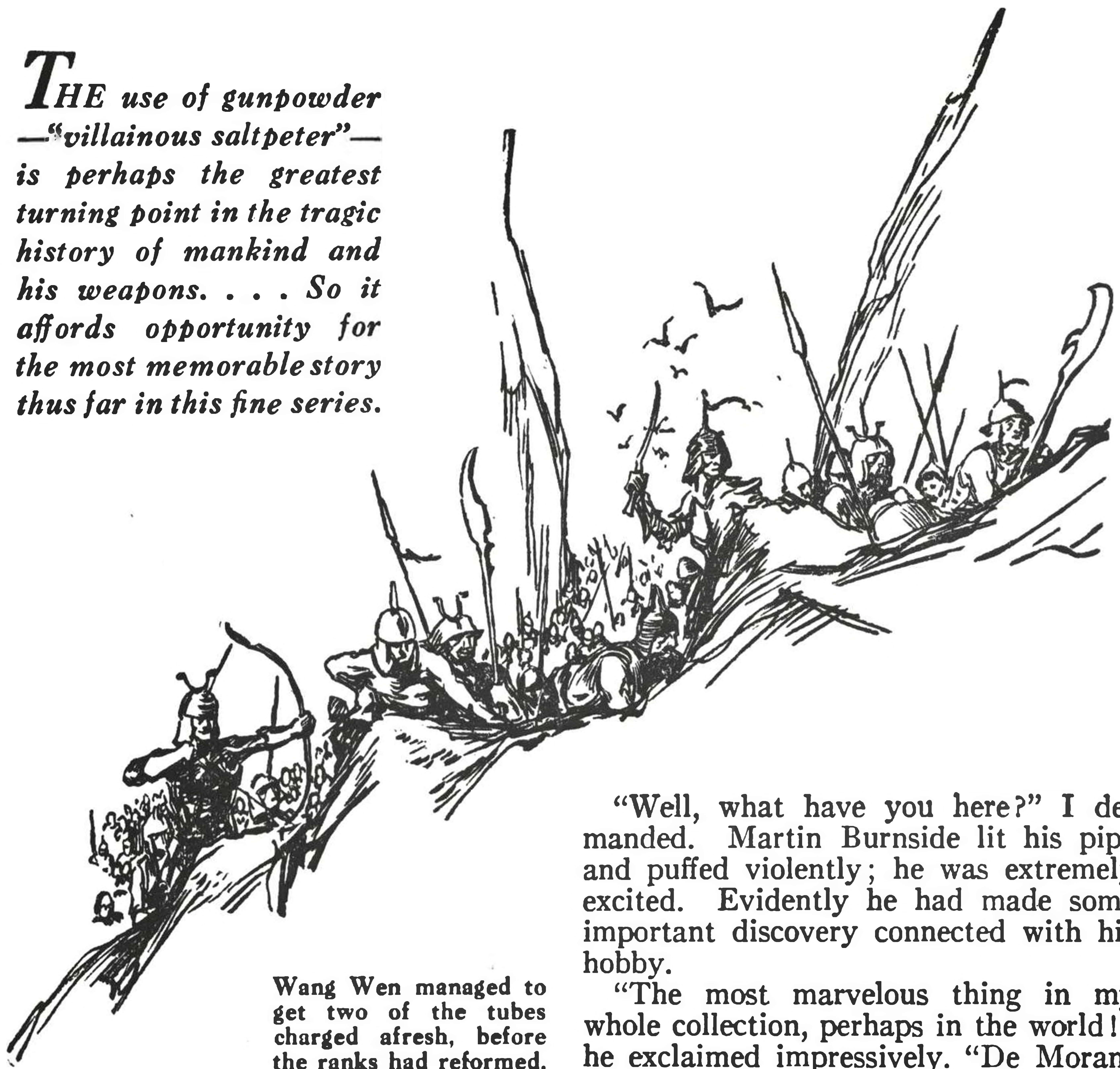
Another exciting adventure of Tiny David and the State police will be described by Robert Mill in an early issue.

ARMS and MEN

VI—*The* Bamboo Cannon

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

THE use of gunpowder —"villainous saltpeter"— is perhaps the greatest turning point in the tragic history of mankind and his weapons. . . . So it affords opportunity for the most memorable story thus far in this fine series.



Wang Wen managed to get two of the tubes charged afresh, before the ranks had reformed.

MY friend Martin Burnside, who collects old arms and armor, welcomed me with a gleeful air, clapped me on the back, shoved me into a chair, and pressed a cigar on me. Evidently I was to be of service to him.

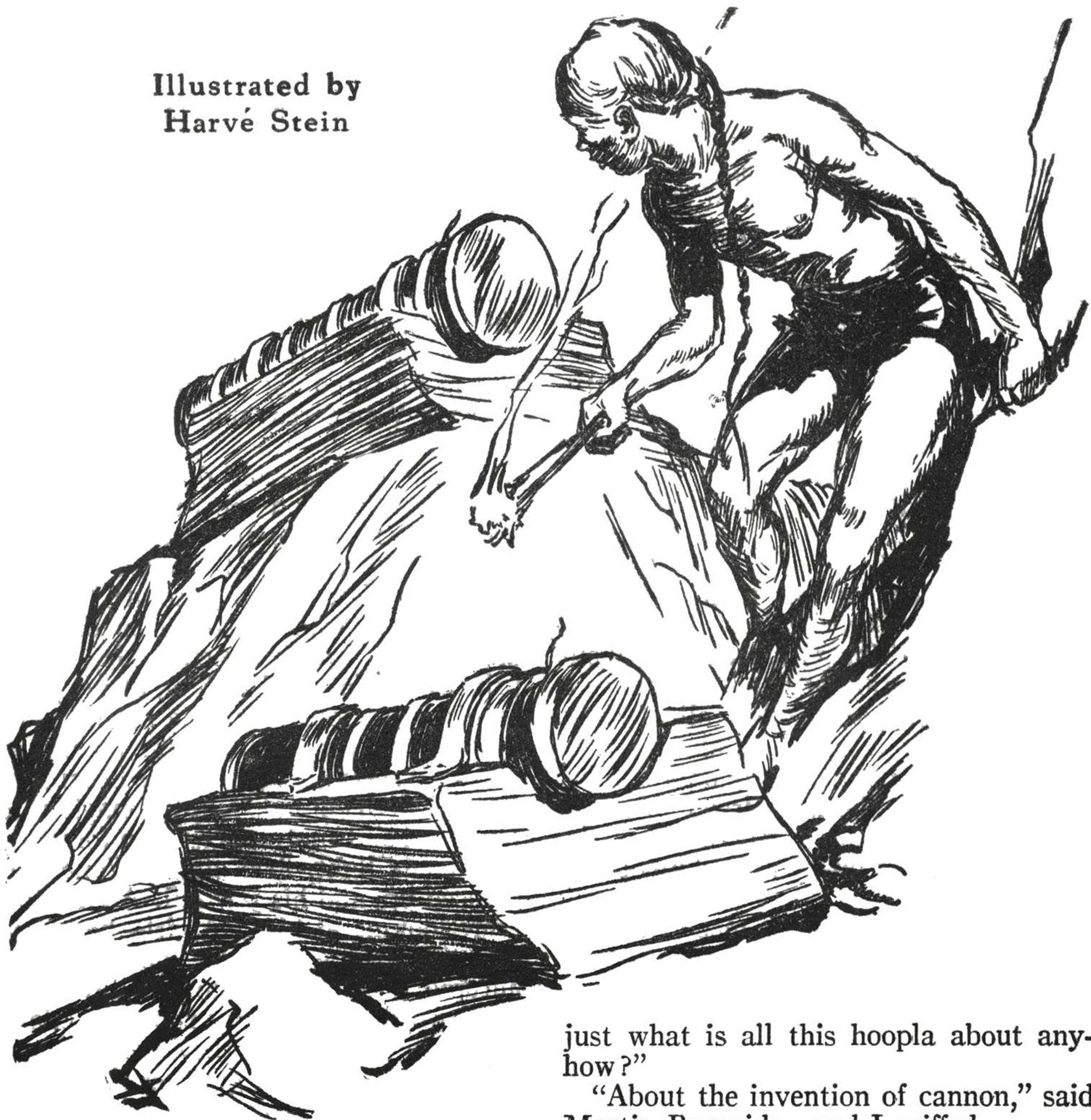
His desk was heaped high with soft rice-paper wrappings, with tomes on China, with sheets of paper both typed and bearing brushed ideographs. An open box displayed some corroded circlets of bronze and fragments of blackened wood, as they seemed to be.

"Well, what have you here?" I demanded. Martin Burnside lit his pipe and puffed violently; he was extremely excited. Evidently he had made some important discovery connected with his hobby.

"The most marvelous thing in my whole collection, perhaps in the world!" he exclaimed impressively. "De Morant was doing some work with a French outfit in the hills of Honan, in China; he opened up a tomb which contained these fragments, and sent them to me. Needless to say, he didn't guess just what they were. When I've put these bits of bamboo together—here, look at this."

He picked up one of the bronze circlets and showed me five Chinese characters deeply incised in the metal:

王文 小气炮



"All Greek to me," I said.

"Naturally. And this manuscript?"

He picked up some pages covered with Chinese writing.

His air irritated me.

"You know perfectly well, Martin, that I'm ignorant of Chinese."

"True." He chuckled, and handed me over a bunch of typed pages.

"There," he observed, "you will find a translation of the text. Part of a work written about the year 1190 by Chu Hsi; a history. It's famous in China. You can look up Chu Hsi in Giles' Chinese Biographical Dictionary and find out all about him. He was practically an eye-witness of what he relates here. This translation is flowery, involved, almost unintelligible to Western eyes; I want you to turn it into a coherent story. There's something about this fairy-tale, if you can get its spirit, that's haunting and beautiful."

"Fairy-tale, huh? So you've gone in for poetry?" I remarked ironically. "And just what is all this hoopla about anyhow?"

"About the invention of cannon," said Martin Burnside—and I sniffed.

"We've gone into all that. We know the Chinese used gunpowder as far back as the ninth century. Schlegel's monograph in the Toung Pao covers all that most completely."

"Certainly," he grunted. "You might tell me that rockets were called Chinese arrows by the Arabs, who knew saltpeter as Chinese snow. You might also tell me that the Chinese used gunpowder only for fireworks at first, and that it was not used in war until the Tartar invasion. You undoubtedly know everything about it."

"A good deal, anyhow," I said half-angrily.

Martin grinned over his pipe.

"Then see what you make of that manuscript, going on seven hundred years old. When you show up again, I'll have a reply from the Field Museum, about these characters incised on the bronze circlet. If they're what I believe they are—you'll see something to make your eyes bulge!"

"I'm less credulous than you, Martin," was my feeble retort.

When I dipped into that manuscript, I found it apparently a masterpiece of nonsense. The literal translation of any old Chinese work abounds in references, quaint phrases, points of custom and ritual, which are utterly strange to our eyes. But as I persisted, as I got down into the meat of the story, it began to have a gripping charm. I found something oddly haunting about it, as Martin Burnside had predicted. It was no story in our American sense; it was a fairy-tale with a twist to it. The fellow who wrote it, swore that it was all true—well, judge for yourself.

IT had atmosphere, at least, from the opening scene where Wang Wen stood by his forge shrinking bronze bands about a three-foot section of bamboo. It was a big fat bamboo, the hollow all of three inches across—a solid chunk of wood despite the fact that it was only a tube. Wang Wen got the last circlet in place, then stepped outside to where one of the old workmen was busily assembling small rockets.

"Where are the other men?" he demanded, blinking about.

"Gone, ancient maternal ancestor," said the old workman. "Their bellies are flat."

Wang Wen stood for a moment, then drew on his plain blue gown and went striding away. He was young and lithe; among the hillside rocks he gained a place where often he sat. Once there, he seated himself and stared out over the gorge and the road below. Gone! Only the old man remained. Gone, for lack of pay, for lack of food. Soon enough everything would be gone. His father's fireworks business was dead. His father was dead. He himself had bound himself over as a slave to the money-lenders, unless he could repay the loan that had paid for his father's funeral. Gone, with his dreams, his great ideas, his discoveries—all swept away.

Outspread before him was a magnificent prospect, the mouth of the great Nien gorge, with the road that was the artery of all northern China. The rocky hillock, on which stood the house and powder works, commanded this approach; to right and left were the wild naked hills of bare rock. Four miles away was the hill town of Chang Fu, untroubled by wars or rumors of wars. Life was bland and placid back in Chang Fu. If conquerors came, let them come, was the general attitude.

And yet, here in the Honan hills, the whole civilization of the Two Dynasties was crumpling, in these bursting days of terror. Ancient China was being crushed. Her armies were destroyed. Any day now, the flood of Tartar invasion would come pouring down this very road, into this very gorge, through upon the fertile plains. It was the year 1162 A.D. But Chang Fu cared not for these things.

Wang Wen cared, and little good it did him. . . .

He sat there gazing down with bitter eyes. Soldiers and the wreckage of lost armies were streaming back along the road, under clouds of suffocating loess dust. Armies, whose generals had disdained him, whose mandarins had cast aside his frantic memorials, whose princes had laughed at him, at his plans, at his inventions. And he sat here, the doom of slavery before him in another two weeks—if Chang Fu lasted that long. Even though empires fell, the magistrates remained and contracts were in force.

Came a light, firm step. Wang Wen glanced up, and his jaw fell. A girl stood there looking at him. A girl—her brows like springtime willows, her face like autumn flowers, delicate and lovely beyond words. Her filmy robes undulated gently in the breeze; they were robes of sheerest, rarest silk, glinting like moonbeams. Wang Wen's eyes widened upon her. Some goddess, some fairy from the western hills! Involuntary words came from him, the old, magical verse of the poet Li Po:

"Surely we see reborn the loveliest lady of story—
Fie-yen the fair, light-flying swallow, goddess of beauty and grace,
Piercing once more men's hearts with rapture's anguished glory;
O clouds, it is you are her robes!
O flowers, you are her face!"

AT these words, a little silvery ringing laugh broke from her.

"That is a pleasant greeting, even if Li Po first said it!"

"Only the greatest of poets could greet you fittingly," said Wang Wen admiringly. "The grace of your figure is like the slender shadow of a bird passing in the heaven! Who are you?"

"My name is Chih Nu," she replied. "I am a homeless wanderer. Surely you are a poet?"

"I am Wang Wen, a maker of fire-

works," he said. "The most unlucky of all men, Little Elder Sister," he added, remembering the formulas of politeness. "Have you come here to buy rockets or figures of fire?"

She laughed again, merrily enough.

"Not I! But perhaps to change your luck, Wang Wen. Why are you unlucky?"

"Because I am to go into slavery," and he told her of his bargain with the money-lenders. "The business is gone, the workmen are gone, my dreams are gone."

"But dreams never go," she said softly. "You heard my name—Chih Nu, Spinning Girl. Very well. Go and see the money-lenders and ask how many pieces of silk they will take to release you from the debt. Come back and tell me. Give me a place in your house, and agree to marry me when the debt is paid. I will spin the silk each night, and—"

"Marry you?" he stammered. "You, a fairy goddess?"

"A mere mortal girl," she said gayly. "Yes or no? Speak quickly!"

"Yes, yes!" he exclaimed. "But I can give you no raw silk to spin."

"That is my affair," she broke in. "Go quickly!"

Wang Wen stayed for nothing, but

"The grace of your figure is like the slender shadow of a bird passing," said Wang Wen. "Who are you?" "My name is Chih Nu," she replied. "I am a homeless wanderer."

hastened off to town. His brain was in a whirl; when he reached Chang Fu and saw the money-lenders, he could scarce speak. They laughed at him, but agreed that for three hundred pieces of silk the debt would be canceled.

"Dreams never go!" The words lingered with him on his homeward way. The sun had vanished; the first stars were coming out. Suddenly he halted, staring up. Chih Nu—the Spinning Girl! Why, that was the star, of course.* What delusion had gripped him? What hallucination had come upon him? In despair, doubting his own sanity, he came home again to the hillock above the roaring road of the Nien gorge—and she was waiting there. She was real.

"Very well," she said. "In ten days the silk will be spun. Now give me a room in your house."

HE gave her a room to herself. The old workman, who was too faithful to leave, brought her food. Thus began a wonderful sequence of days, in which pieces of silk grew out of nothing in the room of Spinning Girl, and dreams flourished.

Wang Wen was in love, madly in love. He went about his work, seeing her now and again for a brief moment, almost mechanically. One day she came out to where he was at work among the rocks above the pass. He thought again that she must be some fairy, and his heart became as water within him.

"Little Elder Sister is a goddess come upon the dusty earth," he said. "My fleshly eyes did not perceive this; my fault is great. Deign to pardon me."

* The star Vega, of the constellation Lyra.

"We need not indulge in formality," she said, with her quick merry laugh. "Come, Wang Wen, show me what work you do with pieces of bamboo shod with bronze! This is some firework, perhaps a rocket, for I see powder piled yonder."

Her presence cast reality upon what he did, so that Wang Wen frowned at all his work, and bitterness crept into his heart and voice.

"This is my dream, my invention," he said slowly. "It was to save the empire from the Tartars; and it was scorned. Look! There on the horizon rise the smokes of burning towns. Yet with a thousand men here on these stones, all the host of the barbarians could never have passed. Scorn and derision; laughter; mockery. And now where are they, those mandarins and princes who scorned me? In flight, their armies broken—and the great chance lost. My dream—lost."

"But dreams are never lost, Wang Wen," she said softly, coming close to him so that the perfume of her body filled his nostrils. "Dreams are the one solid thing in all life. Come! Tell me of your invention. Explain your dream."

"Dreams are never lost? Little you know about it, Elder Sister," and he laughed harshly. "Such dreams bring upon one the jeers of men."

"A boat whose planks are glued together does not swim long," said she. "There are dreams worthless, and dreams like pure jade. The scorn of man may be turned to admiration; for greater than life or death, passing all boundaries of this world, penetrating even to the islands of the Milky Way and the jade throne of Heaven—lifts the imagination. Show me, show me!"

Awed by her words, Wang Wen turned to the thing upon which he had been at work.

It was one of many, all alike except in size, placed here and there among the rocks of the hilltop. This one was the largest of all, the last made. A three-foot section of huge bamboo, it was cast about with rings of bronze between the joints; one end was closed by a cap of bronze, in which there was a tiny hole. The fibers of the joints were drilled out, so that it made a hollow tube. The whole was fastened by bronze clamps into a heavy block of wood, which might be moved about with some difficulty.

"This idea came to me, Chih Nu, from many experiments with gunpowder and new kinds of rockets," he said, with slowly gathering energy. "Look! One lights

a rocket, and it ascends in fire, and the shell remains. Here, then, is the shell of a new kind of rocket, but not to be used for signals, not to celebrate the festival of the Dragon or the New Year.

"This is a rocket to cast death among men, for the powder, when tamped down, will fling stones. This one under my hand, can throw stones with fearful force, far into the pass below—with force enough to kill men and horses at a great distance. Before it, regiments are broken and dispersed, cavalry are useless. Or would be," he added bitterly, "if the mandarins and princes had listened to me."

"How do you know, then?"

WANG WEN laughed. Stooping, he caught up some powder, thrust it into the long tube, and rammed paper wadding after it. In upon this he rammed a handful of stones. He set a fuse in the tiny hole that pierced the bronze end-cap, brought fire from the forge, and touched it to the fuse.

"Now stand back and watch!" he exclaimed. "There is only a small charge of powder here—"

With an exploding roar, a puffing cloud of smoke burst from the tube. The stones went rattling down the hillside a hundred feet away, stirring the dust and shattering on the rocks. Chih Nu clapped her hands in sudden comprehension.

"Oh, I see! With more powder, with more stones—yes, yes! It would be a terrible weapon of war. Why, it's wonderful!"

"That's not all, however," said Wang Wen, glowing with pride. "I have learned something else in working with this powder. It will shoot forth from a tube, carrying stones with it, and thus will go straight. But, if confined and set alight, it will blow everything to pieces. Here, look! I tried balls of iron, but iron is expensive and bronze is cheap—"

He showed her a small ball of bronze. It was hollow, and had been filled with powder through a short tube, its only opening. In this tube, Wang Wen set a fuse, and tamped clay in about it to hold the fuse firm.

He lit the fuse, held it for a moment to judge how quickly it burned, then cast the ball away with all his might. It curved in the air and suddenly vanished in an explosion that showered the hillside with fragments of flying metal.

"You see?" he cried, his face alight. "I have a hundred and more of these balls all made and ready. Many of these rocket tubes are ready. What would they do, were the gorge down there, the road and the slopes, crowded with barbarians? Blow them asunder, shatter their ranks, save the dynasty from them!

"But no one would listen to me," he went on bitterly. "When the army passed through to the frontier, I presented memorials. I begged to show what could be done with these weapons. I asked for but a thousand men with which to meet the whole host of the barbarians—and the mandarins laughed at me, the generals jeered at me. So the dream is lost. I have not a thousand men; I am nobody. There through the gorge goes streaming all the wreckage of our armies in mad defeat, and on the horizon grows the smoke of pillaging barbarians. I am but one man, helpless!" And his face darkened, and the eager light died from his eyes.

"Dreams never are lost, dear Wang," she repeated, her voice thrilling his veins with its silvery vibrance. "Dreams are the noblest thing in life; for they alone transcend life and go beyond it into infinity, into eternity!"

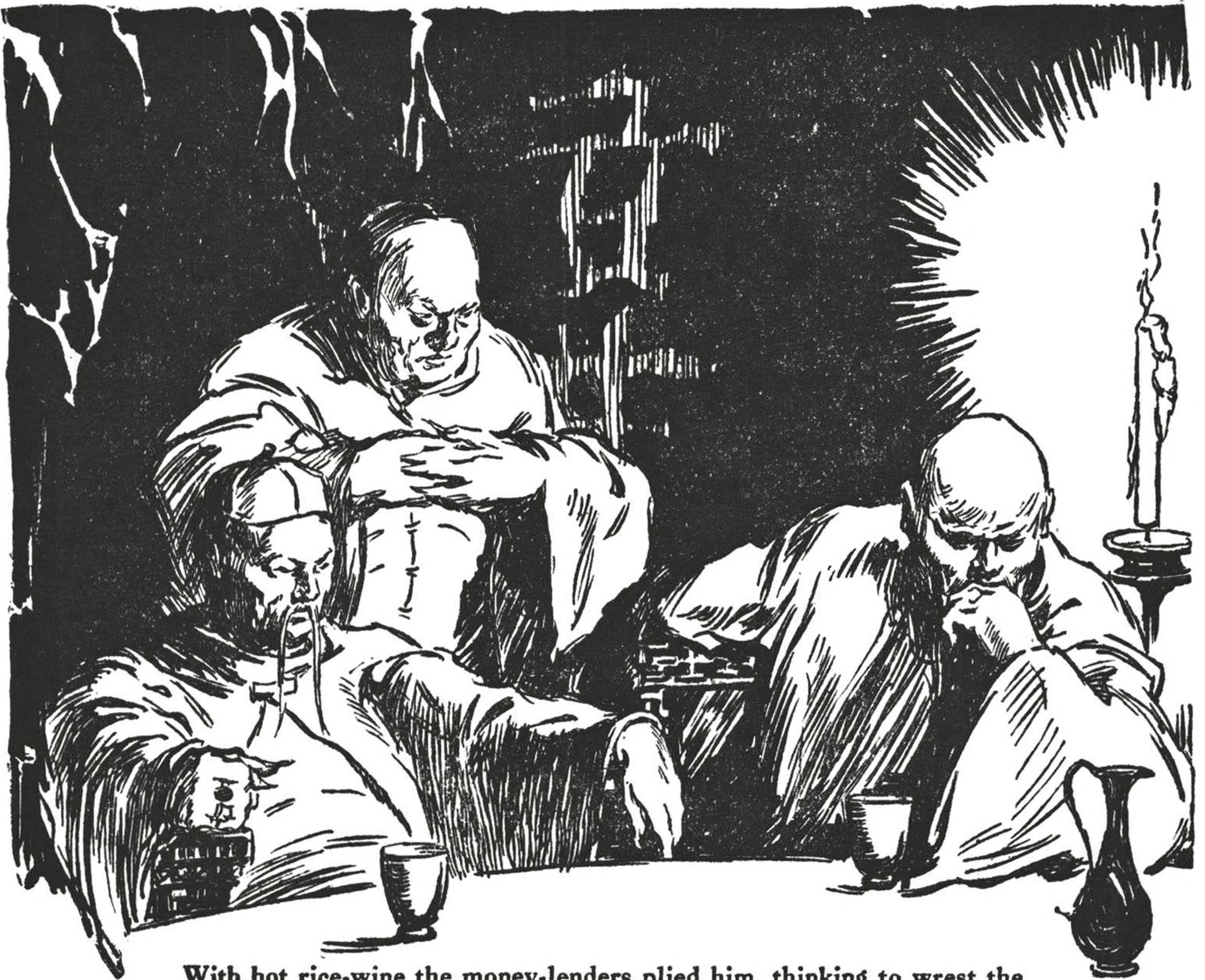
"I am nobody," he muttered, though her words rang and echoed in his heart.

"You are a thousand men," she said. There was a mystical force about her that lifted him out of himself, caused him to stare, wide-eyed. "Only you, and you alone, can cause your dream to be lost, Wang Wen. If the princes and mandarins scorned you, rise above them! If the generals mocked you, prove yourself the superior man! Surely you are not afraid of death?"

"DEATH?" he echoed. "I do not know. I have not thought about it."

"It is nothing but a passage; forget it. Suppose now that the host of the Tartars were flooding down upon this pass, and you stood alone before them, you and these dreams of yours—you alone! Your hand alone could prove its power, and the power of these things you have invented. Your eye alone could behold the shattered ranks, the reeling cavalry. You could bring your dreams to fruition; your name would endure above those who scorned you. Think of that, Wang Wen, while I spin the pieces of silk that mean our marriage."

He stared down the sloping expanse of broken rocks to the dusty road below, where the broken mass of armies went hurtling along in ruin. He saw a vision



With hot rice-wine the money-lenders plied him, thinking to wrest the secret of the silk from him.

there, a vision of trampling thousands pressing forward, of his hand alone halting them—and when he turned to make answer, he was alone. Chih Nu had gone, back to her room and her spinning.

The music of her voice, the spell of her words, lingered with him.

OUT there on the rocky hillside, he worked like a man insensate, wolfing the rice the old workman brought him, falling back to work again. He placed the black powder in pots beside each of the rocket tubes, with wads of paper and heaps of small stones. He aimed the tubes so that their openings covered the rising ground, the road, the mouth of the gorge below where the wreckage of China's armies poured back in bloody route. He rolled fuses and cut them, and laid them ready.

He brought forth the balls of iron and bronze, filled them with powder, tamped in the fuses, and piled them. He grew lean and worn at this labor, day upon day; it urged him, hurried him, compelled him to ever fresh exertions. The dust-clouds lessened above the road, the pouring thousands grew thin, the bursting smoke upon the horizon grew ever closer. And those who passed disdained the lonely man upon the barren hill.

Once or twice he saw Chih Nu again by daylight, but they had little speech. It was by night that he saw her now, when he had flung himself down in weariness. Then she would come and sit by him, talking not at all of his dreams, but of the poets and of music; they wandered together in far paths of song and story until sleep came upon him, and the stars blazed down in cold peace. . . .

His love for her waxed ever greater, and love had risen in her heart also to make response. Under the stars by the chilled forge, she wakened all the starved spirit in him with legend and poem, until these hours grew precious with their lofty burden and were sweet in remembrance.

There came a day when at her bidding, Wang Wen betook himself to the town, and called the money-lenders. They brought mules and went forth with him, wondering and deeming he was playing some mad jest upon them; but there, piled before his forge, were the bolts of silk, three hundred pieces in all. And such silk! Marvel fell upon those men, and they examined the silk with wide

eyes and bewildered fingers, amazed by its beauty and quality.

They showered money upon him, and wine and food, and Wang Wen heated the forge and together they drank many cups of hot rice-wine. They plied him hard, thinking to wrest the secret of this silk from him, so that he became well drunk, but he said no word of Chih Nu. And in the end they loaded the silk aboard the mules and went back to town in the gathering dusk.

Wang Wen drank more wine. He was heated in his brain, and madness was upon him, and hungry love. The words of the old song that Tu Fu had written came into his fuddled head.

The flowers are fallen to fragments, for spring has found her bane,
And the dust is white with petals, thick as summer rain;
Blossoms are made but to perish, beauty is gone in a breath,
So banish grief and sadness with wine, that knows no death!
Here, a tumbledown cottage makes nest for the river birds,
Yonder, the tombs of princes are trampled by passing herds.
Fate renders all men equal, fame is an ancient lie—
So let us pleasure our bodies, before our bodies die!

He stumbled about the place, seeking the Spinning Girl.

"Ho, Chih Nu!" lifted his voice. "Our wedding—this is our wedding-night, as was bargained! The debt is paid. Where are you, Chih Nu? Hiding from me—a merry game, eh? Come forth!"

He staggered into her room, but it was all empty in the moonbeams. He reeled to and fro, searching everywhere; but she was not here. She was nowhere about the whole place, and after a time Wang Wen pitched down beside the forge and slept in drunken slumber.

WITH the morning he wakened, drearily, and sat for a time holding his head, until he was aware of a light, faint *clink-clink* of chisel and hammer on metal. He looked up, rubbing his eyes.

Out there on the platform before the forge was the last rocket tube he had made, the last and the greatest of all, fastened to a solid slab of wood, so that the recoil of the discharge might not budge it. On one of the bronze circlets he had cut the two characters of his name, Wang Wen.

Now there was another figure there, cutting into the bronze with his chisel. He stared, then he leaped to his feet. He recognized Chih Nu, but not as he had known her, for her garments were torn and were white with dust, and her features were thin and wan. She ceased her work and turned to him with upraised hand.

"No closer, Wang Wen! See, here upon the bronze have I carved the place of our wedding, beside your name. Your eyes cannot read it now; but they will ere this day is over. Last night your dreams were lessened, and our dream became faint and dim, and all things ended for us here in this place. Yet tonight, Wang Wen, shall in truth be our wedding. This I promise you—"

With despair and anguish, he rushed toward her, but she lessened before him and was gone like mist. It was a vision he had seen, a figment of his disordered brain; he groaned, and went to the rocket tube. There upon it he saw three strange characters cut, ideographs which he could not read, for they had no meaning to his brain. Then it had been no vision—she had actually been here!

As he stood all a-stare, the old workman came hastily to him.

"Master! Venerable maternal ancestor! It is time to fly. We cannot stay here longer. Look, look! Their horsemen passed ere dawn, and slaughtered all below, and now comes their host —the barbarians! We must take the hill trail to Chang Fu!"

Wang Wen started, and lifted his eyes.

"Spinning Girl—where is she?" he demanded.

"She has not been here since last evening, master."

THEN all else was forgotten, as Wang Wen perceived the sight outspread below. Scattered parties of horsemen were already in the gorge. Beyond, streaming down the ancient road and far overflowing it, was the Tartar host. The morning sunlight glittered through the tremendous cloud of dust that rolled to the sky, and struck upon the endless ranks of cavalry, the spears and pennons, the gayly lacquered armor, the waving yaks' tail standards.

A clamor of gongs, of drums, of innumerable voices, of trampling hoofs, lifted to heaven in a vast roaring medley of sound.

"She is gone!" Wang Wen wakened from his stupefaction. "She is gone—yet I saw her here. Tonight is our wedding-night, she said; well, that is ended."

He turned to the workman, but the old man had fled. Wang Wen laughed and threw off his robe. "You yourself are a thousand men!" Her words echoed in his mind. He went to the forge, and from the heart of it resurrected fire; the bellows whipped it up. He put coals into bronze pots and hastily placed them here and there in readiness. The enormous tide of Tartars was now sweeping into the road and the gorge below. A handful of them dismounted and came clambering up the rocky hillock.

With another wild laugh, Wang Wen pointed one of his rocket tubes at them and fired the fuse. He waited. To the explosion, numbers of those climbing men were swept away by the hail of stones. With yells of surprise and terror, the rest turned and fled. The horde massed below along the road, stretched out beyond eyesight, began to halt.

Wang Wen flew about, loading his rocket tubes, cramming in powder and stones. "Your hand alone could prove its power," she had said. He worked feverishly, pointing the tubes, preparing everything. "Dreams are never lost—" dreams of her, dreams of these inventions, dreams of star-dust and desire.

A rolling tide of men began to mass up the hill. The tubes roared, one by one. Back fell that shattered wave. Other tubes roared, and through the white clustered smoke their hail of death smote into the serried ranks below. Men fell, horses plunged wildly. Panic seized upon those barbarians. They sought to flee, but behind, over the horizon, other thousands were pressing forward.

Powder-smeared, Wang Wen flew about like a madman, reloading his tubes. Arrows flew upward, but fell far short; the bowmen could not reach him at this distance. The biggest tube of all, that upon which Chih Nu had cut mystic characters this same day, sent its full load whirring into the plunging mass of Tartars. A terrible screaming of men and horses echoed up in response.

Hastily, he began to reload, putting in a treble quantity of powder. In the midst, he went rushing to his other and reloaded tubes, for now whole masses of men on foot were climbing to reach him. Death? He laughed loudly. Death was nothing but a passage. She had said it. Now he knew that she had indeed come from the stars to be with him, and that this night he would rejoin her again, for ever.

Down the hillside rocks rolled the white spurts of smoke, and from the rocky walls of the gorge reëchoed and thundered the harsh explosions. The climbing ranks were shattered and swept away, yet others took their places and came on. To these barbarians a hundred corpses or a thousand were no more than heaps of dead grass. More arrows flitted into the sky and came down—nearer now, as men on the flanks crept upward.

INTO the massed ranks below the last of the charged tubes vomited rattling death. No time for more reloading. Wang Wen turned to his piles of metal balls. The fuses sputtered. He hurled them into the air, to right and left, down the slopes. They fell among those climbing men or ahead of them, and presently the explosions began, and again the slopes were cleared of all save the dead, and the wrecked wave of assault went reeling back.

But here and there, on the flanks, the bowmen climbed higher, untouched.

Below, from the milling, surging mass of humanity, a new wave billowed and

moved upward, scrambling over the dead and wounded. An arrow hissed past the ear of Wang Wen; another followed. His startled glance observed single archers mounting among the rocks to either side.

Again his bronze balls whirled and spluttered and starred the hillside with death. Not many of them remained now. Another arrow—this time touching his hair, scraping his scalp, staggering him. He reeled, with blood dripping on his cheek, and recovered. Hastily he managed to get two of the tubes charged afresh, before the ranks had reformed down yonder.

The wave rolled up anew, relentless, implacable. Once more he broke it, halted it, as the tubes puffed forth their smoke and the grenades began to burst along the hillside. Wang Wen hurled himself back to the largest tube, still half loaded as he had left it. Frantically, he crammed in yet more powder, then the wadding and the stones.

Again arrows were hissing around him as he set the fuse in place, and touched a coal to it. He turned to withdraw from the coming explosion—and something checked him, like an invisible hand. He looked down, and clutched at a feathered shaft transfixing his body.

Motionless, he stood there gripping at it, darkness falling upon his eyes. Then came a tremendous crashing roar that drowned out all the world.

The big tube, far overcharged, had burst into fragments.

The reek of powder smoke thinned out, drifted away on the breeze and was gone. The Tartar ranks came surging up and over the crest of the hillock. Presently a general and his commanders followed, in the wild panoply of their barbarian gear. They reached the crest, and stood staring at the scene before them—Wang Wen, dead, amid the fragments of his burst tube.

"This one man was all alone?" exclaimed the Tartar leader in swift admiration. "He, unaided, effected all this? Lucky for us that he did not have a thousand such men here with him! Give him honorable burial, and with his body place this burst thing," and his foot stirred a fragment of the tube. "A fitting wife for such a man, eh? Make a tomb in the hillside for them both."

He swung around to his commanders.

"Investigate these infernal engines, gain their secret, and report it to me later. It may be that we can ourselves make use of these things."

And so they did, sadly adds the chronicler Chu Hsi, who had the story from those who took part in it. But of Chih Nu there is no further mention.

MY friend Martin Burnside wagged his head over the pages.

"You've lost the Chinese flavor, my boy, and you've toned down the supernatural element—"

"In short, ruined it?" I suggested.

"Of course. However, that was to be expected."

"You flatter me. It's all a farrago of nonsense anyhow, Martin. If you're to take the story as cold fact, then this chap was clear out of his head—fancying a star fairy had come down to earth!"

Martin Burnside gave me a queer look.

"Yes? Or maybe she was real—hadn't thought of that, eh? The Chinese always go at things backward, you know, from our point of view. Like wearing white for mourning and so forth."

"All of which," I said, "has nothing to do with the case. You told me that this gave some evidence of the first use of cannon. All it gives is a fanciful yarn that some old Chink thought up while he nodded over his opium pipe."

"Aren't you clever!" murmured Martin Burnside, a wicked glint in his eye. "Yes, it's a fanciful yarn and no mistake. But you overlook the stuff that De Morant sent me out of that burial mound he opened. That, by the way, was on a hill at the entrance to the Nien gorge."

"You infer that it was the grave of this Wang Wen, I suppose?" was my sarcastic query. Martin Burnside shook his head, and gave me a nasty grin.

"My dear fellow, I infer nothing.

Nothing at all. But while you've been doing your level best to spoil the poetical flights of fancy written by Chu Hsi over six hundred years ago, I've been doing something else. Look here."

He showed me a piece of bamboo tubing bound about by a number of bronze circlets. He had carefully, with infinite pains, reconstructed all those fragments of bamboo and bronze. What he made of them was nothing more than a fragment itself, but at least it showed what the original must have been like.

"And you overlook this," he added, touching the one bronze ring which had the five incised characters. "I believe you told me you were not credulous?"

I grunted evasively. The symptoms were familiar. Martin Burnside had a trump card up his sleeve somewhere. After he had blandly enjoyed my hesitation for a moment, he produced it.

"Here,"—he handed me a letter,—"is the reply which I just received from the museum, in regard to those characters. It might possibly interest you."

I took the letter.

Dear Mr. Burnside:

The rubbing which you have sent us is both interesting and puzzling. The first two characters read Wang W'en, *which is apparently a proper name.*

The other three characters seem to have been inscribed in a different hand. I regret to say that their meaning hardly makes sense; that is, their apparent meaning. I cannot offer a translation at the moment. The third character seems unfinished or poorly inscribed, possibly due to the pitting of the bronze. Apparently the characters refer to some fanciful place or island of which we know nothing.

I looked at Martin in amazement.

"The Chinese believed," he said softly, "that there were islands in the Milky Way, which they thought to be a river. They believed the star they called Spinning Girl occupied one of these islands."

"Bosh!" I said. "But—why, confound it, this would indicate that what you have there is actually the first cannon ever made! That it came from Wang Wen's grave!"

"It would," said Martin Burnside, with a gentle wave of his pipe, "if you were a credulous person—like me."

"The Shield of Arngrim," a story which brilliantly depicts the Viking journey to Minnesota in 1362, will be the next in this fine "Arms and Men" series—in our forthcoming August issue.

Bonanza!

In this lively story our friend Horseface Maud the prospector's wife dodges disaster and achieves triumph in a grand climax.

By GEORGE F. WORTS

Illustrated by Monte Crews

"YOU could clean up a real fortune," he said.

He was a tall and slender fellow of about forty, this Edward J. Mallory, and he had about him the air of sly wisdom. For fifteen years, in this boom camp and that, the black-haired, gimlet-eyed Horseface Maud had been encountering Edward J. Mallory, with his suave ways, his periwinkle-blue eyes, as opaque as if they were carved from rock, his manner always of seeming to be thinking more than he was saying.

He sat talking to her in the cook-shack of the little prospecting camp in that remote mountain basin in southern Nevada known as Gold Valley. Her husband was off working in his diggings. Tony Billings was working in his shaft, trying to find that elusive vein from which a sample of gold-studded rock had been found at the sixteen-foot level—a sample of high-grade ore the rumor of which had brought a growing trickle of prospectors into Gold Valley, and had now brought Edward J. Mallory.

Horseface Maud Tackaberry did not trust Mr. Mallory; for every ounce of her distrust, she had a good reason. The truth was that, though she did not know Mr. Mallory at all, she knew him very well. She knew what he was: he was a promoter. She had seen him at this camp and that, trying to interest men of means in pieces of ore-bearing property he owned. She knew he was a good salesman, for she had seen him sell worthless pieces of property for sizable sums of money. She had seen him persuade men to go into deals against their wishes. And she knew that was what he

was up to now—to try to persuade her into doing something against her wishes. The most famous boom-camp cook in Nevada, all the camp gossip sooner or later came to her ears. And whenever gossip concerned Edward J. Mallory, it concerned his smooth persuasiveness.

"I might as well lay my cards on the table," the promoter said. "The truth is, Maud, you're a mighty well-known woman."

"I am the best cook in Nevada," Mrs. Tackaberry said.

"I don't mean that. You are known from end to end of this State as a woman of absolute honesty."

"Ayop," she complacently affirmed.

"I don't want to pry into your business," Ed Mallory went on, "but I'm a little curious to know what it's got you. You're not as young as you used to be, Maud. You're going on sixty. Tellurium is past sixty, and he's not as spry as he used to be. How much longer is he going to be able to wheedle grubstakes out of these ranchers and saloon-keepers? How much longer can he swing a pick?"

HORSEFACE MAUD muttered that she had wondered that herself.

"You've been prospecting, you and Tellurium," the voice of the tempter went on, "going on thirty-three years. You've dug holes all over this State, from end to end. How much gold have you ever found?"

"Just about enough to plug in the eye of a gnat without hurtin' his eyesight none," Maud raucously answered.

"And Nevada," the promoter went on, "—how about her? How about some kind of future for her—not to mention nice clothes and the other advantages girls of her age are entitled to?"

For the past year Ed Mallory had been interested in Maud's eighteen-year-old daughter. He had gone so far as to say he wanted to marry Nevada. And Horseface relished him as a prospective son-in-law no more than she did as a prospective business partner.

"I've thought of that, Ed," Maud confessed. "I sure do wish I could do something for that kid of mine. You wasn't figgerin' on offerin' to buy her, was you?"

The periwinkle-blue eyes seemed to harden. Ed Mallory flushed. "I'm not joking, Maud. I'm talking serious business."

"All right," she roared. "Git to the point!"

He bent toward her. "There is no activity at all in this State," he said. "Everybody in the State is interested in this section, since the rumor got out that gold had been found."

"Only a little hunk of rock, Ed."

"I know. And what are the chances of that boy's making a mine? If you honestly think he's going to find an ore-body there, you're a damn' fool."

Horseface Maud shook her long, bony head. Her gimlet eyes gleamed. "What are you promotin', Ed?" she asked.

"Your reputation, my brains, and the rumor of gold here," he answered slowly. "I, personally, don't think there's gold in this district. But if these prospectors should stumble across some high-grade samples, and you backed it up with your reputation for honesty—"

"I'd lose my reputation. You mean, salt the district, don't you, Ed?"

"It would be easy, Maud. There wouldn't be the slightest risk. You know how it is. You can find a high-grade chunk in a hole, just the way that boy did, and it may mean there's a vein farther down, or it may mean nothing. You could salt a hundred holes here, and no one would suspect you. But supposing you salted three or four. There'd be the damnedest rush you ever saw. You and I could clean up a fortune!"

"How?" she barked.

"Don't be silly. Right now, you go out and locate all the open ground there is. When the rush starts, you sell your claims for fancy prices. I sell the group of claims I've just located for fancy prices. You'll make enough to retire on. You can buy Tellurium a filling-station and let him take it easy. You can

travel. You can give Nevada the advantages a girl like her ought to have. All with a little salting, backed up with your reputation. What do you say?"

They were face to face across an oilcloth-covered table. Horseface Maud got up, her eyes snapping with fury.

"You dirty skunk," she bellowed. "Comin' to an honest woman like me with a dirty proposition like that! Git out o' here before I go for my gun!"

"Now, Maud—" Ed Mallory protested.

"Git out!" she roared. "Git out o' this camp before I call Tony Billings and have him beat you up!"

Warmly protesting, the tall promoter backed to the door. When Maud picked up a chair, he hastened his departure.

He slammed the door after him, and strode toward his roadster, which he had left down the cañon a few hundred feet. He, too, was furious. He'd driven eighty miles across sun-parched desert to make this proposition to this stubborn cook.

A little weather-beaten old sedan was coming up the cañon as he started to get into his roadster. At the wheel was Nevada. As she reached Ed, she stopped the car and switched off the engine.

She was prettier, much prettier, than she had been the last time Ed had seen her. She wasn't quite so thin. Her face was golden tan, her eyes were the bright, deep blue of cobalt crystals.

Nevada grinned and said: "Well, Ed, what are you doing up here?"

Ed opened the door. Because of his anger, his grin was somewhat wolfish.

"I just ran up to say hello to you,"

Tony yelled: "Come on down, Nevada. I think I've got something!"

he said. "Why haven't you answered my letters?"

"I didn't like their tone," replied the girl. "And the answer is still no."

Ed Mallory's face flushed with anger again. He said roughly: "Well, there's no use my staying, so I'll just kiss you good-by."

He reached into the car with one hand, holding to the jamb with the other. Before Nevada could dodge it, he had caught the back of her head with his hand, pulled her face toward him and kissed her on the mouth.

Nevada struck him below the left eye with her right fist. Then she reached for the door-handle and swung the door shut with a slam. Unfortunately for Ed Mallory, his right forefinger was in the way. The door slammed on the nail.

He freed his finger and backed away from the angrily flushing girl with her blazing cobalt-blue eyes. His own face was white with the shock of pain. But he did not curse. In a soft, thoughtful voice, he said: "Oh, man!"

The nail was crushed and bleeding. It was not a fatal accident, but it was fateful: the crushing of Ed Mallory's fingernail was destined to be of momentous importance in the life of Maud Tackaberry.

The promoter, white-faced and smoldering-eyed, got into his roadster and drove away. Nevada resumed her interrupted journey. She had driven down to her father's prospect-hole to borrow some steel for Tony. She drove up the road, past the cook-shack and to a point as near as the steep grades would permit to Tony Billings' diggings. There

she alighted and carried the steel to Tony's shaft. It was now down about twenty-five feet.

Looking down, she could see the brown, good-looking young man at the bottom. He yelled: "Come on down, Nevada. I think I've got something!"

She went down the ladder. Tony said with excitement: "This looks good, kid. There's a change coming in!"

Nevada said absently: "It does look like a stringer starting. Maybe it'll lead to an ore-body this time." Nevada adored Tony with a virginal passion that was robbing her of appetite and sleep. That was why she was helping him with such enthusiasm, spelling him with the shovel, and working the windlass when they mucked out after a round of shots. But she was beginning to feel very much as her mother felt about prospecting. All her life had been spent in one camp or another. She loved the life, but it was really a hopeless life. She had seen so few men strike gold in paying quantities. To the end of their lives, they were hopeful, always seeing the pot of gold at the end of the *next* rainbow.

Her father was a perfect example. Thirty-two years of prospecting—and never a worth-while pay-streak! Tellurium was a plump, hearty little man of sixty, with a round, red, amiable face and the soft blue eyes of a dreamer. His pink head was bald except for a fringe which grew upward in white feathers. He was a sweet old thing—but so futile! Nevada felt that she couldn't bear it if Tony became just another futile prospector.

She was hopeless about Tony on another score. In spite of her efforts, he hadn't fallen in love with her. And he probably never would. She would willingly have married him, and starved with him the rest of their lives, prospecting, but Tony did not want her. And he persisted in treating her like a child, and this infuriated her. She had decided to write to her aunt in Los Angeles, asking if she could live there. She would take a business course—become a stenographer!

This plan and the plans of many other people were frustrated, however, by the remarkable gold-strike in Gold Valley.

ALONE in the cook-shack, Horseface Maud was cooling off.

"The dirty crook," she muttered. "Try to pull any of his fast ones up here, will he? We're gonna have a boom that'll be heard from coast to coast, from the Mex border to the Canadian. We won't need no phony salting—there's gold here, and I know it!"

Every morning Maud had been browsing around the section, locating all the open ground she could find. She had been re-locating old claims that had been abandoned, and pacing off and locating new ones. She had been building and rebuilding discovery monuments, and setting out corner and side-center stakes. As she was a woman of tireless energy, she had covered a great deal of ground.

After supper the prospectors always drifted down from their cook-fires to the cook-shack and spent the evening talking about the gold-mines they and other men had found and lost, or almost found, or were about to find.

THIS night, after supper, Horseface Maud solemnly addressed this masculine gathering. She said she had had a dream. As prospectors believe in dreams, she had their immediate attention.

She said: "I've had the same dream every night for two weeks, and this district sure was havin' an excitement. The way I dreamed it, the gold was real close to the surface, too—not down much deeper'n forty feet. Down in that shaft o' Tony's, he found a whole mountain o' ore. So did you, Misery Bill. And so did you, Hank. You all found gold, and there was the biggest boom you ever saw in your life, and we all got rich."

She elaborated this nocturnal vision. "I can feel it in my bones," she said. "I felt the same way before the Goldfield boom. I felt the same way before the Eldorado boom. I felt the same way before the Rhyolite boom. Something just seems to come over me. Gents, we're all gonna be rich!"

The next morning she made Tellurium stop work in his diggings to help her enlarge the already spacious cook-shack. She was like the fabled camp cook, who, at the height of a rush, sold some claims she owned for a million dollars. When asked if there was anything in particular she wanted, she answered: "The camp cookin'-concession!"

Maud borrowed forty-nine dollars of Tony's savings, drove into town in her Model T stake truck and bought a thousand-gallon galvanized iron water-tank, which she brought back to camp and installed beside the cook-shack. There was no water in Gold Valley. It had to be trucked in fifty-gallon drums from Whiteblotch Springs, five miles

Two men grabbed Horseface Maud. Several cursed her excitedly. "What's the matter?" she roared.

away. When the strike she expected came, she would start hauling water and filling the tank. She would then sell water at golden rates.

A week passed. And then Ed Mallory came, furtively, in the middle of the night. He was equipped with a small pouch of free gold, and a large sack containing high-grade ore-samples from famous boom camps all over the West.

Ed Mallory did not drive into Gold Valley. He turned off two miles from the camp, and in a narrow little cañon he stopped his car. Here he planned to camp for a few days. He went back to the fork and carefully erased the marks of his tires where he had turned off the main road.

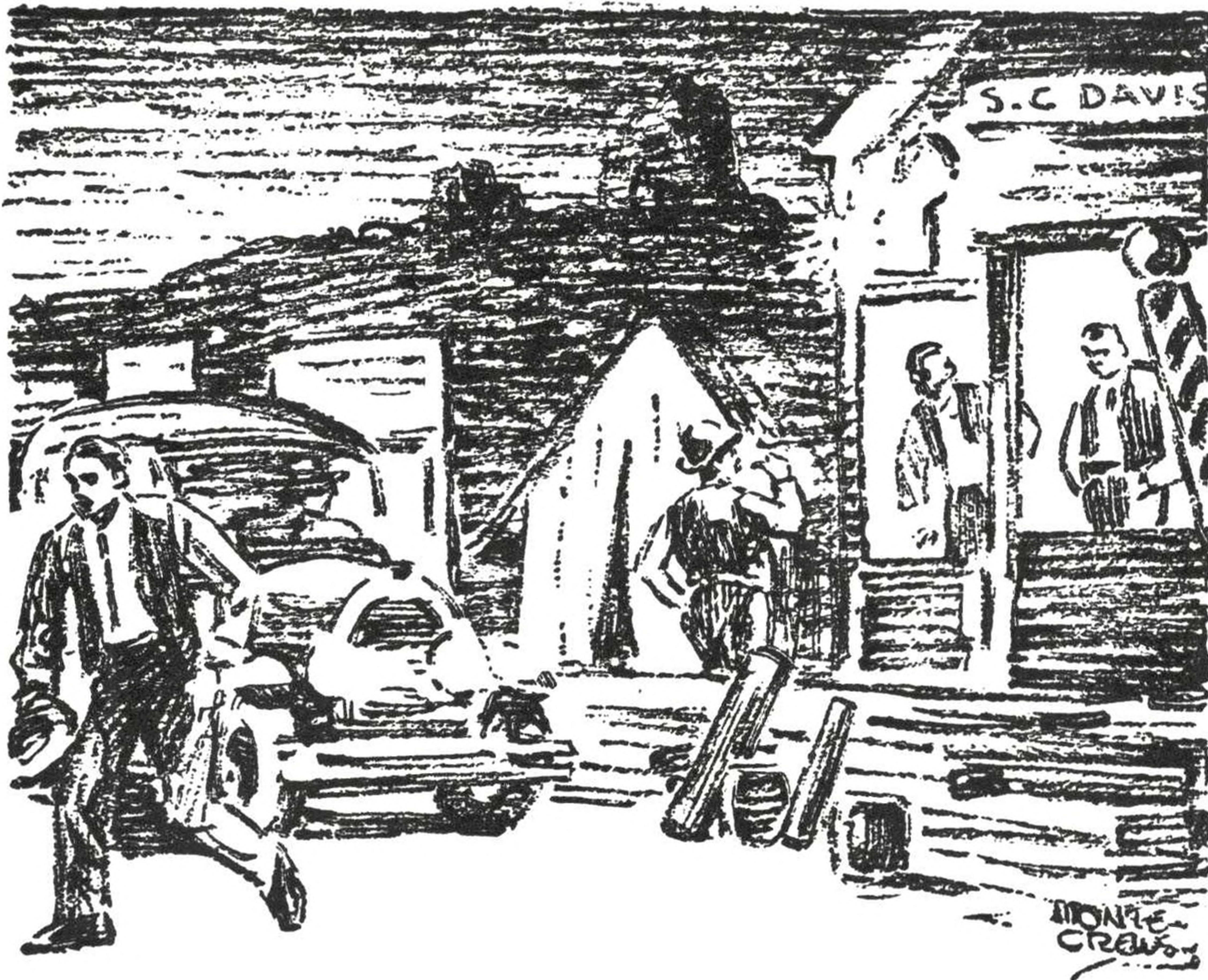
His plan was very simple: No one in Gold Valley knew that he was here. He was going to salt systematically, at night, the prospect-holes being dug by the dozen or more prospectors now in the Gold Valley district. Maud would be fooled with the rest. With her reputation behind it, Gold Valley would boom.

Ed Mallory had, in his sack, high-grade samples from Johnny, Bullfrog, Rhyolite, Goldfield, Tonopah, Delmar, and there was even a good-sized chunk—practically a museum piece—from the famous Ophir at Virginia City, the richest strike in the Comstock Lode.

Of course, he must use samples of high-grade resembling the rock in this district. These old-timers were pretty smart. They'd be suspicious if they found, for example, a sample of unmistakable Bullfrog or Delmar rock in their diggings. He intended to salt these diggings with great care, letting the prospectors find the high-grade samples—cleanly fractured—in their holes.

Methodically, in the moonless Nevada night, Ed Mallory set about his work. And on the following morning the excitement started. Shortly before noon old Misery Bill came in from his diggings a mile away, yelling as he came, and waving his arms. His rheumy old eyes were bloodshot. His face was magenta with excitement.

He screeched at Maud: "Looky here! Looky *here!*"



They dragged her up the road to the assay-house, where a gasoline lamp threw light into ugly faces.

Misery Bill had a chunk of pale gray rock clutched in one fist. It sparkled with authentic gold.

"Where'd you git it?" Maud gasped.

"In my shaft! Jist like you said, sweetheart! At forty foot! Jist look at it, Maud! Jist feast yore eyes on it! Have I got me a mine! Is this here district in!"

He executed a hornpipe.

"What are you fixin' to do?"

"Tell my grubstaker! Put in machinery!"

"Is it off a ledge?"

"No! But what of it? I'll find the ledge! It's there! And I'm a millionaire!"

He went scuttling off to Las Vegas in his decrepit old car, and Maud sat down in the cook-shack and permitted herself the luxury of a few tears. She was weak and happy. She'd been right! The district was comin' in!

MISERY'S "strike" proved exciting enough; but when, the next afternoon, Jake Breen came loping into camp with a chunk of high-grade ore he had found in his diggings, there was real excitement. He was down only fifteen feet, and he'd found a chunk of rock that would knock your eye out. Gold sticking out all over it!

He too went rushing off to town. And with him went a message from Horseface Maud—in fact, many messages, several to women whom she knew would be delighted at the chance of a job. She wanted them to help her cook and serve to the mob that would certainly come. Also there was a message to the Mesquite Grocery, the proprietor of which had promised to deliver to Gold Valley a truckload of supplies on credit any time a real boom started.

Real or false, the Gold Valley boom had actually started some time previously, when the trickle of prospectors began coming in, in response to the rumor that Tony Billings had found a chunk of high-grade in his shaft. On the morning following Jake Breen's departure for Las Vegas with the chunk of high-grade he had found, the rush really started in earnest. Fifty carloads of men came in that day, pitched their tents and began locating what open ground there was left. Among them was Ed Mallory.

He said to Maud: "So you decided to give it a whirl after all."

She placed her strong hands on her flat hips and glared at him.

"You crooked louse!" she bellowed. "This here is a honest strike!"

He gazed at her with insolent incredulity.

"Git out o' this tent!" she roared.

"I'll have another talk with you after a while," he said smoothly, and walked out.

Maud glowered after him. She was seething with righteous anger. But she couldn't remain furious long; she was too happy. Gold Valley—her valley—was booming! It meant that her days of worry were over. Her dreams for

Tellurium and Nevada were going to come true!

From that day on, men came streaming into the valley day and night. As Ed Mallory had shrewdly pointed out, there were no other booms on in Nevada at the present time. The time was therefore ripe for "an excitement." Men in all parts of the State were ready to load their cars and start off on the first tidings of an exciting nature.

These, the vanguard, were not the money-spenders. Some of them boarded with Maud, but most of them cooked their own meals. The real spenders would not come until later, when it was well established that the Gold Valley boom was authentic, not false. A few claims were changing hands for cash, but the prices were low. Because Maud badly needed $150, she sold a "fraction" for that price, well away from the claims where the "strikes" had been made.

With the bills pinned to her undershirt, she changed from her overalls to the pink dress she saved for town wear, put on a tattered old raincoat to protect it from the dust, and drove into Las Vegas. She passed upwards of forty cars on the drive through the wilderness to the Tonopah Highway, cars loaded with men and supplies and picks and shovels, all headed for Gold Valley.

She estimated that more than five hundred carloads of men were already established in tents in the big basin. It wasn't enough. She wanted thousands! She wanted Gold Valley to have the biggest boom in the history of the country!

DRIVING up Fremont Street to the building atop which were the masts of the Las Vegas radio broadcasting station, she was hailed from both sides of the streets by old friends and acquaintances. Everyone wanted to know about the boom. Was it another false alarm or a real strike?

She told the same thing to everyone who asked. Gold was being found in new workings almost every day!

"It's the biggest strike in the history of the State," she told all comers. "They aint any question about its bein' real. It's bigger'n Goldfield. From what I hear, there's more ore up there than they found in the entire Comstock Lode. It looks to me like them mountains is solid ore!"

She left excited men talking wherever she passed. Her destination was the radio station, the manager of which was a young man whom she considered as "practically a nephew."

Fixing him with her gimlet eyes, she said: "Son, I'm just bustin' with big news that ought to go on the air. What we've got up at Gold Valley is enough to make you froth and foam at the mouth. Lemme at that microphone! I want to tell the world!"

The manager of the radio station said it wouldn't cost her anything. It was news. He would gladly put her on the air for a half hour, or as long as she liked. All Nevada wanted to hear the truth about the Gold Valley rush, from a woman known, trusted and respected by mining-men. It would be a privilege to let her go on the air and tell her story.

"No, son," Horseface argued. "Get this straight: I'm not here on any good-will mission. I'm what you call a press-agent. I own plenty claims up there. I'm here to boost the boom and sell them claims."

BUT he would not take any payment. He told her to come around a little before seven; he would give her that time—"the best spot of the evening, Mrs. Tackaberry, because this is an extra special occasion."

Horseface Maud left the radio station and attended to other business. She sent telegrams to the Los Angeles representatives of the several news-reel companies. She had supper at the Oasis Restaurant, and she kept the restaurant in an uproar, answering questions and making impromptu speeches to the mob that surged in and out, but mostly in.

At seven o'clock sharp she confronted the microphone. She had rehearsed her speech for the past two days. In her booming, raucous voice, she began: "Hello there, folks of this fair State of ourn. I just dropped into town from Gold Valley to pick up some grub for that mob out there, and to scuttle right back to the job. And they asked me to say something to all you folks about the excitement we have on up there.

"Well, folks, it looks to me like the biggest strike this State of ourn has seen since Goldfield. And I hope Black Jack MacDonald and Drywash Wilson and Roadside Smith are listenin' in. Because it looks to me like we're gonna see all the old familiar gold-boom faces together again. Now, folks, I have been asked to say a few words about what I think of this strike, just what stock you can take in it. Folks, confidentially, I

think there is enough ore up there to pay for the whole doggoned depression!"

From this point Horseface Maud went into details. She mentioned Tony Billings' shaft—which was, although she didn't know it, the only shaft in which high-grade rock had been honestly discovered. She mentioned Misery Bill's and Jake Breen's "strikes."

IN her enthusiasm she made shameless exaggerations. She employed stock-salesman technique in mentioning other great strikes that men had been slow to take advantage of. She mentioned the horde of sixty thousand men and women who had passed through Nevada on the way to the California diggings—the belated Forty-niners—that great migration which had passed within a stone's-throw of the rich pay dirt that led to the opening of the Comstock Lode, greatest treasure-chest in the West's history.

She talked for a solid hour. Blondy Lawler, a prospector, grabbed her as she started out of the studio, hustled her down to the Big Four Club for a drink, and plied her with questions. And there she came face to face with Ed Mallory again. It was impossible for Ed to get a word with her in private, so thick and so insane was the mob surrounding her. An hour later she went out, cranked her truck's engine, got in and drove homeward.

Ten miles out on the Tonopah Highway, Ed Mallory in his roadster overtook her. She halted her car, and he fixed her with his opaque periwinkle-blue eyes and said: "Maud, what the hell is all this? It's phony, isn't it?"

And she roared: "What do you think? Do you think a woman with my reputation would tell lies?"

She looked at his hard face in the moonlight. He was stroking his unshaved jaw with his fingertips. She saw the blackened dead nail on his forefinger—the nail that had been smashed when Nevada slammed the car door.

He stared at her and shook his head. "I don't know," he said. "I wish I knew. You've got me going. You've certainly got me guessing."

Maud raced her engine and started off, muttering to herself. More slowly, Ed Mallory followed.

On the way in from Tim Harnedy's filling-station she passed a large truck on which what appeared to be a small galvanized house was being transported. She stopped and made inquiries. Mike Healey, an old friend of other booms, was moving in with his assay-house and equipment.

She drove on, crossed the big dry lake and climbed the long grade to Quartz Springs Summit. Ahead of her through the starlit night she saw lights—a long, winding file of dancing lights like a parade of fireflies. More boomers!

It was exciting to reach camp, to see the hundreds of tents in the light of hundreds of camp-fires and gasoline lamps, to hear the roar of men's voices.

Next morning the prevailing excitement was boosted another notch when three more prospectors—the early birds—came into camp with samples of high-grade ore which they had found in their diggings. Maud saw Ed Mallory hanging around with men who were pounding up samples of rock and panning them. She didn't know that one pocket of his overalls was lined with chamois skin. This pocket was half full of gold dust from high-grade rock specimens which he had laboriously pounded up and panned down. It was an easy matter to sift a pinch of this dust into a mortar when a man wasn't looking.

And each time a man found gold in a pan, the excitement increased. Men were running about camp with dripping gold-pans, showing everyone the fine line of gold at the tail of the black concentrates. The camp was in an uproar.

It never occurred to Maud to suspect Ed Mallory. He had not been present when the first strikes were made. The possibility that he might have started the Gold Valley boom did not enter her mind. She never doubted for an instant that the boom was authentic.

Nevada was busy selling water to all comers for twenty-five cents a gallon, or ten dollars a drum. Tellurium was hauling more water. The cook-shack was a humming hive of activity, with men going in, being fed, and going out, all excited, all babbling.

Mike Healey had arrived before dawn and had set up his assay office. He was promptly stormed with customers. In response to Maud's radio ballyhoo, the influx of gold-seekers had doubled.

NOT for a moment did the author of this boom let the excitement subside. For example, Ed Mallory had found on a near-by hill an outcrop of white quartz which closely resembled the famed snow-white quartz of Grass Valley, California. That afternoon he went for a

walk with genial old Harry Murchison, a mining-man of much experience. Murchison had come to camp skeptical. A great many men were anxious for his opinion.

Mallory saw to it that the walk they took eventually brought them to the top of the hill where the white quartz outcrop was. Harry Murchison said, "This stuff looks pretty good," and when he kicked at a piece of the rock, Mallory dropped into the fragments the piece of Grass Valley ore he had ready.

Harry Murchison saw it and picked it up. Mallory knew he would have sworn—as he later did—that that piece of rock flew out with the chunks he had kicked.

He started cursing. Mallory had never heard a man curse with such fluency. The sample was possibly the best in his collection. It was streaked, heavily laced with gold.

"Who owns this claim?" Murchison roared.

"I think it's Tellurium's," Mallory answered.

He knew that Murchison wouldn't buy the claim. He had brought along a man with money, who was willing to spend plenty on Murchison's say-so. Murchison, on his return to camp, told his backer to offer Tellurium five thousand dollars for that one claim.

TELLURIUM, however, would not sell. It was always thus with Tellurium during a boom.

"If it's worth five thousand to you," Tellurium said excitedly, "it's worth more'n five thousand to me."

Tellurium never learned. His optimism rose to any occasion. During several booms, Maud had heard him refuse more than five thousand dollars apiece for claims, had watched him hold them for ten thousand and fifteen thousand dollars, and when the boom collapsed, he still owned the claims. He owned claims all over Nevada which he had refused to sell at the opportune moment.

Horseface Maud was taking no such chances. She would accept any reasonable offer. That afternoon, she sold three of her claims for one thousand dollars apiece, and another for seventeen-fifty.

Earlier that afternoon there was some incidental excitement. A large red monoplane circled over camp and dropped a note. It was addressed to Mrs. Tellurium Tackaberry, and it said:

"Kindly meet us at dry lake. Landing immediately."

She sent Nevada off to the dry lake in her truck. Nevada returned with a load of news-reel men and their equipment. There was even a portable sound-recording machine.

They had received Mrs. Tackaberry's thoughtful telegram, and were here as per her suggestion.

She showed the news-reel men about the camp, and the diggings. They took shots, with sound, of Misery Bill, of Jake Breen, of Tony Billings, of half a dozen other men who confessed to having made big strikes. Then Maud faced the cameras and condensed her radio talk to a hundred and fifty feet of dramatic monologue; whereupon Nevada took the men back to their plane, and the films were speeded away for development and distribution to some hundreds of thousands of motion-picture theaters throughout the civilized world.

No gold boom in history had had a ballyhoo to compare to this. It took months for the news of the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill to start the rush of '49. It took years for the real richness of the Comstock Lode to penetrate the public consciousness. It took fully a year for the Klondike rush to be properly publicized.

Latest details of the Gold Valley strike were at this moment being flashed by cable and wireless to all parts of the world. Photographs were being transmitted to newspapers by radio across oceans and continents. All the paraphernalia of modern communication and transportation was being pressed into service for the Gold Valley strike.

Horseface Maud, happier than she'd ever been before, sat tight, and collected money for the sale of water, meals and mining claims.

There were the usual whisperings. A few gloomy prospectors were spreading dark rumors of wholesale salting. Maud paid little attention to these. You always heard such rumors during booms. There was going to be a meeting that evening, to elect camp officers and decide on rules governing the district. Already there were disputes. There had been fights; there would be more.

AT this meeting Horseface Maud was elected honorary mayor. She was uproariously cheered. She was well on her way to making a comfortable fortune. In the course of the next day,

she sold twenty-eight thousand dollars' worth of claims for cash. She would take no options. She would sell only for cash on the line.

She saw Ed Mallory several times in the course of the day, talking to groups of men, arguing. She wondered what he was up to. Probably trying to promote something. Then she noticed that men were looking at her queerly, some of them very coldly, but she didn't have time to speculate much. Every hour, it seemed, something new was happening. Loads of lumber were coming in. Along the road that would some day—perhaps! —be the main street of a raw new mining town, ten saloons were going up, a filling-station was being installed, and a truck-load of gambling paraphernalia was waiting for a home. Men were building shacks. There was talk of a hotel, talk of a picture-theater, rumors that both Las Vegas and Tonopah would rush work on paved roads into the Gold Valley district. . . .

That night the blow fell. All through supper, men had been sending queer, speculative glances in Maud's direction. She sensed something in the air—something hostile and ugly and threatening.

Suddenly a group of six men came surging into the cook-shack. Two of them grabbed her, each taking an arm. Several of them cursed her excitedly.

When she demanded explanations, they clamored. She heard clearly only the words "assay office."

"What's the matter?" she roared.

They dragged her out of the cook-shack and up the road to the assay-house. A mob of men milled about it in the darkness. Inside, a gasoline lamp threw hard white light into red, ugly faces.

When she saw Ed Mallory in the doorway of the assay-house, her heart skipped a beat and she felt ice on her spine.

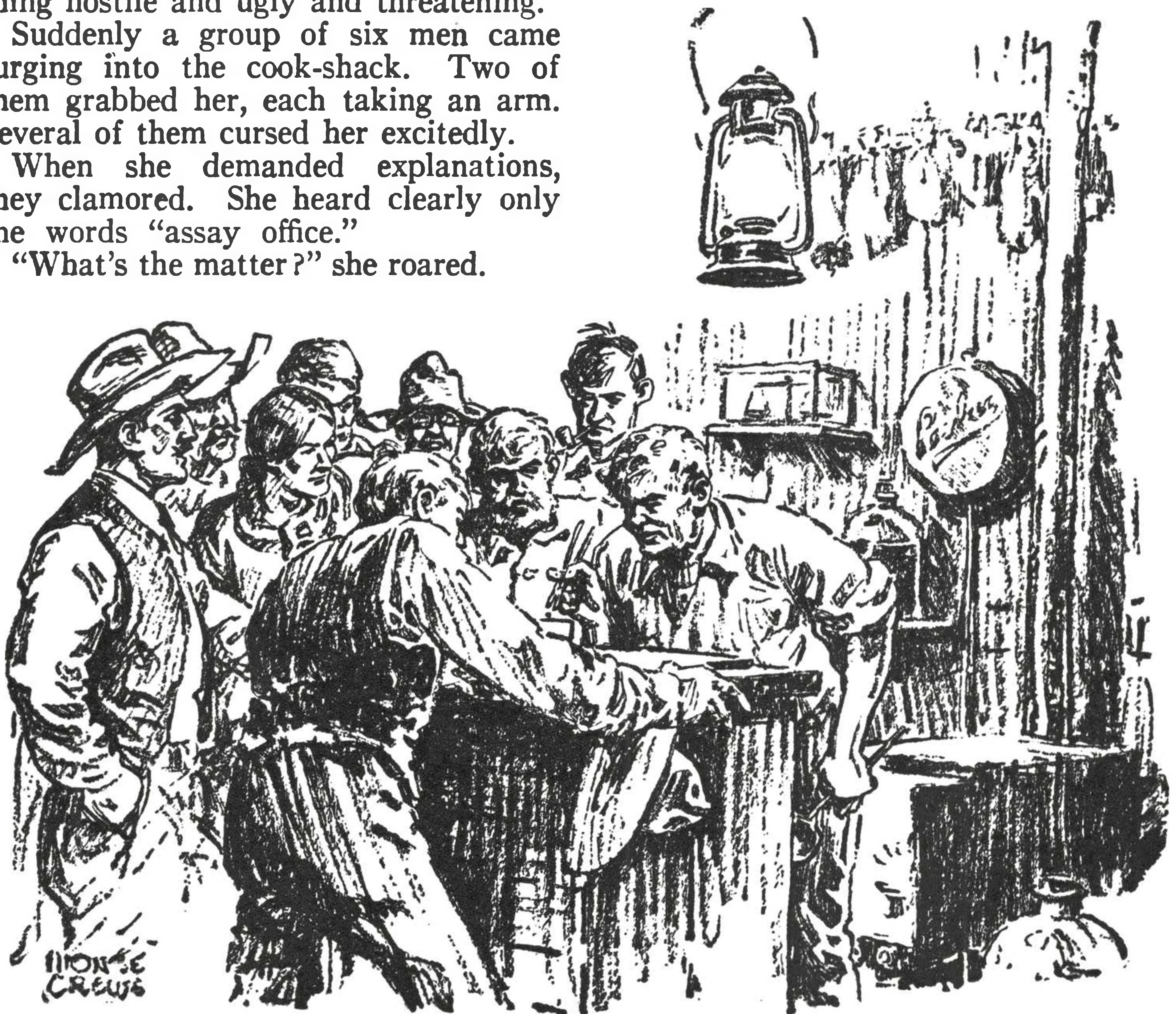
Mike Healey it was who explained; but he was frequently interrupted by other angry men.

She had been brought here to face her accuser, Ed Mallory. She gathered, from angry phrases, that she was accused of having salted the whole district, of having started a phony boom.

Maud yelled: "The liar! Let him prove what he's saying! You men know my reputation! Let him prove it!"

There followed more shouts. Mike Healey said: "Maud, Ed claims he saw you climb in the window of this office late last night. He claims he saw you sneak in and salt the litharge!"

Litharge, an oxide of lead, is used in assaying as a flux. Some litharge is used in every assay for gold. By salting the litharge can, every assay run would be satisfactorily high.



There was doubtless gold in that bead. . . . Loud voices rose: "She salted it!"

Maud shouted: "It's a lie! Mike Healey, do you think I'm a crook? You've known me for twenty years. Am I a crook?"

"I'm running some of the litharge now—to check up on it," Mike said.

A strange man said fiercely: "Yeah! And if he finds gold in that litharge, it's gonna be tough for you, Mrs. Tackaberry!"

She shivered a little as she visualized this camp of men, suddenly disillusioned, suddenly ferocious, turning on her. They might even hang her! The least she could hope for was nasty publicity, disgrace. And Tellurium and Nevada would be dragged down in disgrace with her!

There was such a press of men about her now that she could hardly breathe.

Mike Healey was opening the door of his little gasoline furnace. It was pink-white hot. With a pair of tongs he lifted off the sand bed a white-hot cupel in which a tiny molten bead of metal gleamed greenly like an evil eye.

Some one shouted: "It blinked!"

Here indeed was very bad news. There was doubtless gold in that infinitesimal bead. There must be gold!

The assayer put it on the iron rubbing-plate to cool. Men crowded about, silent now. Mike Healey would now place the bead in nitric acid, to cut out such silver as might be present. But it really wasn't necessary. He dropped the little bead into a small glass containing the clear acid solution.

Every man in the crowd could see the color of that bead—as yellow as yellow. Pure gold! Or almost pure gold.

Loud voices rose: "She salted it!"

The mob seemed to whirl about. A man was fighting his way through. He was using elbows and fists and snarling: "Let me through here!" The man was tall and young.

It was Tony Billings.

Men gave way to Tony because he was tall and strong. He shouted:

"What's going on here?"

ED MALLORY answered: "Nothin' much. We just found out that Maud Tackaberry salted the litharge."

Tony snapped: "You're a liar!"

"It's too bad, son," Mike Healey said; "but Ed, here, told me he saw her crawl in the window last night and salt this litharge. I just made a run of it, and there sure is gold in it."

"Let me see that can!"

Why he asked to see the can of litharge, neither Tony nor any one of them would probably ever know. He was carrying a gunnysack heavy with rocks. He dropped it, and looked at the litharge can. He took off the lid and held the red powder up to the light. He shook the can. A tiny black object protruded from the top of the red powder. It looked like a piece of charred paper.

He picked it out and looked at it.

"THAT'S funny," Tony said. "It's a fingernail. . . . It's a fingernail that's sloughed off a smashed finger. How did it— *Hey!* Mallory! Let's see that smashed fingernail of yours!"

But Ed Mallory was not there. At least, he was doing his best not to be there; he was trying to wriggle out of that crowd.

He did break out. Then most of the crowd pursued him. A few hung back to listen to what Horseface Maud was saying.

From the depths of honest indignation, she was asking them, one and all, if they had ever heard of such an outrageous performance.

She bellowed: "Wait'll they bring him back here! You'll see that fingernail'll fit right onto his finger! Did the saltin' himself and then goes around accusin' a woman with my reputation of doin' it! Saltin'! Gents, you can imagine how I felt! Accusin' me of saltin' this district!"

Mike Healey said: "Why d'ye s'pose he picked on you?"

Maud snorted. "He heard people talkin' about suspicionin' a lot of saltin' goin' on, and he got scared they was goin' to find out 'twas him doin' it. He hates my insides, so he tried to put the blame on me an' get clear himself! That's what!"

Some one said: "He must've salted the whole district. The strike's phony!"

Maud's heart sank. Had the whole boom been Mallory's doings? Wasn't there any gold in Gold Valley?

Tony had picked up the gunnysack and was reaching into it. He said: "Maybe some of it's been phony, but there isn't any question about the district now. Get a load of this."

He pulled out of the sack a chunk of greasy brown rock almost as large as his head. Horseface Maud stared at it with swimming eyes. You didn't need a prospector's glass to see the gold in it. It seemed fairly to drip with gold. You

could plainly see the pick-mark where he had pried it off the shaft wall.

Another roar went up from the crowd about the assay office. And it was this roar that doubtless saved Ed Mallory from a very unpleasant reckoning. Some one had tripped him as he ran; and some one had jumped on his back. Some one else was kicking him in the ribs.

These activities ceased when the magical word *"Gold!"* was heard again. And under cover of the new excitement, Ed Mallory scrambled up, limped to his car and escaped. . . .

Tony Billings was now the center of attention. He was explaining how he had come upon the ore-body he had been digging for so long. It was in a new cross-cut. His latest round of shots, which he'd set off after supper, had uncovered it. He'd waited for the fumes to clear, then gone down the ladder with a miner's lamp, and found it—a footwall and a hanging wall, with a four-foot mass of vein matter in between!

Not a pocket, not a kidney, but a vein!

Thus did Mallory's hand-made boom come through. For this was an authentic strike. High-grade ore in place, that any skeptic could examine until his skepticism melted into the hysteria that overwhelms any man who sees high-grade ore in place.

Mike Healey promptly ran an assay. The ore ran twelve thousand dollars a ton.

Before morning, Tony had refused a cash offer of one hundred thousand dollars for his mine. He wanted more. He wanted, so he said, to sell all his claims in a group.

WITH all doubters satisfied, the excitement that now prevailed in camp made the previous boom seem tame. And the mounting wildness of the situation was whipped higher still when Misery Bill came into camp with samples from his own diggings—samples assaying twelve hundred dollars a ton. And Maud, seeing that these samples could not possibly have been salted by Mallory, wept from sheer relief.

That afternoon a syndicate of Los Angeles men arrived by airplane. Among them were mining engineers. They spent the rest of the day and all of the next inspecting Tony's shaft, his crosscuts, and in going over the ledges which ran through his property.

The upshot of all this was a flat offer to Tony of one million dollars for his four claims. He promptly accepted.

When the deal was closed, with a down payment of fifty thousand dollars in cash, the balance payable in Los Angeles on Tony's demand, it was dusk. With the cash and the contract in his pocket, Tony went to the cook-shack, found Nevada, and said he wanted to take a little walk.

In a thicket of juniper trees, where no eyes were upon them, he halted.

He said: "Nevada, I've been in love with you from the minute I laid eyes on you, but I wasn't going to offer a girl like you a life of prospecting. I am now very nicely fixed indeed. Will you marry me, Nevada?"

Nevada said, "Oh—oh, Tony!" with ecstasy and anguish.

FOR the Tackaberrys too, the boom did well. Once the real boom had started, Horseface Maud stopped selling claims cheap. When she and Tellurium had sold everything they owned, including the cook-shack and the water-tank, the truck, tools and shacks, they pooled approximately two hundred thousand dollars.

They promptly went to Los Angeles on a spree. Interviewed there by a horde of reporters as to their plans, Horseface Maud said: "We're goin' to fool around here for about a month, boys. I want to take in a premeer and see a little high life. Then we're goin' to join our daughter and our son-in-law. By that time, the honeymoon ought to be over enough so we'll be sort o' welcome—anyhow, for a while."

The whereabouts of Tony Billings and his bride had been a nine-days' mystery to the press. It was rumored they had slipped out of the country to England, to France, to Honolulu.

"Where are they?" the reporters wanted to know.

"The truth is," Horseface Maud bellowed genially, "they've just left for Merchant City, Michigan, where Tony's goin' to testify into jail that bunch of political crooks that he came out here to escape from. Then they're goin' on a little prospectin' trip in those big black mountains back o' Gold Valley. The four of us sort o' figured on settin' up a prospectin' camp at a likely-lookin' place Tellurium found up there a few years ago. We aint goin' back to Gold Valley, account of we don't like cities."

HAWK of the

The strange and fascinating story of fighting his way to manhood in a wild new-found land among savage folk who might be brothers to the American Indian.

The Story So Far:

THE schooner *Cherokee* nosed her way north into the Bering Sea, where she was spoken by a whaler; then she was swallowed up in a dense fog—and never again seen by the eye of civilized man. . . .

The *Cherokee* was no ordinary vessel, for her owner and navigator, Doctor Lincoln Rand, had equipped her as a kind of floating infirmary in which he hoped to accomplish for the natives of the north Pacific coasts something of what another knight of medicine has done in Labrador on the Atlantic side. With him were his young wife Helena, and his educated Indian aid and friend Mokuyi.

A succession of storms drove the ship off her course, apparently northward. For many days the three floated thus, blindly, in their groaning, creaking craft.

Yet the long-expected complete freeze-up did not materialize. The *Cherokee* actually began shaking off her weight of ice, and floated freely once more. Then one day they saw a branch drift past, with leaves still green upon it. Finally they came in sight of shoals; and dimly they detected a distant headland. When they finally and unmistakably grounded, all three believed the end had come. But early dawn of a day which would last but an hour or two revealed instead that most beautiful sight of all to sea-weary eyes—land!

A strange and savage land it proved—an oasis of the Arctic somewhere north of Siberia, they concluded, somehow warmed by unknown ocean currents and by the fires of a great volcanic region that flamed beyond the horizon. A land thickly wooded with evergreens, for the most part, and supporting many and varied wild animals. Stranger still was its human population.

For almost immediately upon landing, Rand and Helena and Mokuyi were beset by a band of painted savages, and would have been killed had not Mokuyi addressed them in his native tongue. *And they understood him!*

In the long talk which followed, Rand learned that these people were unquestionably of the same stock as the American Indian, though they had never so much as heard of the outside world. And Rand found much evidence for his conviction that here was the birthplace of the Indian race, whence our First Americans came in prehistoric times.

A few months the newcomers lived among these primitive people; and here Helena's baby was born.

But only six weeks afterward tragedy wrote an end. Native enemies from the plains to the north raided the village; and both Rand and Helena were killed before the attack was beaten off. Thereupon Mokuyi adopted the little white boy as his own; Mokuyi's native wife Awena cared for him; and later Mokuyi himself taught the boy to speak and to read the English of his fathers.

Kioga, he was named—the Snow Hawk. And the child throve amazingly in his early years. Yet the other children of the village were jealous of his superior powers, and finally when he was six, stoned him out of the village. But little Kioga had one stanch friend—Aki, a bear-cub Mokuyi had given him some time before, now half-grown and powerful. And somehow, with Aki and the good-natured bear-clan, Kioga managed to survive and to recover from his hurts. . . . When at length he returned to the village, he was received with open arms by Mokuyi, but there were many who scoffed at his wild tale.

In lone foray at night against a sleeping camp of plains savages, Kioga killed his first enemy, and brought back the long rope and whip which he added to his store of weapons. In trying to help his bear-friend Yanu in a fight to the death against a great tiger, he was himself wounded. In rescuing a puma cub,

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Wilderness

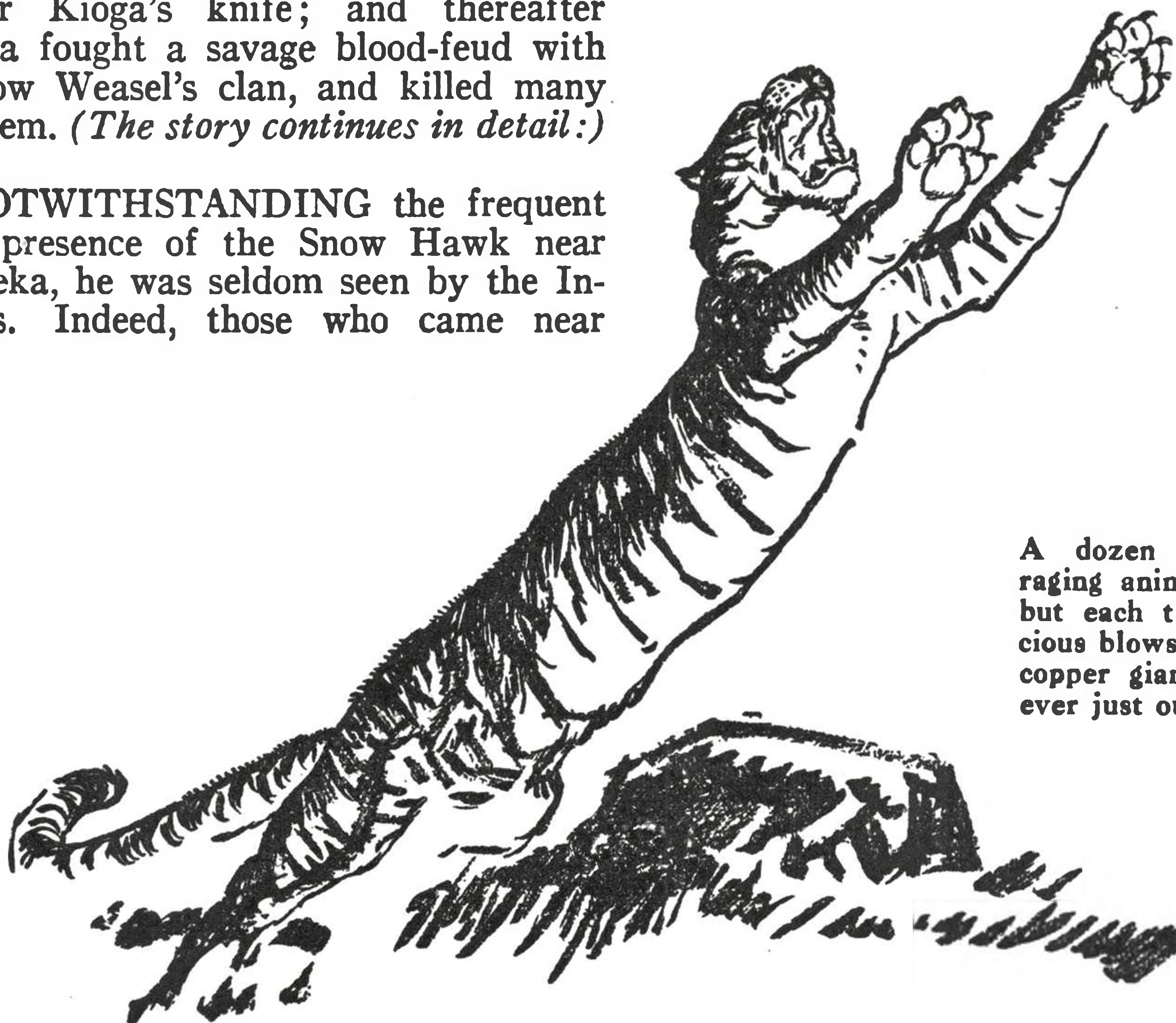
By WILLIAM L. CHESTER

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon

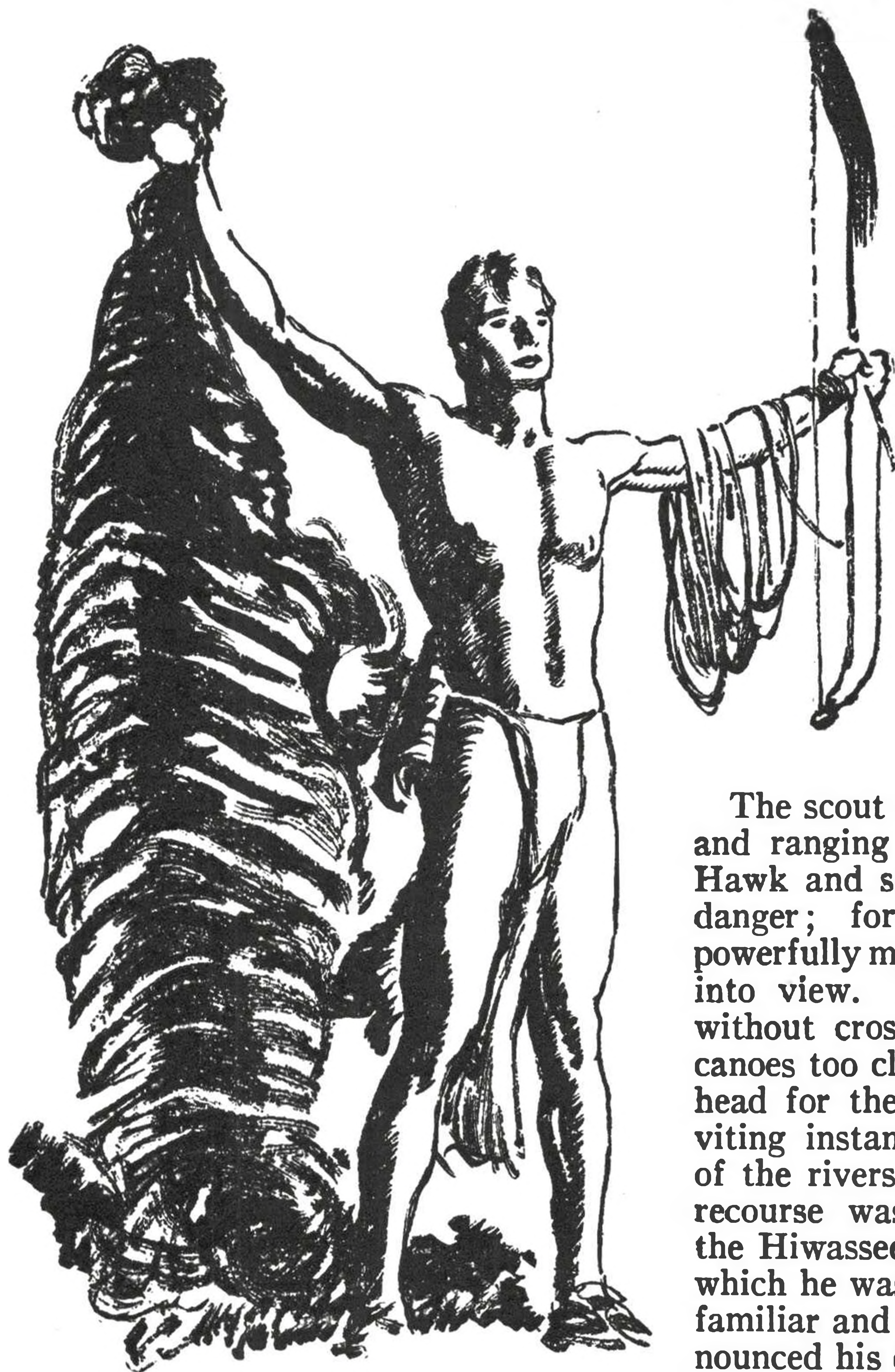
he acquired another savage pet, Mika. . . . These events starred his boyhood. And then, visiting the shore one day, he saw the hulk of a vessel pounding to pieces on the reef. Swimming out, Kioga boarded the wreck, and explored it—and bore away in triumph a steel knife or two, and an armful of books over which he pored many an hour, renewing his knowledge of English.

Just in time, perhaps; for presently his last link with the outer world was broken when his foster-parents Mokuyi and Awena were murdered by Yellow Weasel, the head of the Long-Knife secret society, who sought to usurp the power of Mokuyi's friend and protector the chief Sawamic. Indeed the evil-hearted shaman pursued the fleeing Snow Hawk also, and would have killed him had not Kioga been the stronger and quicker. So it was Yellow Weasel who perished under Kioga's knife; and thereafter Kioga fought a savage blood-feud with Yellow Weasel's clan, and killed many of them. *(The story continues in detail:)*

NOTWITHSTANDING the frequent presence of the Snow Hawk near Hopeka, he was seldom seen by the Indians. Indeed, those who came near



A dozen times the raging animal leaped; but each time its vicious blows missed the copper giant swinging ever just out of range.



How well that beautiful pelt would grace his wilderness cave—how his little world must cower before the conqueror of Guna the tiger!

enough to salute him with an arrow boasted of the fact. But on one occasion the tribe had reason to think that the luck of the outlaw was turning.

ONE dusk had found him taking his ease in his canoe, upon one of the smaller lakes draining into the Hiwassee, when, with the quiet of floating things, two canoes materialized several hundred yards to his north. Each bore four warriors, but the little remaining light was in their eyes—which, he knew, made him almost invisible. Therefore he stirred not, lest movement draw attention from keen eyes.

Better for Kioga had he followed his first impulse to lead them a chase, which would at least have given him the advantage of a start. But he did not divine that behind the first two there came a fleet of over a dozen trade-canoes—convoyed by two war-boats, bearing fifteen warriors each.

The scout canoes were within bowshot and ranging inshore between the Snow Hawk and safety before he realized his danger; for now, behind them, the powerfully manned convoy-canoes forged into view. He could not turn ashore without crossing the prows of the first canoes too close for safety; nor could he head for the opposite shore without inviting instant chase by the greyhounds of the rivers—the long-boats. His only recourse was a straightaway dash for the Hiwassee, to the south, a dash upon which he was well embarked before that familiar and expected yell of menace announced his discovery.

Then came the resonant twang of a bow and the quick hiss of an arrow striking the water with a splash ahead. Another bow-cord vibrated, and this time a bright copper triangle darted out from under the skin of Kioga's arm, near the shoulder, stabbing through the flesh and skewering the limb before he realized he was hit.

A quick backward glance showed the long-boats swiftly overhauling him, with several of the warriors taking aim, and a covey of arrows already in flight. In that fractional instant, without panic but with the swiftness of desperation, Snow Hawk took to the river. Arrows hailed about him and riddled the canoe's bottom, though only one found the mark, taking him in the thigh as he sank; but in a moment the spot would be alive with the excited and bloodthirsty Koshoni boatmen, who were already hastily igniting the pitch flambeaux by whose light they hoped at last to take the Snow Hawk dead or alive.

Kioga sank with two arrows in him, but with wits unimpaired, and he at once turned under water, swimming in a direction least to be expected by the Koshoni—straight toward his pursuers, by the reflected light of whose bow-torches he could judge their location without coming to the surface.

Luckily the fast war-canoes were over and past him before he had to come up for air, which he took quickly and sank, striking out again toward the trade-canoes. The wooden shaft of one arrow hampered the use of his arm, while the deep-buried point of the other gave him excruciating pain with each movement of the leg; but with bursting lungs he kept on; and now, if ever, he found cause to be thankful for those miles-long, hours-long endurance swims insisted upon by old Yanu years before—swims which had given him the water-presence almost, of a seal.

Gratefully he saw the vast shadow of one of the trade-canoes and came up under its stern with a stealth that taxed his last ounce of lung-strength. In the clamor being made by the Indians, he breathed freely without fear of discovery.

Where they had ridden down his overturned canoe, the warriors were still probing the depths with lances and poising those river-spears, shaped like boathooks, ready, if possible, to take him alive.

IN the respite thus gained, Kioga's first concern was to remove the hampering barb from his arm, breaking it silently beneath the water and drawing out both ends of the shaft. Nothing less than the cold steel of his knife could remove the other point buried in his thigh—steel which was now engaged in an operation of a very different kind.

By this time the Koshoni warriors were realizing the futility of further search, and concluding that the outlaw must be on the bottom, riddled with arrows like his canoe. Slowly they returned to their fleet. This was a delusion from which he had no desire to awaken them, so he submerged once more and swam from the shadow of one canoe to the other, locating them by their lights, and pausing at each to draw breath and drag his knife along its bottom before passing on.

He had not reached the last before the first was in difficulty, settling by the stern and rapidly filling through the slash in her birch-bark bottom; and in another moment several others found themselves in like trouble.

The long-boats, in response to the calls for aid, were returning frantically inshore—by the route the Snow Hawk had hoped to use in reaching safety. Accordingly he struck off toward the opposite shore and was soon out of immediate danger, and able to look back and see several of the flaming flambeaux extinguished, as one after another of the canoes foundered before they could be beached. Then, leaving consternation behind him, and intent only on escape, the Snow Hawk dragged himself ashore.

THE arrow in his leg was a torment whose removal resulted in further loss of blood, far too much of which had been drained out of him through wounds kept open and flowing by submersion and activity. For once those tireless muscles were compelled to rest, and at every halt he left a spot of blood. That the infuriated Koshoni warriors would pick up that red trail, once they learned to whom they owed their disaster, he did no doubt, and well he knew the Indians: Revenge was their first thought.

Sure enough, with the first streaks of dawn the warriors were on the shore and finding ample evidence of Kioga's escape.

For an hour they were checked in the thickets of red sumach to which the resourceful quarry had taken, knowing that the color of his blood would be all but indistinguishable from the crimson of the sumach leaves. He seemed to have vanished under the very knives of his pursuers, in cover scarce dense enough to hide a wolf.

Then came the startling discovery of fresh stains leading straight into a dense thicket of devil's club, near which they found his abandoned weapons. Tracked to his lair at last, the Snow Hawk was at bay, his long race run!

Swiftly, lest the quarry so long sought escape again, several Koshoni warriors drew knives and tomahawks and entered the thicket, while four others waited outside, prepared to put arrows through him should he attempt a sudden break for liberty.

Suddenly came a yell of surprise from within the thicket, followed by a terrific clamor and a series of thunderous roars that shook the ground underfoot. Five Indians had entered the devil's club, but only one ever returned, clutching the torn and bleeding remnants of

an arm. The savage vowed that Kioga had changed himself into a giant bear and crushed his several pursuers with as many mighty blows. . . .

It had been Aki to whom he had introduced them, Aki whose trail and scent had come to him like reprieve to a condemned man, just as he had been preparing to make a last stand. Now it was Aki who licked his wounds, who stood on guard, who killed and brought in a portion of every kill to the master who had never forgotten him. And at the last it was Aki to whose shaggy shoulders he lashed himself, to be half dragged, half carried to a place of greater safety, where he was weeks recovering his strength.

So it came to be believed that the Snow Hawk could assume at will the form and powers of bird or beast of prey. Braves who dared face odds of ten to one in open combat passed with awe the scenes of these now notorious events. And if they believed they had to do with one who was part animal, part man, in a sense they were right, for Kioga usually bested them with the cunning wiles of the forest creatures.

Occasionally, it is true, a band of rash young warriors would go boldly forth to try the mettle of the mysterious one—and crestfallen return, burning with a mightier desire than ever to acquire Kioga's prestige with his scalp. But it was for prestige, for honor, and not for hatred, that these man-hunts were conducted, albeit a deadly and fruitless game whose ardor was checked by the fatal accuracy of the outlaw's well-known aim.

AROUND a hundred camp-fires and in the lodges of the mountain tribes his name was one to conjure with, his adventures the subject of unending conversation by warrior-band and hunt-party; yet he was more feared now than hated, thanks to the repute which he had won by his exploits.

Indeed, there were those among the Indian women who even made prayer-offerings to the holy Sun and Moon to insure his safety; for more than one little child, on wandering from the village, had been returned safely in the stillness of the night babbling a strange account of rescue from the jaws of some wild beast, and of a dizzy flight through the tree-tops above the river on the way home. And more than one little family party, its canoe marooned by snow and ice in the rivers, could tell of fresh-killed meat found lying near their fortified wikiup when all the near-by game had been driven off by the wolves.

BUT still another and greater adventure was to add luster to the name of this Indian Robin Hood. Kias, bold young son of Uktena, the Keen-eyed—a powerful sachem—and one of the most persistent pursuers of the Snow Hawk, was to bring tidings of it to Hopeka.

Kioga's reputation among the Indians had its counterpart in the wilderness. Whereas in the beginning the other savage denizens of his hunting-ground had feared him as the man-cub of Yanu, now they had learned to fear him in his own right, and with reason.

He had been seen to evade the lunge of a grizzly's armed forepaw. He could stop a galloping elk dead in its tracks. The solitary wolf now avoided him; and even Tagu, killer of many men, slunk away at the hissing threat of the lash above his satiny flanks.

I have already said that Kioga was no insensate slayer, destructive of life without cause. Yet pride of prowess was a natural attribute of the young savage during these years of his approach to mighty manhood. Instinctive within him was the love of combat and the desire for domination over the wild creatures by which he was surrounded, and acquired from his Indian training was a craving for the prestige of the victor.

He never lost an opportunity to play the lash upon the great cats. Ever more insultingly deliberate became his reaction to the charge of his yellow-fanged enemies, ever more ferocious their attempts to end their elusive tormentor's career. And now he even began snatching the prey from beneath their very jaws. In this his rope was a wonderful asset, enabling him to swoop, seize and carry his dinner on up into another tree by the force of his original momentum. But once, during the execution of such an act of piracy, the leather strand parted under the strain of its double burden. A huge paw, bristling with curving retractile claws swished downward, dangerously close.

In the fraction of a second required by the growling tiger to kill the still struggling deer, Kioga leaped to safe refuge above, as if propelled by steel springs. There he hung, checkmated, four deep and bleeding gouges along the back of his thigh attesting the narrow

margin by which he had escaped the singing blow.

It was Guna's turn to triumph, which he did by devouring most of the deer and forty-odd feet of the broken leather rope to boot, thus adding another injury to the score for which there must one day be a reckoning.

Kioga gazed musingly down upon the tiger's handsome length. How well that beautiful pelt would grace his wilderness cave, how his little world must cower before the conqueror of Guna the tiger!

"I have slain Moka," he thought, "and Moka killed a she-tiger in the ravines. Why, then," reasoned Kioga with unassailable logic, "having slain Moka, who slew a tigress, should I not kill thee, O bloody-clawed robber?"

And presently the glimmerings of a cunning plan began to form in his mind as he repeated his old vow to sleep upon the flat hide of Painted-sides. Then, retrieving his grapnel and the remainder of its rope, he departed coastward. It had come to him that he could no longer trust his weight to a rawhide rope; but how about the skin of a shark, ten times tougher than ox-hide?

Arrived at the coast, Kioga went unerringly to a spot where he knew he would find sharks, a beach where, some days since, he had seen a small whale washed ashore. The decaying carcass had attracted a horde of the dread scavengers of the sea and like maggots in a cheese the sharks were gouging at the vast carcass.

Above them, on a rocky shelf beside deep water, Kioga took his position, sharp spear in hand; whenever one of the grim beasts came within reach the heavy lance spaded down into the brute brain, and in another moment its brother sharks were tearing it to shreds. And at the first opportunity he attempted to haul one of his victims intact upon shore. At last, by good fortune, he succeeded.

KNOWING the tenacity with which sharks clung to life, he carefully avoided the terrific jaws. It was well he did so, for as he attempted to pry them open with the handle of his spear, the weapon was suddenly bitten cleanly in two, shortening it by some three feet. But presently its death-struggle was over; and sharpening his knife, he laboriously stripped the carcass of its valued skin. This he immersed in a pool of brine left by the retreating sea, where he left it. For a week he roamed in the neighborhood; then, returning to the shore, he accomplished the tedious task of tanning the shark-hide and cutting it into strips suitable for plaiting into rope or whip-lash.

The half-healed scrapes given him by Guna still smarted cruelly, but his pride was wounded more than his body by his narrow escape of several days before.

SOME hours later Kioga came upon the trail of Guna; presently he drew close to the beast—only to find that it in turn, was prowling on a fresh spoor—the spoor of man. Curiosity led him on, and he soon saw that the little party of men the tiger followed had split up. Guna also read the signs and—sage hunter—followed a single trail with long reaching strides. For though he might have destroyed five hunters in as many seconds, the man-eater was not one to increase his own risks.

A grim smile suddenly wreathed the lips of Kioga, for from his vantage-point high aloft he could see a lone Indian fleeing swiftly but without panic along a game-trail, throwing frequent wary glances over one shoulder.

Then Guna, who was rapidly overhauling the lone warrior, realized his proximity and voiced the frightful long moan of his breed, which seemed to rise from the ground about the hunted thing. Instantly the young hunter wheeled—to see the broad head and back-laid ears of the tiger already thrusting out of a thicket, followed by the muscular length of the sinuous body.

With his back to the stout bole of a tree the young Indian began calmly to loose his arrows, pitifully inadequate, against the killer whose hunger-fangs showed bare and menacing. Finally hurling bow and empty quiver at the crouching animal, Kias drew his knife and, chanting his death-song, prepared bravely to meet his Maker.

From a vantage point high above, the Snow Hawk hung between two decisions: To let the Indian die was to eliminate one more enemy. But admiration of the youth's bold stand, together with the irritations of his past futile encounters with the tiger, rekindled the feelings with which he had sought out Guna but an hour before. Swiftly he lowered to the attack.

As the rippling, sliding muscles of the cat steadied preparatory to launching the charge, a sharp report echoed in the little parklike clearing. Guna, the most

single-minded and destructive agent on earth, hesitated at that sound. A moment later a dark shadow floated as by magic out over his head, wielding the punishing lash. Each touch of the thong upon his sable-striped hide was like the sear of hot iron. A dozen times the raging animal leaped—great bounds a full ten feet in air; but each time its vicious blows missed the copper giant swinging ever just out of range. Mad with pain and fury, the beast coughed out the deep, rare, full-chested roar that throws jungle-life into quivering panic—the anger-voice of a savage tiger, riving the silence like thunder.

BUT Kioga showed no panic. Momentarily the increasing arc of his swing brought him closer to the long-hair, while the flaming eyes of the great brute followed, the thick black-ringed tail lashing continually. And then Kias was witness to a spectacle which other human eyes have not seen since man forsook the tree-tops and became an upright animal—a sight that congealed the blood in his veins.

Of a sudden Kioga slid downward on his shark-hide rope. His return swoop brought him into range whence he struck as the eagle strikes the fish-laden osprey. Like lightning the long-bladed spear passed obliquely through the tiger's body as he shot past. The fierce animal sagged beneath the mighty thrust, delivered with all the weight of the man's body and inertia.

Sweeping back to the attack as the stunned tiger snapped at the spear, Kioga crashed with numbing impact upon the half-reared body. Twenty feet they slid from the force of collision, and before it could whirl, the man was fastened to the brute's shoulders and striking for the heart with his knife.

Frenziedly the enormous cat twisted in midair, thrashing from side to side, already claimed by death, yet with the dying vitality of its kind struggling to smash with a blow the iron-thewed thing clamped to its back.

But what the deadly spear had begun, the long glittering knife swiftly concluded. With jets of blood spurting from both nostrils Guna sank beneath the weight of his conqueror, twice quivered, convulsed and lay still. He whose curved fangs had lived on death, lay silent, his fearsome voice forever stilled by one whose brown skin bore the raw furrows of his own bloody talons.

Kias had faced certain death without a visible tremor, but he quaked inwardly before the slayer of this sinister beast. Then at last he found voice.

"The son of Uktena was wrong to hunt upon the trail of the Snow Hawk."

"The son of Uktena knows not fear," answered Kioga, smiling as he recalled how easily, a dozen times, he might have slipped ten inches of steel into the boy. "And the Snow Hawk has made a friend, who will take up the ax no more against him."

"Agh! Mewasin!" assented the young brave eagerly. Then, unashamed, he turned on his heel and fled. . . .

Despite his rescuer's admonition to keep silence, the temptation to tell of his encounter was too great for Kias. Over the watch-fires that night the wondering Koshoni learned again that their one-time enemy could be a friend in need. Fierce old Uktena vowed solemnly that one day he would repay his debt to the rescuer of his son: and thanks to this circumstance the affair found its way into the music of the Indians, and as you read, is probably being sung into the ears of dusky men-children in that far-away village, to inspire them to deeds of equal hardihood and valor.

CHAPTER XVII

The Hidden Channel

KIOGA'S taste of civilized knowledge had only whetted his desire for greater learning; and the older he grew, the more time he spent near the seacoast, vainly hoping to discover another wreck upon which papers and books might be found.

One day as he returned dejected and empty-handed toward the sea-cliffs he took a route different than had been his habit theretofore. His steps led past a broad deep ravine some yards beyond high-water mark, and as he was proceeding along its edge, glancing down into its sandy interior, he suddenly stopped short, staring at something which had caught his eye—a long, curved, dark line which seemed at one point to disappear beneath the sandy floor.

Fixing his grapnel securely upon a rock he dropped his rope into the little valley and slid rapidly down the vertical wall to the bottom. Idly he scooped out some sand along the long dark line, exposing the rotted planking of some long-buried vessel, spongy with decay. Hurled

up and wedged here by some mighty storm-tide which in receding had left her high and dry, she had slowly sunk beneath the sandy layers which the years and the elements had piled about her.

Having nothing better to do, Kioga continued his excavations until he had laid bare several yards of the interior of the ancient craft. He had about decided that this foolish labor had gone far enough when the bit of driftwood he had been using as a shovel encountered something hard and unyielding. This proved to be one of five bands of rusted metal which in turn enclosed a great chest, the size of a large trunk, secured by what had once been a great padlock, now a huge mass of solidified rust.

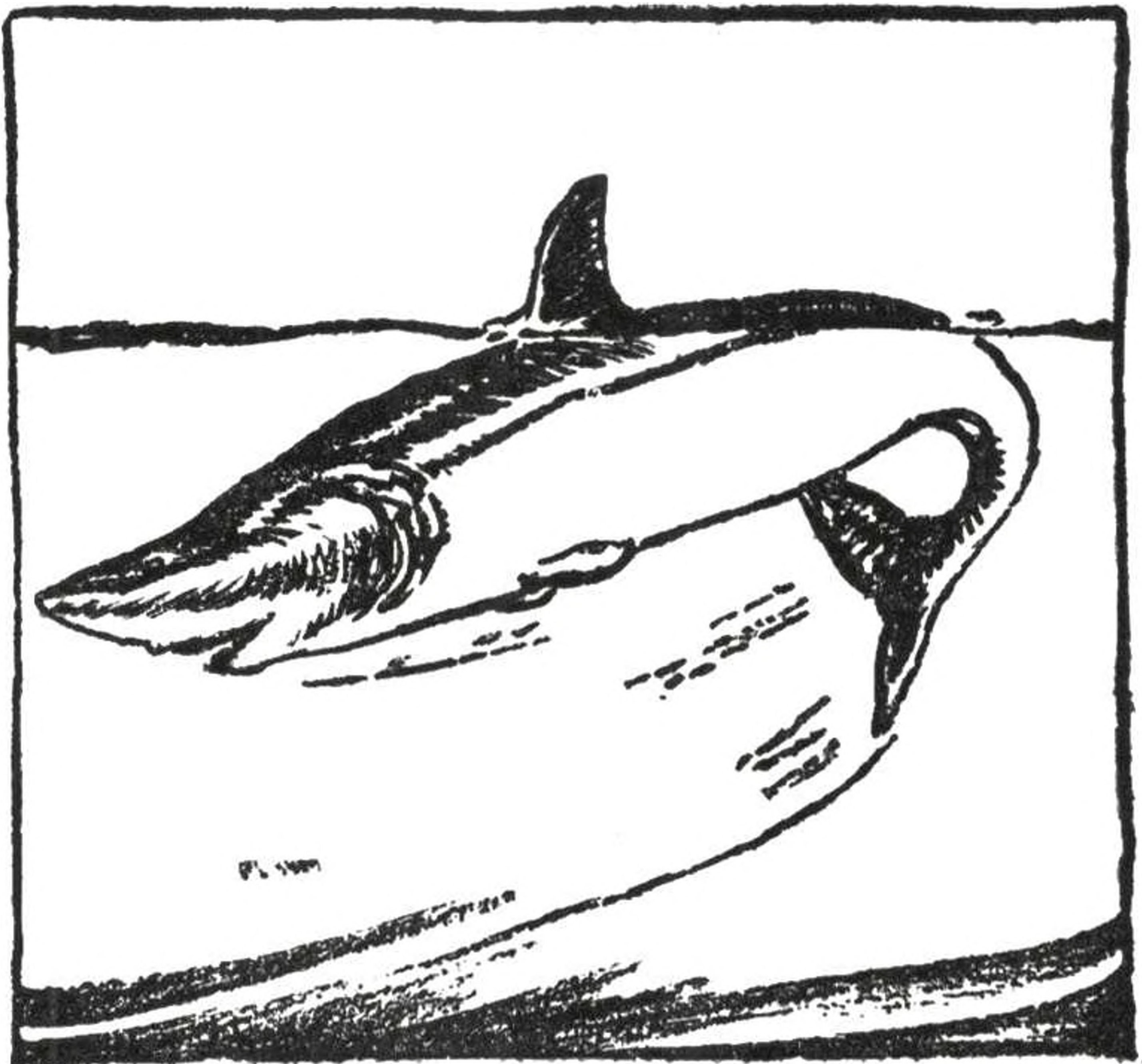
Concluding that whatever was so carefully protected must be valuable indeed, with great care the Snow Hawk levered his discovery from its centuries-old base. Heavy as it was, its weight was no challenge to the great muscles of the youth; and he soon had it upon solid ground, where he knelt to examine the fastenings.

Old though these were, they defied the prying power of his knife-blade; nor could he pierce the thick wall of the chest beyond the depth of an inch, for it was lined with a harder material. He therefore decided to transport it entire to his cave.

This was, of itself, a herculean undertaking through the tangled labyrinth of cañons, forests and streams between the coast and the cave. But in a week he had accomplished it, by gradual stages, and he was ready to batter it open. Swinging a heavy war club, he fractured and then parted the rusted iron bands one by one, until finally he was able to raise the cover, beneath which lay a piece of decayed woven stuff which came apart in his hands like spider-web. And then, of a sudden he stood erect, gazing speechless into the open chest.

The top compartment was choked with gems, some in the quaint settings of days long past, but the great majority unset, and in some cases uncut.

There were flashing diamonds from India, emeralds and turquoises from Egypt; rubies red as pigeon's blood from dark Ceylon; rare chrysoberyls, large as robins' eggs, with the opalescent luster found only in the finest stones, glowed raspberry-red in the firelight, but leaf-green by daylight. He saw red Burmese tourmalines, yellow-green Ceylonese peridots; and gold-colored Maturan zircons



bright as diamonds rested beside greenish aquamarines and round blue Cashmere sapphires. Velvety, lustrous pearls with rosy sheen, taken from the depths of the Persian Gulf by a long-dead Malabar native diver mingled with soft-glowing violet amethysts dug from the bowels of the earth by some Mexican slave.

Such was the treasure the Snow Hawk took from the centuries-buried hulk. Precisely how long it had lain beneath the sands God and the sea only knew.

Yet the very richness and value of the find offer the single clue to its origin. Only the fabulous hoards of the Indies could have yielded such a princely cargo, and that in the days when corsairs roamed the seas taking tribute from conquering kings who had learned to bleed empires of accumulated riches.

Beneath the compartments containing the gems lay another containing solid layers of gold coins and small heavy oblong ingots. These Kioga hefted and finally piled criss-cross into a little wall against the side of the cave. Over them he tossed a bear-skin, then continued his exploration of the chest.

FOR hours he sifted the gems between his fingers, watching their brilliant sparkling in the firelight. To the last layer, he had retained the hope of finding something readable; he would have eagerly traded gems, gold, chest and all for twenty printed English volumes.

Despite his disappointment, however, a new idea had come to him; and within the hour he was swinging at a swift pace back toward the coast. . . .

He had followed the coastline for miles in either direction, finding nothing but impassable shoals. Now for the thousandth time he calculated the possible lo-

cation of the invisible channel through which wreckage of every variety found its way. That the sea-lions entered from afar he knew, but they came straight through the smother of breakers in which no man-made craft could live. Other forms of life also entered here, among them the sharks; but their route lay beneath the surface.

Taking a position above their cut-under lairs he watched several of the slit-mouthed gray monsters come and go like ghouls, then drew from his quiver an arrow.

Making fast a long thin rawhide cord to the arrow, he tied to the other end of the cord a leafy branch. Swift and sure the arrow flew, lodging in the ugly body behind the great dorsal fin. At once the shark sounded the depths, then hurtled seaward—and the branch followed its every underwater turn and twist. In the directions taken by that floating branch, Kioga knew, lay the channel seaward.

He repeated this performance, but used a strong rope attached to a harpoon he had fashioned, and fastened that rope to a raft of logs upon which he himself perched. Then he buried the harpoon in one of the gray monsters, deep enough to hold, but not so deep as to kill.

The beast's sudden rush was abruptly checked. The raft moved, at first slowly, then faster. In a few moments the shore was a hundred yards behind as the panic-stricken shark, unable to free itself of the weapon, dragged the raft in its wake.

IT was a mad, perilous ride, at first. Great seas washed over the raft, yet each ebb found the Snow Hawk clinging atop it. Soon the first swift pace slackened, and the raft rode the swells more easily. Now he noted landmarks which would aid his return through the rocky labyrinth which comprised the inner reefs.

Occasionally he saw the broken and battered remains of what had once been a ship pounding to ruin on the rocks. Many hours passed before he won through the inner reefs into the more open water of the outer shoals. Only now did he sever the rope and give his unwilling benefactor its freedom. On a great rocky island he rested for the duration of the tide, eating of the clams which he dug from between the rocks. Then he pushed on again, observing more and more hulks as he went. From among these, he realized, had come both of his own finds.

For several hours he watched the whales broach clear of the sea, and with streams of water sluicing down their black sides fall thunderously back.

He had done what man had hitherto failed to do, in discovering the exit from reef-bound Natowapi into the open seas. Returning by the use of pole and paddle and favoring current, and guided by the landmarks previously memorized, he thought long and deeply on the value of his discovery, and determined to come this way again at every opportunity, in order to familiarize himself with the tortuous windings of the channel; for already in the back of his head was the intention to set out some day for the Other World.

HUNTING leisurely back toward where he had last seen the bears,—deep in the densely wooded hills of Tsusgina-i,—his mind full of thoughts foreign to his surroundings, it was some time before Kioga's senses informed him of curious events occurring in the forest.

A tiger passed him in the opposite direction without his taking particular notice. Then a band of silent wolves coursed an elk beneath his tree, but slid to a halt upon their haunches, as before a stone wall, at the mouth of the valley into which the prey had vanished. For several minutes the fierce beasts milled with lifted muzzles and strangely lowered brushes, trying the air-currents.

Then, as with one accord, they turned tail and soundlessly disappeared.

Now Kioga knew that in such numbers the wolves were masters of the woods. It was a reversal of one of the wilderness habits for them to turn before accomplishing the kill, an anomaly he could not afford to overlook. Moreover, he suddenly recalled, Tagu and his breed, so common to these dark glades, were curiously absent, and that the streams, usually bearing the canoes of the Koshoni hunters, were oddly empty of hunting craft.

A hush seemed hanging over the entire wilderness as, thoroughly awake to his surroundings now, Kioga advanced cautiously toward the mouth of the valley in which the elk had hesitantly disappeared. Then, in an instant, he received the thrilling knowledge through his nostrils: Not for many years had he caught that powerful odor—the penetrating, exciting and fearsome scent of bears in great numbers—not since the last concourse of the Bear-People.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Concourse of the Bears

KIOGA found the forest floor a living, shaggy, moving rug of mingled weaving bears: grizzlies with dried mud from the swamps of Gate-gwa upon their paws and hanging manes; huge brown bears from the cliff-caves of Utawagunta; black, rough-coated brutes from the forests of Walasihi. There were also smaller glacier bears, roach-backs and silvertips.

It was a magnificent sight to Kioga; and when he caught sight of Aki bulking huge among the other bears, he hurried quietly to his side and was quickly surrounded by his faithful family of giants.

This strange reversion to gregarious habits by animals inclined to be solitary ranks with the mystery of the elephant's final resting-place. No man knows how it happens, nor what instinct brings the bears of Natowapi together in bands at a place somehow known to all. But this much is certain: they fraternize in temporary amity, during which time they root up the ground searching for rodents, tear apart every dead log for miles looking for insects; they then denude the mushroom-beds and berry-patches and mark every tree high up its trunk with deep scrapes of their claws. So much the Indians know. Evidences of wholesale battle thereafter are common, but the reasons therefor remain a puzzle.

Kioga's observant eyes told him this concourse had progressed perilously near to the point of general hostilities. Of all the bears comprising the concourse, Kioga dominated but a handful; a huge silvertip and a smaller but equally vicious black had by bluff or force, established themselves masters of the others, subduing all challengers one by one. At any moment these two would be at each other's throats.

Meantime the entire concourse was becoming more restless momentarily. The bears were whining, grunting, coughing and champing their jaws. Kioga, sensing what was to come, took his station on a wide-flung limb well above them. A sudden roar from many score deep throats sustained itself for fully five minutes in an awful volume of sound, as the unrest grew. As if at a signal, the silvertip and the black approached each other warily, each circling the other with menacingly bared fangs, both towering erect upon their hind legs.

Suddenly Urga the silvertip dropped to all fours and with a mighty lunge struck at his adversary. In another moment their excitement would communicate itself to all, and the clearing would become a battle-ground and a death-bed for many of the band.

But Urga had not yet closed with his leaner foe when something black and coiling slithered down from above, opening out with a report like a rifle-shot and exploding full against the silvertip's sensitive snout. Uttering wild howls of pain, he rolled coughing and grunting upon the green, surrounded by the others of his immediate and amazed band.

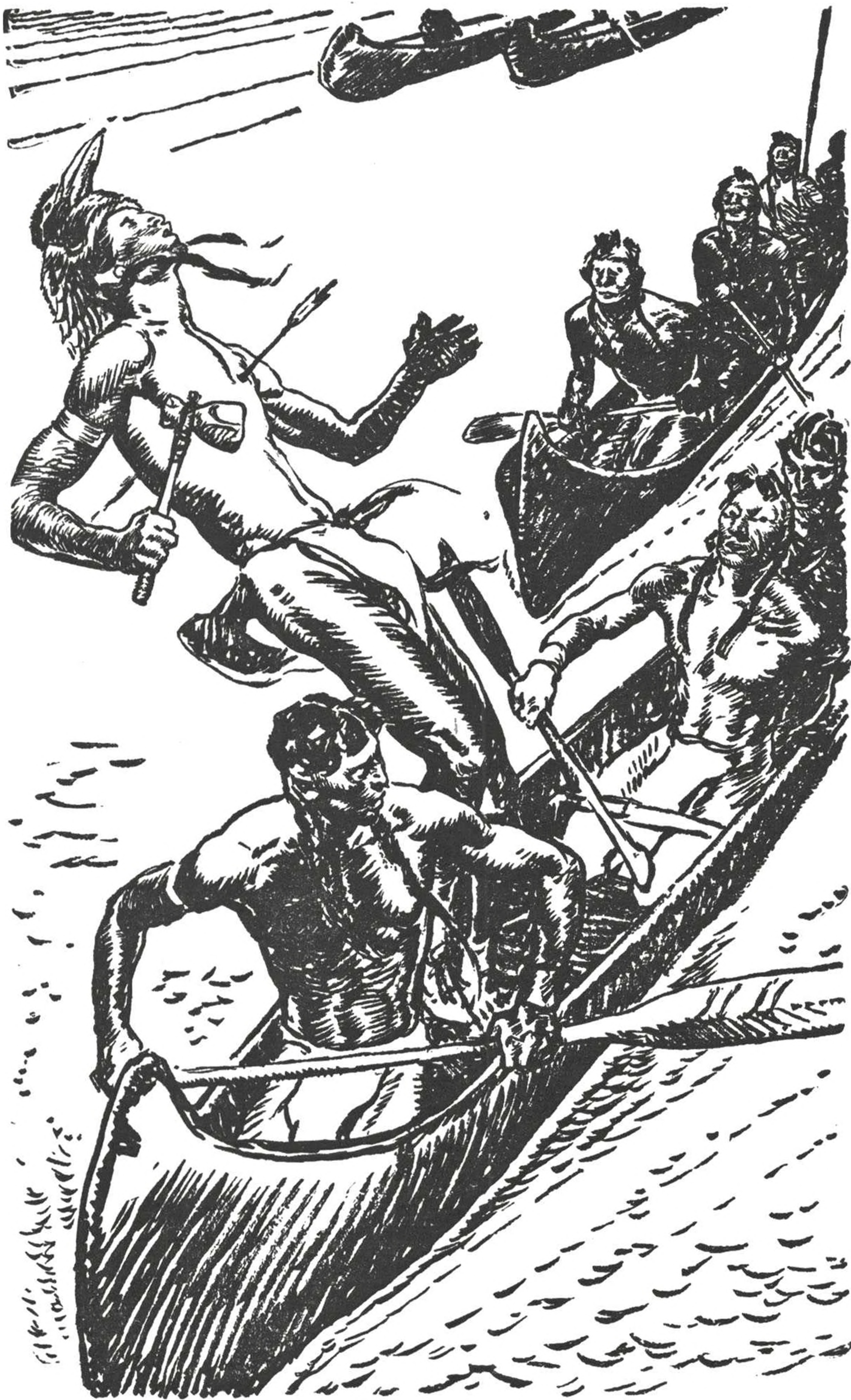
The enraged black saw in this intervention only a fortuitous offer of assistance, and rushed upon the silvertip, foaming at the jaws.

Aki saw the man-cub accelerate his swing, and recalling Moka the bully, looked for Kioga to mete the same punishment to the black, for already he was hurtling earthward like a cannon-ball down his rope, his legs drawn up. Then, as he would have swung past the snarling, snapping combatants, man and bear collided like two bowling-balls. The black rolled ten feet, and when he recovered the thong was again darting downward.

THE affair could have but one ending. A dozen times the bear felt the bitter lash before he retreated, filled with a mighty respect for this man-cub and his long, black snake-like arm; while among the remainder of the band the man-whelp vastly increased his influence by the example he had made of the two savage belligerents.

His steady oscillation above their heads attracted the attention of the entire gathering who watched, as if fascinated, swaying their huge brute heads back and forth, small blood-shot eyes gleaming. Choosing a moment when the clamor had somewhat subsided, in the blend of growls, gutturals and meaningful sounds pitched below the register of ordinary human ears, Kioga addressed the bears. What he said, we can not know; doubtless it was about food, for when he had finished, the harsh growls had become eager whines, and even Urga had submitted without further struggle.

When the bears chose, they ruled the forest. In making himself master of the bears, Kioga became literally the uncrowned king of the wilds. His scepter, the symbol of his domination, was the



"See this ax!" he shouted. "It shall find a sheath in his brain!" Scarce had the words left the medicine-man's lips when the feathers of an arrow appeared in his breast.

punishing fifteen-foot whip. More than one bear soon bore the tell-tale mark of its vicious authority; but not one beast lay dead behind when Kioga led them down the mountain toward the richer valleys below.

The concourse was very nearly scattered by one of those sudden storms peculiar to lofty mountains, which struck them as they descended, without the slightest warning. A tree near by seemed to explode beneath a splintering lightning-bolt. A moment later the toppling giant crashed into the lower jungle, pinning two of the bears to earth, and as the thunder burst with deafening crashes which rolled the whole circle of the firmament, drowning all thought in its reverberations, the bears began to mill round like cattle.

Blue sparks crackled into the air from their ear-tips and fur, and each animal wore a purplish electrical halo. The unseen force with which the atmosphere was laden struck in waves; giant muscles convulsed and twitched involuntarily in response. The stench of sulphur reeked away from rocks struck by the cease-

less blue and yellow lightning now blinding them, and thunder seemed to be bursting right in their midst.

But the worst was now over. The bears shook gaping jaws and half-paralyzed bodies to send the blood coursing freely through their veins again; and finally they lay quiet, drenched, dripping, watching the awesome play of the elements.

As they rested, half choking on each breath of wet air, from above came the ominous creaking roar that warns of landslide. Now, in dim view through the curtain of rain, the slide swept past, bearing on its earthy crest trees, rocks and dead or dying animals it had snatched. A moment of silence as this racing rubble leaped over a cliff into space then a rumble, muted by the thunder, as it destroyed and killed anew in its irresistible search for a level.

Shaking their dripping coats and manes like huge dogs, the bears now ambled toward the edge of the landslide to feed upon the tidbits inevitably found at such a place—the bodies of animals killed in their tracks before they could escape. Here for two days longer they remained while the rain diminished to a warm drizzle and long skeins of floating mist eddied in every cave and lair. . . .

The respect of the bears for the two-legged creature who led them grew daily in proportion as they waxed fat with good eating. For two months he had now held them together, wondering how long such harmony could continue, and suspecting that it would end with the exhaustion of the available food-supply or the coming of the approaching winter, already heralded by the reddening sun.

The berries were all but gone now. There remained only the salmon streams, their bottoms black with fish headed upstream toward the spawning beds.

In that direction Kioga now turned his steps, followed in undisputed obedience by his shaggy companions.

CHAPTER XIX

The Battle on the Acoopee

WHILE Kioga was leading his bears through the jungle of thickets toward food, Four Scars, surviving nephew of Yellow Weasel and heir to his position as shaman to the Long-Knife Society, was leading his band into the wilderness—but for a very different reason.

The same superstitious fear to which Kioga's warfare against the Long-Knives had given birth suggested to one member of the Long-Knife Society a means by which he might cut himself away from it and from all the evil fortune which seemed to plague it. This savage had betrayed to Sawamic the full details of the carefully planned uprising, and the old leader had personally led his stalwarts in a surprise attack upon the plotters. The resulting battle between Four Scars' little army and the loyal forces had raged fierce and hot, until by a desperate assault the defenders had driven the Long-Knives to their canoes.

TWO hours later the absent hunters returned to find the village bathed in blood and littered with dead, of whom the most illustrious was Sawamic himself. Had the hunters come in time, the Long-Knives must have been annihilated, but the Koshoni determined to set out in pursuit. Twenty canoes were soon coursing on the heels of Four Scars' band.

Knowing that pursuit was inevitable and that sanctuary would likely be denied him among the other tribes, the wily traitor fled toward the untrodden wilderness of Tsusgina-i by way of the Acoopee.

Only their great extremity could have driven him to seek refuge in the known territory of the bears—this and the hope that the Koshoni would not follow into the Ghost Country—a vain hope, as it proved.

Thus it came about that as Kioga led his bears south and eastward to the salmon streams, Four Scars was leading his band north and westward along the shallower and unfamiliar Acoopee; while far behind came the Koshoni, gaining in proportion as the Long-Knives concluded themselves safe and reduced speed.

From a lofty crag to which he had ascended for a view of the surrounding terrain, Kioga saw and recognized the canoes of Four Scars in the distance and made haste to be on hand when they came to rest in that wide bottle-neck cove concealed by overhanging trees wherein lurked the bears in mighty force.

From the impenetrable foliage he looked down upon a dozen war-canoes filled with crafty warriors rendered doubly cunning, revengeful and ruthless by the peril to which their treachery had exposed them. A sullen fierceness lay

upon their swarthy paint-smeared lineaments; Four Scars wore the horrid mask of the raven-god, indicating that this deity's influence possessed him at this moment; to the accompaniment of pantomime and savage emphasis he was haranguing his warriors thus:

"The wolves pursue the cunning quarry. Let them beware, lest it turn to strike; for the blood is not yet all run from the veins of the Long-Knives!" Grunts of savage approval greeted these words, enunciated with an expression of vicious menace. "The quarry must find its lair, whence it must first hunt for its own existence; secondly for its mate, without which its line perishes. The maidens of Hopeka are fair, and the canoes of the Long-Knives swift. Need more be said?" A grim silence answered in the negative.

"Thereafter," continued Four Scars, "a name must be given the village of the Long-Knives. His dream has told Four Scars that it shall be 'Head on a Pole,' and that the head shall be crowned with the scalp of Kioga!"

THE shrewd savage had known how to electrify his followers. The look of stoicism which the warriors had assumed dropped away, and ferocious smiles of anticipation darkened their swart faces. Intoxicated by the word-picture he was drawing, Four Scars raised his shining weapons aloft.

"See this ax!" he shouted. "It shall find a sheath in his brain! Behold this knife—thirsty for his blood." So boasted Four Scars to a mutter of applause. "We shall see whose medicine is greater."

In the shadow of the cliff to which Kioga had retreated a bow was straining. Scarce had the inflammatory words left the medicine-man's lips when another voice—the whispering voice of an arrow in swift flight—replied to the challenge. The feathers of an arrow appeared suddenly in the painted breast. Then, without uttering another sound, the rebel leader toppled lifeless into the water beside his canoe.

A momentary startled hush was followed by wild confusion in which mingled howls of hate and fear resounded in the supposedly safe retreat. Then the Indians sought frantically to back-paddle out of arrow-range.

Kioga had sped his arrow in heat, knowing, in the light of what Four Scars had said, that he was executing a traitor. But his anger went no further, and soon the invisible archer was engulfed by the foliage and returning toward the bears. As he went, the advance scout-canoes of the Koshoni turned the bend of the river.

To their wild whoop of discovery, the Long-Knives shrieked back their own dread cries of defiance. As the Koshoni avengers bent to their paddles, the quarry, escape cut off, drew several canoes upon the beach, determined to offer battle.

Kioga had not taken ten steps when he caught the notes of triumph and defiance echoed in those war-cries; and returning, he took in the situation at a glance. It was not one which would require his interference; nor was he much concerned about its outcome. Doubtless he would have witnessed the battle with interest, without raising a hand for either side.

But the bears, restless from their extended contact with one another and eager to disband, had caught the scent of the intruders. As the sound of approaching warfare racketed through the glens, an ominous rumble gathered volume deep in that cove. The forest floor seemed to weave into a rolling sea of shaggy bodies as the great beasts milled, infuriated by the violation of their hitherto hidden and impenetrable territory.

Could they have gained exit by any other route, they would probably have done so. But the only way out was through the cove, and already a mass movement began. Silent as vast phantoms the bears shuffled through the underbrush jungle in a charge no power on earth could check until many miles lay between the animals and the detested presence of man.

WITH their backs to this menace, the Long-Knives did not realize their predicament. But the Koshoni did. An explosive hiss from the leading canoe suddenly arrested the steady paddle-stroke. Following the lean pointing finger of Cipikau, every eye focused upon several lumbering blurs against the background of the cliffs.

"The Ani-tsa-guhi!" came the medicine-man's awed whisper. "The Bear People are on the war-road!"

"It is better to go back!" muttered another Indian, a warrior with no desire to test the power of Cipikau's medicine against such opponents as these.

"Agh! Back! Back! Seven generations of medicine-men have not looked

upon such a spectacle since the village of Ocowomo was gutted by bears in the sun of the comet! Back, turn back!"

But no man moved. Each remained rooted to his seat as if hypnotized by the fascination of the sight ahead.

Already the maddened bears had run amok, lumbering from the undergrowth like veritable juggernauts, smashing and scattering the drawn-up canoes of the Long-Knives like twigs with their mighty blows, and roaring thickly as they felt their great jaws sinking into unresisting flesh and crumbling bone.

DURING the brief moment in which their terrifying appearance petrified the Long-Knives with fear, a dozen more bears closed swiftly in, annihilating every man standing ashore, and splashing belly-deep in the agitated stream, in long surprisingly agile bounds, to attack the second row of canoes.

What seemed a solid wall of great beasts poured forth from the underbrush and charged into deeper water, with booming, deep-chested roars voicing their rage. The paralysis of fear fell from the Long-Knives. After their first wild yells of startled alarm they prepared their tardy defense. Lifting their voices in the battle-cry of their clans, they added another note to the frightful din of that bellowing shambles.

With the smell of blood hot in their nostrils, the remainder of the bear horde roared into the fray, blocking off the exit of eight canoes from the trap, rending and tearing the occupants as their weight swamped the craft.

Here and there a heavy canoe loaded with humanity sank at one end under a massive paw and rose high in air at the other, as the grizzly attackers clawed the warriors out of their barks, like mice out of burrows.

Now and then a bear fell heavily with an arrow through the palate and into the brain. But around him reared others bristling with the feathered shafts, their rugged coats matted and dripping from a dozen wounds, but untouched in a vital part. Moreover, many of the bears knew the weapons of their opponents from past experience, and struck down lance or spear with contemptuous ease, countering with bone-crushing blows of mighty forepaws which, even when they missed a mark, bashed gaping holes in the foundering canoes.

Human flesh and blood could not long avail against the tactics of the bears, who fought with the ferocity induced by long repression and aggravated by the maddening prick of hastily shot arrows.

Raging to destroy and kill, they sometimes attacked even those of their own number who stood in the way. In the wild heat of the battle Aki fell under such a mindless assault, just as he was about to rear beside one of the remaining canoes, which had been forced back under the overhang. And Kioga was drawn into the fight in spite of himself.

The warrior nearest Aki had been poised to leap from the high bow of the craft and now perceived the great bear's plight. He lifted a murderous club, with a ten-inch spike of flint.

Simultaneously fingers that were like tightening coils of wire fell upon the savage's brawny arm, as from the overhang there dropped a human form that was Nemesis, boarding the last canoe of the Long-Knives. The blow that would have been fatal to Aki never fell, and before the Indian had recovered from Kioga's unexpected check, he had gone to join the other struggling forms in the river round about.

Off balance after his sudden defense of Aki, Kioga would have been easy prey for several of the Long-Knives remaining in the canoe. But Aki, in rearing, rested one great paw upon the longboat, precipitating its other occupants into the river, and was now engaged in smashing feathered and painted skulls under as fast as they appeared on the surface.

At sight of a naked human being, rising erect and alive out of the wildest press of the bloody meleé and forcing a way through the crowding bears ashore, who fell back beneath the powerful suasion of the heavy whip, the Koshoni could endure no more.

A moment later they were in broken flight toward the Hiwassee, having taken captive the Long-Knives who had survived the slaughter.

CHAPTER XX

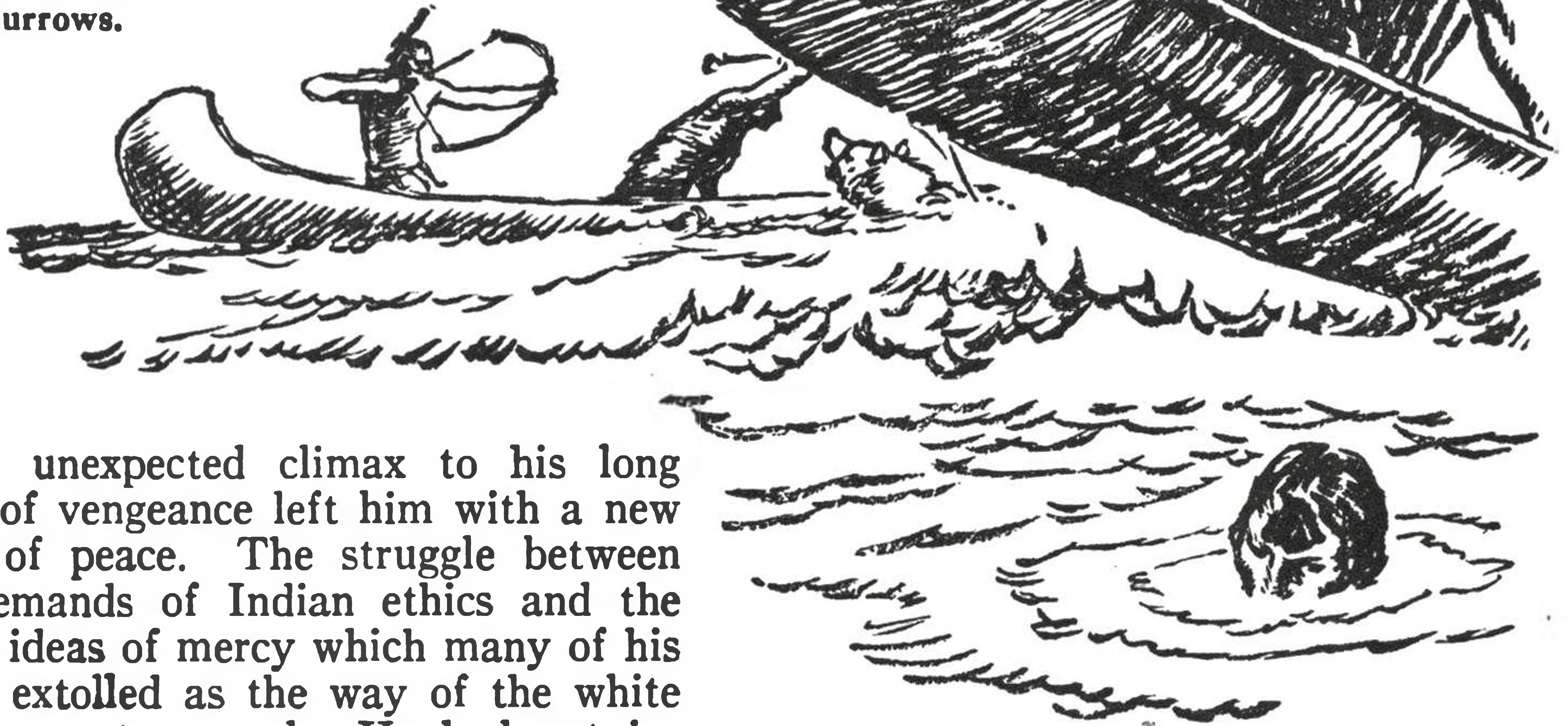
The Warrior Chieftain

AT the healing, steaming sulphur springs the bear concourse was coming to an end. Though Kioga had again matched his powers of persuasion against the instinct of the bears to return to their solitude, this time he had lost.

Without farewells, as is their way, the members of the great band drifted off,

formed later into smaller natural groups and shuffled away in the direction of their various habitats, silent but for the clicking of their long claws, which soon faded away.

In a short time all but a handful had gone, of which a few elected to remain with Kioga and the Seven, swelling his band to a dozen. Kioga himself took up again his old way of life, sometimes lost in the printed lore of another world, sometimes drawn by the lure of the sea toward the cliffs, to dream and search the distant reefs for sight of some floating thing bearing the imprint of distant civilization.



The bear horde roared into the affray; the grizzly attackers clawed the warriors out of their barks like mice out of burrows.

The unexpected climax to his long years of vengeance left him with a new sense of peace. The struggle between the demands of Indian ethics and the newer ideas of mercy which many of his books extolled as the way of the white race, was at an end. He had not intended so terrible a fate for his enemies as that worked upon them by chance and his bears; but he experienced no regrets. . . . The sacred obligation to the beloved dead was discharged.

ONE day, toward spring, he set out to find raw materials for his proposed craft—a canoe which he would build, to sail toward the land of his unremembered father. It must be a long, strong canoe, not of framework and bark, but dug out of a solid tree-trunk, as were the war-canoes of some of the northern tribes.

His search led him along the broad Hiwassee, through the jungle of towering underbrush which lined its banks and arched above the river, in some places quite covering it overhead. Twice in an hour he fancied he heard a faint and prolonged sound, muted by distance, but dismissed it as the sigh of the breeze in the forest. Finally, however, he was forced to recognize it as the cry of an Indian herald.

For some moments he listened with tilted head, then melted away through the trees in the direction of the sound, swinging soundlessly along the arches just above the shoreline. In an hour he passed a lone courier, and paused to watch the man cease paddling, call aloud a name and a few sentences, listen intently, then paddle onward.

The name was his own. The sentences invited him to counsel with his people, the Koshoni. Could it be, he wondered, some ruse engineered for his capture?

Continuing along the river and taking full advantage of the natural cover, he soon came upon an Indian camp. A host of war-canoes enlivened the waters near that scene, and the shore was covered with craft drawn upon the bank. An abatis had been built upon the land-

ward side, its pointed branches turned toward the forest as protection against wild animals. An air of expectation seemed to pervade the large band of warriors and chiefs whenever the lone courier returned; yet despite this a sense of grimness hung over the gathering.

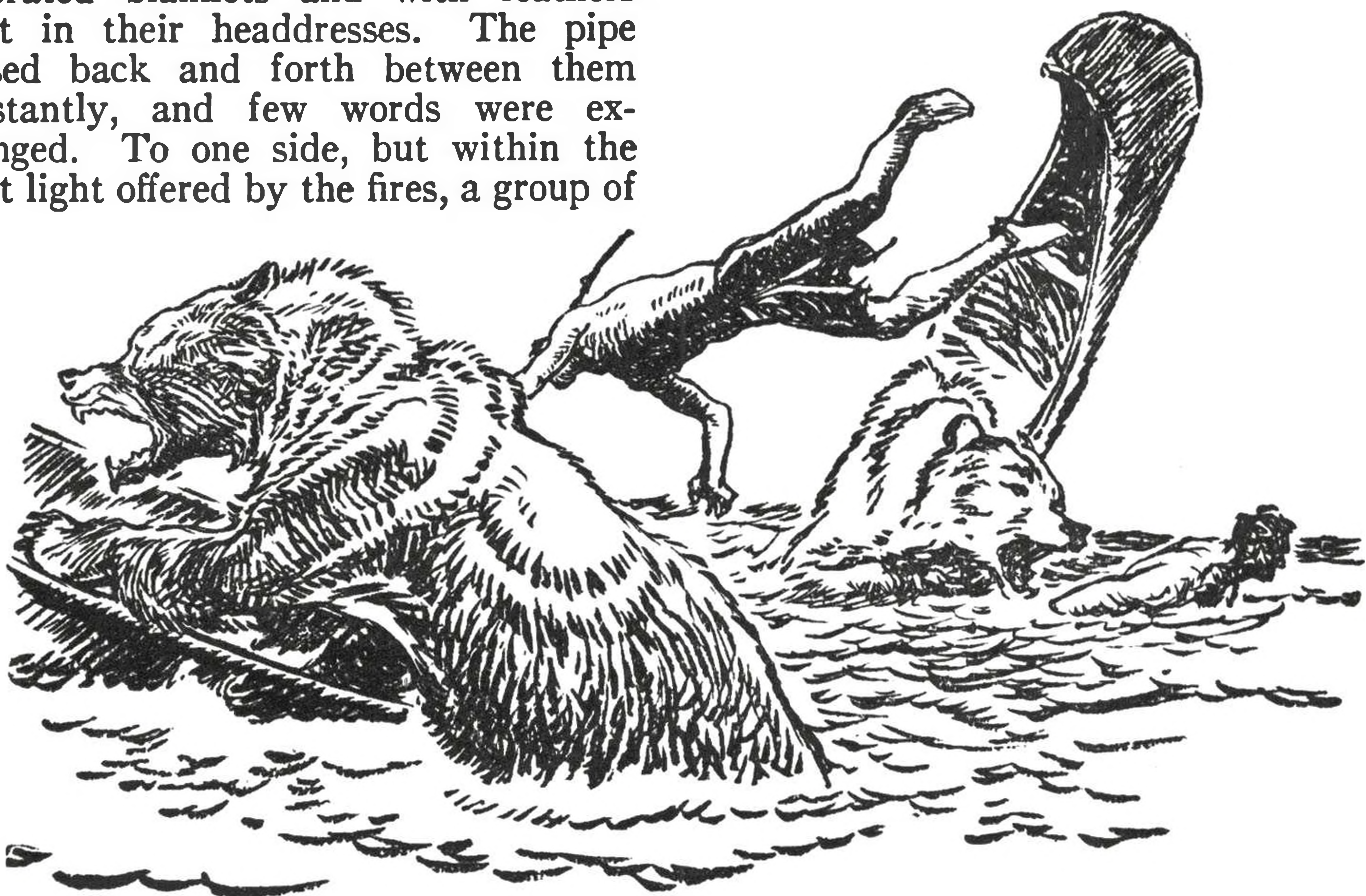
From the variety of costumes and the number of men, Kioga concluded that something important was afoot. Accordingly he stole toward the meeting-place and from the outer darkness observed the activity within the formidable wall of out-pointed branches.

Tiny fires glowed near the shore, about which sat Indian chiefs muffled in their decorated blankets and with feathers erect in their headdresses. The pipe passed back and forth between them constantly, and few words were exchanged. To one side, but within the faint light offered by the fires, a group of warriors, naked to the loins, half-heartedly threw tomahawk or knife at a mark. Others were engaged in the repair of canoes or straightening arrows and restringing bows.

Now and then a lone scout appeared to announce briefly that his efforts to attract the attention of the Snow Hawk had been vain, and instantly another fresh scout set out to carry on the search. Occasionally a hunter returned silently to camp with game shot somewhere along the shore.

The smell of roasting meat had attracted numerous wild beasts whose eyes glowed in the darkness, but the acrid smoke of the fires dispersed most of them. These eyes were but little fiercer than the eyes of the men about the fires; for despite the peace-pipe, distrustful glances passed to and fro; and beneath the painted blankets each man gripped his most reliable weapon tightly in hand.

All this Kioga noted in a single comprehending glance. Grimly he fitted an arrow to the string. If this were treachery, he would soon know of it. Drawing until the barb pricked his fingers, he loosed. The sharp whistle of the shaft brought every eye around, and its ringing impact, as it scattered one of the little fires, contained an unmistakable note of warning. For a moment every man in the clearing froze immovable, lest the least move draw another and deadlier missile; they knew that their search was ended.



Into the startled silence which had descended upon the camp there dropped the sonorous syllables of the Indian tongue as if from the air about them.

"Whom seek the chiefs in the forests of Tsusgina-i?"

"We seek Kioga, son of Mokuyi, him who led the Ani-tsa-guhi, the Bear-People, to war against the Long-Knives."

"*Ni kauto.* I have come."

More than one hand had leaped instinctively to hidden arms at the sound of that voice, but fell away again as men remembered for what purpose the chiefs had come here.

"*Ho mita koda!*" came the invitation to enter the camp, from a chieftain who had been elected spokesman for the rest. "You see how we lay aside our arms."

"*Kyi!* And also I see many whose arrows have pursued me through the mountains since many years ago!"

"Kahkit soyit pwoau!" came the bidding to a feast of venison, again in the voice of the spokesman-chief. "We are here bringing peace. Shamed are many of us because of our long warfare with Kioga. But that passes now, as the waters of the Hiwassee, never to return."

Again came the voice of the invisible outlaw:

"Snow Hawk hears not the voice of the Peacemaker."

A silence fell over the Indian camp as old Ukimaws delivered a long eloquent and reverent eulogy, concluding:

"Sawamic has gone away. His people mourn him. He hunts tonight in the land of his ancestors. With his passing, evil days are upon the Koshoni. The Great Ones Above turn away Their faces. The great council ends in disagreement. War threatens our tribes, brother against brother. Then the Koshoni will be easy prey for the Ahwa-Kanek."

"What do the chieftains want of Kioga?"

"We are come to ask that he join the Council of the war-makers. There is no agreement among us, except in this."

"Whose voice spoke the name of Kioga?"

"Uktena, father of Kias," came the instant reply, and in this answer Kioga learned the gratitude of the old warrior, whose son he had saved from a terrible death beneath the talons and fangs of Guna, moons ago.

A LONG silence followed, and when Snow Hawk did not answer, a second chieftain arose to address the unseen warrior.

"Muhwase speaks, for the People of the Plume. By this token Muhwase has cast his vote for Kioga, son of Mokuyi!" He placed a brightly decorated pipe upon the ground in the semicircular clearing.

"By this token," declared another, "Nakuti speaks for the tribe of the People-with-their-ears-pierced." A bundle of snow-white ermine-skins dropped beside the pipe. "Nakuti's vote goes to Kioga!"

A fourth chieftain rose and laid down a string of cunningly matched eagle-talons. "These," said he, "go with my vote representing the Tugari, who will not be placated by empty promises of union. Pitwaskum has talked!"

"Kinesa came without gifts," uttered a tall and brawny figure with many scars upon head and torso. "But this canoe which bore him is the token by which he votes with his brothers! Through Kinesa the Cliff People have chosen."

ONE by one, to accompaniment of wide gesture and expressive pantomime, the various chieftains of the Kindred Tribes pledged their fealty to the proposed war-chief; and when it came the turn of Pam'apami, the chosen representative of the Pipe-Smokers, he seized his bow and dramatically broke it across his knee.

"This," said he impressively, "is the Koshoni—a broken bow. This string which holds the pieces together is our hope for peace. If Pam'apami binds it about the two pieces, Kioga has accepted. If I cut it thus—so his refusal cuts our hopes, and living men now here will lie dead when the holy sun returns."

Kioga was first amazed, but later impressed by the obvious sincerity of the assembled leaders. He had had no desire to undertake further responsibilities which would interfere with his long-considered departure. Yet he was, after all, sprung from a great race whose leadership has turned the tide of world history. In the end he capitulated, answering:

"Bind the pieces, O Pam'apami, for, by the broken bow, Kioga accepts!" Then, with the long low swing which set so many barriers at naught, he dropped into the clearing, and faced the Council.

The Indian leaders looked into the eyes of a man as tall as any of them but more perfectly and gracefully formed than their best example of manhood; he stood straight as a lance, erect and proud as an Inca prince of the blood.

The action of Kioga in thus boldly putting himself within their power consorted well with his reputation for bravery. Many who might have experienced some lingering feelings of hatred toward him succumbed to admiration, and after a moment of dead silence there echoed across the waters from ten-score bronzed throats and lungs of leather, the spontaneous reverberating thunder of the tribal salute. Distrust, fear of treachery, festering hatreds, all fell away in that sudden wild acclaim.

An hour later, having smoked the calumet with every member of the delegation and accepted the ornate eagle-feather headdress emblematic of his new office, Kioga abandoned his life of outlawry and ostracism and was borne tri-

umphantly downstream in a swift craft which seemed to fly under the powerfully wielded blades of ten brawny braves. Behind him came the armada of all the tribes of the Koshoni, touched into wild barbaric splendor by the beams of the smoking torchlights affixed to the prow of every canoe; while on the still night air the ancient chanted music of the hymn to the warrior-chieftain rose like the swelling notes of a giant organ.

In the village of Hopeka a vociferous clamor welcomed the long-absent one back to the scene of happy and tragic memories. Within the hour the warriors and chieftains met and formed a circle in the village clearing.

Upon the dance arena was then enacted a ritual as old as the Indian race. A hole was made in the ground, into which a hatchet was placed. One by one the members of the council, followed by bands of warriors representing the various tribes, came forward to add a handful of earth to the growing pile which now hid the weapon from view. Soon would begin the dance upon the spot, and already the throb of the tom-toms came whispering forth at the touch of the drum-sticks.

Great words began to be spoken by the various leaders, exhorting all to forget their enmities toward each other for the sake of the common cause. Finally it came time for him to talk whom all most desired to hear. Boldly Kioga then stood forth and in words rich in Oriental metaphor of the Koshoni tongue, spoke of his long outlawry, now happily ended; praised the bravery of those who had pursued him these many years; craved the friendship of his enemies in the name of union and peace. Finally, turning to the war-councilors he called upon these leaders of the Kindred Tribes for their military support.

"Our enemies, the Ahwa-Kanek," he concluded, "act as one man in hunting buffalo and in making war. As one tribe the Koshoni must unite likewise against cunning foe. To this end, when my brothers return to their tribes, they will carry this word:

"When the Sun shows his face above rim of southern mountains, every warrior will come behind his chief; every chief behind war-chief. By trail and by stream all will meet at Painted Cliffs.

"There Koshoni will teach Ahwa-Kanek what war means; with coming of long dark they shall have learned nevermore to harass United Seven Tribes!"

Fired to frenzy by this talk a brave trod the first measure of the war-dance of his clan. Others leaped into the arena amind the chanting of the singers and the relentless pound of the drums.

When the delirium of the dance had ended, the feasting began, during which the remaining singers intoned the ceremonial songs more and more sleepily, until, at last, quiet descended upon the village, and only the distant howling of the wolves disturbed the deep quiet.

So it came to pass that after many years Kioga the Snow Hawk returned to the association with other men so long denied him by the strange chain of circumstances that followed, after a boy left the palisade in the company of a bear, so long ago.

CHAPTER XXI

The Turning of the Ahwa-Kanek

NEWS of Kioga's election, like that of the battle on the Acoopee, blazed swiftly along the forest streams by courier-canoe, by inter-tribal runner and drum signal; and under the ægis of this strange personality a new Koshoni was being born.

With the first faint flush of the sun after the long winter night, a mighty force wended its way along the forest streams converging toward a common center, but by routes necessarily as winding and serpentine as a Chinese maze.

Surrounded by several hundred fierce and pitiless warriors armed to the teeth, the Snow Hawk awaited the remainder of his Indian bands. He was soon joined by two hundred braves from the plateaus of Wero-moco. Their torsos glistened with red, blue and yellow pigment; their long hair was tied in knots atop their shaven skulls. Dead-white paint thickly smeared in hideous circles about eyes and lips added a terrific effect of wildness.

Then came ninety picked foot-archers from the lofty crags of Stika-yi, naked to the breech-clouted loins. These wore their hair worked into fantastic shapes and stiffened with war-paint into the semblance of curving horns.

Soon came Itagunahi with his host of spectral warriors bristling with arms and daubed with great bands of ghastly blue and orange; followed by three hundred canoe-men and hand-to-hand fighters from the northernmost reaches of the Koshoni realm, their faces horrid dec-

orated masks, their features rendered fearsome by the artistry of wives whom they were here to defend and protect from the Ahwa-Kanek.

How the Hiwassee blackened with the graceful canoes of the gathering clans, painted with scenes and emblems of recent or ancestral battles! What a scene of savage power these lean and ghostly forces mirrored in the lacquered waters of the river—the bravest of the brave, a sight to quicken the pulse of any leader!

Among them Kioga distributed his considerable store of weapons shaped from his salvaged iron; and thus, armed as never before in all their history, the Koshoni awaited the coming of their ancient foe. Despite the presence of that fierce host of warlike men, all was silent as death in the canoes moored upon the shadowy bosom of the river. As fast as reinforcements arrived by foot, they were transferred to the extra canoes, and their spoor eradicated by skilled trail-hiders.

With a small party of ranking chieftains and several scouts, the Snow Hawk took to the forests near the mountain ramparts of the Painted Cliffs bordering upon the Shedowa. Through the black basalt cleft which formed the easiest entrance into the forest territories the party made its way, soon reaching that lofty watch-tower from which the eagle-eyed scouts had brought news of the coming of many warriors across the plains.

Low on one horizon hung the huge, magnified, transparent bubble of the moon, paled by the two-hour dawn which would grow ever longer as summer approached. When this short dawn again faded, the brightening moonlight revealed a host of mounted Indian warriors—the raiders—advancing rank after irregular rank toward the darker shadows of the cliffs.

Their mounts were magnificent, many in the full and shaggy hair of late winter, while others were clipped to display muscular contours rivaling those of the famed bronze horses of Lysippus. Most of them were richly caparisoned in saddles of polished leather, wrought with silver, inlaid with copper and hung with weapons of battle and metal chains and burnished medallions; the headstalls were draped with ermine tails; the reins were of braided horsehair, entwined with dyed snake-skin. But many others carried no saddles at all, but were ridden bareback in the slouching but easy Indian style; these were controlled by hackamores of rawhide or by a single strand of grass rope twisted about the lower jaw, and ridden by the less distinguished members of the raiding bands.

In the forefront paced the fine mounts of the war-chiefs bearing their resplendent riders in full battle regalia. Behind came the main body of warriors, nude to the waist, wearing shorter war-bonnets with pairs of black buffalo horns curving away from temples swathed in buckskin bands ablaze with decoration. Then came a horde of younger warriors burning to take the war-path and return with their own trophies or die on the field of battle—dog-warriors entitled only to the single eagle-feather, but hideous to a man with smeared grease-paint.

Soon the darkness began to throb to the dull, deep *bome-bome-bome* of the war-drums as the raiders fortified their spirits with boastful song and the enactment of past warlike exploits, to the tune of loud battle-yells and that fierce long whoop of the plains fighters.

FOR hours this savage preparation continued by the fitful light of huge fires about the encampment. But toward morning the older chiefs brought about a return to sanity, and soon dark silent shadows were slipping deftly from lathered horseback to gather in groups and discuss the forthcoming pillaging expedition into the rich strongholds of the Koshoni.

Appalled by the superior numbers of the Ahwa-Kanek as evidenced by their own eyes, the Koshoni chiefs counseled against engaging the entire force at once; but Kioga waved objections aside and with a delegation of selected headmen met and challenged the vanguard of the Ahwa-Kanek force near the entrance

to the basalt cliffs. A small body of dismounted horsemen came disdainfully forward to parley with the Koshoni, pausing at about fifty paces.

Then, in the sign-language, the Snow-Hawk gestured:

"You are the Ahwa-Kanek, come to raid our people. We are the United Seven Tribes of the Koshoni. Do not enter our territory."

"You talk with a crooked tongue. The Koshoni have never united!" was the curt reply. "Like jackals they bicker among themselves. The Koshoni are weak, like women. Go back and tell your chiefs that."

INFURIATED by this reply, the chiefs who had previously counseled caution were now in favor of an instant sally to capture the insolent avant-guard of the plainsmen. Again Kioga gestured:

"The Koshoni are a mighty people. They offer the Ahwa-Kanek peace. Here is the pipe with which they would smoke a treaty."

The leader of the plains delegation laughed tauntingly. Again the chieftains at Kioga's side protested further friendly advances, but he only said, "Wait." The plainsman was again signaling:

"We do not smoke the pipe with women who wear nothing above the waist. Go back and tell your chiefs that too. Have you any more to say?" To which the Snow Hawk made answer:

"This! Tell your chiefs that the Koshoni have received no scars on the back when running from the enemy, which they must hide under war-shirts. Tell them also, that unless they retire from the Koshoni hunting-grounds and bring tribute of five hundred white buffalo-skins, the Koshoni will kill all their warriors and return their scalps to their villages upon the ends of their own arrows—will lay waste their villages and level their tepees. Tell that to your chiefs!"

For a moment the Ahwa-Kanek herald stood dumfounded with falling jaw, while Kioga's subordinate chiefs chuckled savagely at these great words. But Kioga did not smile. He had tried to effect an honorable peace by what he considered a white-man's code. But as an Indian he was prepared to accept the alternative of pitched battle if it became necessary.

As they turned to melt into the wilds again, an arrow whistled toward the group of forest Indians, piercing one of the chiefs through the arm. The Ahwa-Kanek thus broke the age-old truce of the parley, and no answer was possible to that affront but war.

Keeping to the rocky cliffs which would show no trail, the Snow Hawk and his band found concealment in an arroyo which afforded a view of their back-trail.

Arrogant from force of habit and confident in their superior medicine and dreams of victory, the plainsmen passed scornfully through the door of the open trap. With glittering eyes the hidden Koshoni leaders watched their progress.

When all had gone Kioga and his handful of supporters slipped back upon the darkened plain, stealthy as panthers. Ten minutes later a thousand head of blooded horses stampeded across the plains. The horse-herders who had been caught offguard by the stalking Koshoni, lay weltering in their own blood. So was struck the first blow. The battle was joined.

On their return Kioga found the dominating pass leading back upon the plain manned by three hundred of his best warriors, who had separated from the main canoe-band.

SWIFTLY, in order to reinforce the other ambuscade, he and his party sped into the hills on the fresh trail of the raiders, who had by now split up into parties to carry on their raids independently of each other. The Ahwa-Kanek were convinced that the threatened resistance was a colossal bluff, for their scouts had found no evidence of an enemy.

But the waiting Koshoni disembarked in full force and poured silently into the forested valleys on the trail of the raiders, leaving the canoes anchored and under guard at the river's center. Taken by surprise, the last of the raiding parties fell first, with appalling loss of life, beneath the withering barrage of broadhead arrows which suddenly cut among them. Their shouts and cries of surprise were promptly stilled by the tomahawks and war-hammers of the Koshoni.

From a commanding ridge rose the call of a wolf, a deep rocket of sound with an agreed-upon break in its concluding music. At this signal the dark glades which formed the trap became shudderingly alive as the Koshoni warriors fell upon the enemy with the fierceness of demons, replying to the startled

yells with their own ululating shouts of battle.

The air was soon full of the twanging of scores of bows, followed by the short flutter and deadly impact of their winged missiles. The ruddy light of the slow dawn flashed upon whirling axes and gleaming knives as these hereditary enemies sought each others' throats like leopards. For a time, amid the indistinguishable mass of tangled forms, friends all too often struck down their own allies in the confusion of close quarters; but soon individual combats, typical of Indian warfare, raged all about.

Everywhere blood-streaked men paused in their fighting to tear away the scalp of a conquered foe and wave it overhead with fierce mockery. Here a mortally wounded Koshoni rose in the throes of death to present his skull to the inexorable scalp-knife. There an Ahwa-Kanek, overwhelmed by his enemies, received from them the salute due his valiant stand, and fell smiling, tomahawked to the brain. A disarmed brave staggered at the impact of a spear transfixing his chest, yet calmly and impassively awaited the knife already plunging toward his breast, confident that his conduct and example would be noted and preserved to the everlasting honor of his name.

MANY chieftains fell on both sides, for unlike those who direct the armies of civilization, the highest Indian leaders were ever in the forefront wherever the battle raged hottest. Only thus could they command the continued respect of their savage followers.

Plainsmen against forest dwellers, opposed in all things but the mutual desire to perish in a blaze of glory, these were strange fighters who could pause to mourn an instant over the dead body of a victim but recently killed, or shout, while delivering the finishing stroke: "Die, brave enemy! I kill with regret!" Strange, contradictory and fierce, yet somehow admirable in their submission to the demands of their rude chivalry and savage code.

With deadly effect the Koshoni were pitting their new weapons against the spiked war-clubs, stone axes, copper knives, lances and hide shields of the raiders. Yet in the ravine where the major conflict waxed fiercest, it shortly appeared that despite the advantage of ambuscade, the overwhelming numbers of the Ahwa-Kanek must prevail.

But the Koshoni resistance was soon stiffened by the advent of reinforcements. From the lip of the gorge threescore expert archers under Kioga the Snow-Hawk rained down their bolts, picking off the plainsmen at close range with deadly consistency. Then, abandoning their bows, they resorted to the weapons of close combat—knives, clubs and tomahawks—and swarmed down into the ravine.

AT the head of a dozen men Kioga attacked wherever he saw his own forces hard-pressed, striking unerring blows with his war-ax, which dropped an enemy in his tracks with its every swing. Behind their intrepid leader the little band fought with concentrated fury, and on every hand the Koshoni rallied to this infusion of fresh force and new courage. Sensing in him the core of the Koshoni attack, a dozen raiders hurled themselves upon him in a body. Despite those astonishing powers of activity, he was hard pressed to hold his own, and was soon slashed in a dozen places by the weapons of his assailants, though as yet not one had succeeded in delivering a full stroke upon that lightly bounding figure.

The superb recklessness of their leader nerved the Koshoni to prodigies of desperate courage; and slowly the Ahwa-Kanek fell back. At the pass by which they had entered the Koshoni strongholds, the Ahwa-Kanek suffered their severest losses, reaped down in scores as orderly retreat became confused rout.

The remaining plainsmen, thinking to mount, dash off and lure the Koshoni out upon their trail, to be slaughtered at will, found their horse-herders lifeless and their mounts scattered beyond recall. From their midst there arose such a howl of anger and frustrated fury as rarely assails the ears of the most hardened warriors. For hours the victims of this ruse dispersed across the plain on foot, while in their ears rang the fierce cries of those left behind to be cut down and scalped by the merciless victors.

When the last blow had been struck and the rout completed, perhaps two hundred raiders found themselves taken alive, and of all their little army, scarce a third escaped to carry home the tale of their defeat, and of the rise of a new and mighty war-chief among the Koshoni.

Very few Koshoni had escaped being seriously wounded; Kioga himself was borne on a litter of blankets and

branches to his war-canoe, where the medicine-men were quickly performing their magic medicine-rites over him.

It was thus, under the Snow Hawk, that the Seven Tribes met and turned the foe, gaining the upper hand over their ancestral enemies for the first time in many generations. It was a triumphant war-party which rode the homeward rivers, under the reddish beams of the torchlights, bearing home the booty of the battle in seven long canoes loaded to the very gunwales—bows, arrows, lances; many circular battle-shields, war-clubs, *coup*-sticks and hatchets—to make no mention of articles of "medicine" whose magic properties had so signally failed their deceased owners.

Arrayed in captured finery, the savage little argosy descended upon the village of Hopeka. The waiting inhabitants, imagining the worst, sent up cries of lamentation at what appeared to suggest the annihilation of their warriors, and the approach of their own doom. But on perceiving their error, despair turned to wildest joy, and the forest rang to the victory-dance, portent of the bloody climax to come; and in an hour the tortures had begun, their ingenuities multiplied at sight of several canoe-loads of the dead being transferred to dry ground.

Kioga in no way shared the barbaric aftermath of the battle, nor took any part in the acts of cruelty surrounding the stakes. Pleading the seriousness of his wounds, he kept to the lodge in which he had been installed with much ceremony. Pride of race, the consciousness of being sprung from an ancestry to whom such cruelty must seem repugnant, stayed his hand. Indeed by trading upon his own prestige and authority he was able to save the lives of fifty captives who would otherwise have perished. More than this not even he could do in the hysterical frenzy following this first great victory over the hated Ahwa-Kanek.

DEFEAT by overwhelming odds of the Ahwa-Kanek was not the last victory the Koshoni were destined to gain over the plains warriors. Yet among these far-flung tribesmen the stunning defeat was softened by reports of the unprecedented amnesty shown to the released captives of war, whose eulogies of the bravery of the Koshoni war-lord won Kioga the esteem, however tempered with hatred, of his enemies.

Recovered from his wounds, Kioga found power, much glory and a certain measure of contentment. The new responsibilities incidental to his assumption of the duties of warrior-chief were anything but arduous. Many of these he wisely delegated to able Kias, whose knowledge of tribal matters was exhaustive, and who set forth at once upon a tour of the far-flung villages by canoe, to consolidate the gains in union already won by the great victory at the Painted Cliffs.

Kioga had cause to regret just one fact. During his absence on the war-path, Mika the puma had refused food from the hands of the Indians. For hours he had raged in his collar, pacing back and forth with eyes ever seeking the gate by which the master had departed. One morning the stake to which he had been tethered was found wedged between the tops of two wall-logs. The leash hung down outside the palisade, and from it dangled the broken collar. Mika had returned to the wilderness. It was reported that a silver puma had been seen running a deer in the swamps far inland; but the animal did not return to the village, and though Hawk mourned the loss of this companion of many hunts, it was not without hope that Mika would some day respond to his call again.

IN the peaceful days that followed, many of the Council made bold to suggest overtly that now it was time a warrior took meat and gifts to the lodge of a maiden. Hawk smiled at that, a little scornfully. He had awakened but slowly to the appraisal of the many dark-eyed maids of Hopeka who looked upon the handsome swarthy young war-chief with approval.

One dusk in early autumn, however, he was drifting in his canoe upon the Hiwassee. The river was smooth as a limpid pool. Through the shadows cast upon it by branches far above he could see the pearly shells mirroring back spears of starlight. It was a time for reflection; and Hawk was thinking on the words of the sachems.

In his heart he carried the image of only one woman, Awena the Flower, as he had known her before that terrible hour, years ago, when he had carried her lifeless from the village. For one like Awena he would plunge through volcanic fire, or swim the Caldrons of the Yei. Ah, she had been beautiful as the quarter-moon now rising out of the river, like

a goddess from her bath! None could ever compare with her image, thought Kioga sadly.

Suddenly through the silence about the village toward which he moved there floated a strange sound, round and sweet as a quivering chime, followed by a quiet musical chord. And then a woman's voice came across the water, raised in a melody he had never heard before. Its words were in the familiar dialect of the Wacipi—the River People of the northern forests. The song was a lament, and poured from the shadow of the palisade near the river's edge.

As the Snow Hawk drifted in, entranced, he could see the faces of the sentries in the moonlight, strangely softened and relaxed from their habitual stern hauteur. From the village came no children's shouts, nor clamor of hunters' games. Hopeka and its people were silent, spell-bound, harkening as they had from the beginning when this wild nightingale first sang music more beautiful than their own.

Straining his gaze, Hawk saw her kneeling upon the sands, facing the southeast, and singing with a voice that surely reached the stars. As she saw his canoe drifting in, the song died away and she rose with startled lightness.

Sickle-slim she was, fine-featured as an ivory carving, with the lofty bearing and soft step of a doe. She wore but the light slit skirt of the Shoni maiden. Exquisitely embroidered moccasins, open at the trim ankles, marked her as a young woman of breeding and quality in her tribe. The pure blood of the best Shoni families warmed her delicate features, reddening her full and handsome mouth, with its white and perfect teeth. Her taut skin had the tint of light-brown wine, the texture of China silk. Behind the shapely head her hair hung in two braided gleaming ebony loops, caught up by the ends and fastened at the slender nape by a polished horn clasp. Her small ears had never been pierced for ornament, but about her neck was a fine-woven cord, holding a carved bone sunburst pendant in the shadow of her breast. Clasping her left arm between elbow and wrist was an open silver bracelet. At her back a thin copper knife touched the flesh. She was otherwise unadorned.

Lifting a small urn to her bare shoulder she moved into the village with all the plastic undulant grace that God can give to woman. And her oblique regard, quickly averted, abided with Snow Hawk.

The next day he looked for and saw her again. She passed him at the gate, head high and aloof, without sound other than the faint rustle of her skirt. In but a moment she had been gone, had not Kioga intercepted her.

"A warrior thirsts," said the Snow Hawk in the clear soft syllables of her own dialect.

Pausing at the sound of his voice, she lowered the urn and proffered it to him. Lost in contemplation of each other, neither spoke. And then, quietly, the girl continued on her way, leaving him in possession of the forgotten water-vessel, its contents untouched by a warrior who thirsted!

It was a little while before he realized the meaning of that act, or the implied invitation it conveyed to return it to her father's lodge. But when he did, he walked forward with lighter step.

That night the sachems pretended not to notice that for the first time his place at the council-fire was vacant. But one of them, a visiting chief, smiled with inward satisfaction. Heladi his daughter had been inconsolable since the untimely death of her mother, and indifferent to the attentions of a dozen eager young men of the village. This new diversion would benefit her.

So began the friendship between the Snow Hawk and the daughter of Menewa, high chief of the Wacipi, at whose door Kioga became a frequent visitor, more welcome than he knew.

Gifts he brought regularly. A hair ornament of burnished copper one day, a bracelet of matched shells the next; now a golden ear-ring, selected from among his treasure, set with a glowing ruby, strange to the delighted eyes of Heladi; again the perfect skin of some small forest creature, or a wing-shaped fan of feathers, acquired in a distant village. But never did he carry to her uncooked food of any sort, for by the social usages of the Shoni, that would have intimated a desire to take her to wife, and for this he was unprepared.

Yet for Heladi the hours she spent with the Snow Hawk were the happiest of her life. The bereavement song was heard from her lips no more.

Few were so learned as she in the history and highly developed music of her people. None played more cunningly on the Indian *abali,* an instrument of

bone, fiber strings and wood, peculiar to that northern tribe and used by no other Indians.

In return for Kioga's gifts she brought his life an interval of peace and poetry after its years of strife and bloodshed. Often she sang for him at the fireside; songs of war and achievement, of peace and plenty: the lilting rondels of holiday-time and the plaintive monodies in which the Shoni music abounds. And from the seven strings of the curious lute-like *abali* in her lap she plucked a magic muted accompaniment. So the time passed, swiftly as never before.

Then, one night, beside the river at evening and out of a full heart, for the first time she sang a song of love, ancient as the music of Solomon:

In eyes that look but do not see, a maiden smiles;
To ears that hark but do not hear, a maiden sings;
O lips that speak but do not seek a maiden's kiss,
There is an empty lodge in which a maiden waits.

Her voice broke a little on those last syllables, and a long silence came between them. Kioga was looking out over the moving waters. Heladi sat with head averted, as if, having gone so far, she were ashamed, hurt at his seeming indifference to this delicate encouragement. Finally he answered her.

"I see your heart, Heladi. But we are of two races, you and I."

"What matter?" she asked softly. "If you see my heart, is it not one with yours? Is not Heladi beautiful?"

"More than the moon on yon waters," he said, without answering the question she most wanted answered. "But one day I will go away, to the Land-Where-the-Sun Goes."

"I do not understand, this land of which you speak."

"Nor I, Heladi. And that is why, one day, I must go."

"Kioga—you will return?" She was breathless and almost pleading. Then, like one upon whom conviction sinks heavily: "Ah no, you will never return."

"I do not know. Sing to me, Heladi."

"I cannot," she whispered, shivering.

"It grows late and cold. Let us return," he said, throwing his feather robe about her as he escorted her to her father's lodge.

But not all the robes in Hopeka could have comforted her then; for it was her heart that was cold as ice.

CHAPTER XXII

Civilized Men

EXCEPT for sheer accident, the Snow Hawk might have lived out his life as war-chief of the Shoni, until his strange career was checked by another and more savage fate. But whenever other tribal affairs permitted, he renewed his wild life for a day. Often the mere scent of passing game was enough to unleash the yearning for the chase.

On one such occasion the distant bugle of a stag lured him forth. Shedding the vestments of that scarcely less wild life within the village, he vanished from the frenzied circle of a tribal dance and streaked to the hunt.

The elk was swift; but swifter still was the Snow Hawk, who could cut corners, where the beast must follow the thicket paths. Yet it was some time before he came over the animal and drew his knife. The dazzling pace had carried him many miles toward the seacoast; of a sudden his mood changed.

With a last explosive whip-crack upon the prey's sweating quarters he let it go and put down his blade again. He had not been near the reefs in several months.

The sound of the elk's escape had hardly died when Kioga veered off. Pausing a moment in a thicketed cut behind the coast, he picked up a short-bow which he always kept hidden there for practice-shooting at the sharks. Though he had but the two arrows usually stuck in his belt, with these, his knife and the lash, he felt sufficiently armed.

Arrived at the cliffs, he had taken but a single downward glance upon the sea when he drew back dumfounded—then looked again.

Far below, the handsome shape of a yacht graced the bay. She had but a single funnel, and her hanging rigging mutely evidenced passage through violent storms. A list to starboard betrayed the damage wreaked upon her hull by the jagged reefs.

But wonder of all wonders, upon her deck strode the moving figures of men—of white men: the first he had ever known to enter this ship's graveyard other than as skeletons.

Will Kioga at last come into his heritage of white-man's civilization with the arrival of this yacht, and living white men? Be sure to read the forthcoming August issue.

Lost and Found

SUDDENLY noisy grouping of Baptist Hill's dusky denizens about a new disturbance of its uncertain peace drew its idlers like flies. But not Columbus Collins; that dark, distraught detective had troubles of his own, without horning in on other people's.

"Yeah, but how is you *know* your wife's comin' here to Demopolis?" his five-foot helper, "Bugwine" Breck, was dividing his attention between Columbus and a battered blowtorch.

"Becaze I is four bucks behind wid her alimony—dat's how! And I knows Amnesia: when it stop, *she* starts. —Quit messin' wid dat busted blowtorch, runt! You's fixin' to burn up somethin'."

"Aint got nothin' else to detect by, after dark, since de agency's flash-light broke down," rebutted Mr. Breck gloomily. "Why aint you pay de woman?"

"Pay her wid what?"

Bugwine booted an abashed brain to the foot of its class—for forgetting that the Columbus Collins detective agency's treasury was empty.

He was saved further embarrassment by a sharp break-up in the excited congestion up the Hill. Citizens began to stream noisily down Hogan's Alley toward the agency, headed by a big negro leading an uncouth mule and volubly surrounded by local advisers. Bugwine heard his master's voice:

"Stand back, runt! Git classy! Liable be a case!" Hunger had sharpened Mr. Collins' faculties acutely.

"Is y'all de big detectin' boys?" the newcomer and his mule halted before the agency, against the background of a semicircle of self-appointed guides.

Mr. Collins' swift inspection showed his prospective client as a bit on the boxcar side in size; his ragged overalls rendered an unsatisfactory financial forecast, and the territory north of his ears seemed but sparsely furnished at best. Yet one could never tell: often the brightest and best dressed were the most broke.

"When us aint solve a case, it's insolvent," he compromised noncommittally.

The mule dropped one hip and dozed disgustedly.

"Always gits our— *Ouch!*" the reviving Mr. Breck essayed a sales-talk, then changed his mind, under the sudden application of his master's hand on his mouth.

"Everybody here say you two boys is who can git me out my jam," pursued the stranger anxiously.

"Depends on is you got no money—"

"—becaze my business sho Gawd *is* git in a jam since I come here!" completed the man-mountain ruefully.

"How much money you say you got?" Mr. Collins stuck to the fundamentals. Charity practice was what kept doctors and detectives hungry.

"Got eight dollars—but dat aint de trouble."

"Got eight dollars—and you aint *got* no trouble!" the husband in Columbus outspoke the sleuth.

"I *aint*, is I? I been in de jail for carvin' 'em up, and I been in de jail for gittin' too rough wid wrastlers; but aint never been in no jam like dis before. Man, I got about four and a half loads of hell right here on de fur end of dis halter now!"

MR. COLLINS noted the glare of his client at the mule, who flinched uneasily under its hatred. "Cain't solve nothin' till I gits de clues and de full data," Columbus fetched out an eight-dollar phrase to fit his fee.

"Till you—*huh?*"

"Gits all de dope: what your name is and whar from; and de nature of de crime and de *corpus delicti*—"

"Aint no cawpse—it's wuss'n dat! And my name's Chitlin's New—"

"From whar? You aint live here?"

"*From* Uniontown. But dat aint what's pesterin' me—it's whar I's gwine *to*."

"Whar?"

"And *dat*," divulged the muscular Mr. New morosely, "is what I craves *detectives* for."

"You means you forgits whar you is gwine to?" interjected the underbrained Mr. Breck from his own experience.

"I means I aint never *know* whar I was gwine."

Unpaid alimony and a lost man and mule provide two stove-colored detectives with a brainstorm.

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by
Everett Lowry

COLUMBUS' brain put up a battle, but Bugwine's surrendered without firing a shot in its own defense.

"Mister George Ross—he's my white-folks, over in Uniontown—" mounted Chitlings' mourning, "starts me out yesterday mornin' to carry dis here mule to another town. Only, he aint tell *me* de name of it, becaze he say is I know nothin' beforehand, I all time gits it backwards. So, instead of tellin' me whar I's gwine, he write it down on a tag and tie de tag round de mule's neck. Dat way he say I *cain't* git it wrong."

"Sho cain't. Why aint you look on de mule's neck now and *see* whar you gwine?" Mr. Breck's brainlessness recurred to ruin an eight-dollar case in its infancy.

"Cain't read. And, besides"—recital rose to a yelp—"old mule done eat up whar he gwine!"

"Eat up—*huh?*" Both of Mr. Breck's feet slipped violently in the loose gravel beneath them.

"Mule done chaw up de tag and swaller it. Now *aint nobody know whar us is gwine!*" rang the tortured tenor of a lost soul.

"Boy, you got to go home and start over aga—" Bugwine began a fresh professional *faux pas* before Columbus' grip got to his neck.

"—And I cain't even go back and find out," the lost mammoth climaxed his despair, "becaze Mist' George done already left Uniontown in his old car to meet me and de mule whar us aint!"

Whereupon Mr. Breck dodged involuntarily—at a change that had that instant come over his chief. When Mr. Collins' eyes started protruding and shining like that, a case was fixing to wind up in the usual way: Columbus with the fee and Bugwine with the blame.

"Puts our best man on it!" clarioned a head-detective with an idea already. "Bugwine Breck de human bloodhound is in charge of de agency's lost client department! Always gits his town!"

Eying the dawn of hope this produced in Mr. New, Mr. Breck's heart further joined his heels in his twin left shoes: these big husky clients were the hardest to outrun later when a shrimp-sized assistant had failed to keep all of Columbus' big-mouthed promises.

"Bugwine, dust off de map! Fee's eight dollars. Git de client a place to go—snappy!" Mr. Collins was now firing orders like a machine-gun.

"Town's comin' right up! Cain't see it for de dust!" Mr. Breck's acquiescence rang only slightly hollow as he threw himself into an instant uproar. If you couldn't give a client results, give him noise, was the Bugwinian policy.

"Hitch yourself and de mule outside, Mist' New," Columbus continued to order about client and aide equally. "Bugwine fixin' right now to bay down de trail of dat town!"

BUT with the lost Chitlings and his mule parked out of earshot in the rear of the agency, Mr. Collins changed his tone and tune.

"What all de big idea?" Mr. Breck beat him to the verbal draw.

"Idea is I needs four bucks for Amnesia's alimony: and Chitlin's is got eight."

"Whar I come in on dat?" persisted Bugwine warily.

"Comes in dat dat hog-ties you to solvin' dis case, and solvin' it rapid."

Bugwine blinked apprehensively. This was putting it in a nutshell—but making a hard nut of it for an assistant to crack.

"Stun yourself wid somethin', so you'll be brighter in de brains," rasped his superior helpfully. "Den lose dat blowtorch before you sets somethin' afire wid it. Craves class, and you aint got none! Now clue yourself. Git de client place to go—"

"Yeah—" By now Mr. Breck was seemingly hand-cranking an intellect that had stalled on a fresh mental hill. "—But aint it *still* got to be de *same* town whar his white-folks done drove to meet him, else it aint do him no good?"

Columbus rose threateningly.

"Git bayin' before I busts you! Tell you I needs de alimony, not alibis! Show class!"

BUT scarcely had the dust and disturbance of Bugwine's taking the trail died down, when a new cloud appeared on the opposite horizon for Columbus, stirred up by the bicycle-wheels of that perennial bad-news bearer, "Wormholes" Ford. Mr. Ford fell from his wheel before the agency, in evident haste and excitement.

"Busts a sprocket gittin' here," he bulletined breathlessly, "so I can git here in time for you to do somethin'."

"Somethin' for who?" Mr. Collins failed to enthuse.

"For yourself. Sees a boy in Fish Alley jest now, what jest git here from Livingston—"

Mr. Collins gripped his chair-arms in new interest: Livingston was where Amnesia stayed when her alimony was not in arrears.

"And he say he passed your wife about halfway here—on de side of de road, wid a flat, and her and de radiator both boilin' bad. Headin' dis way."

Columbus shuddered: Let Amnesia Collins get steamed up, and it would take more than a flat tire to keep her off a delinquent husband's neck!

"Whar you gwine?" the avid Wormholes watched a gangling detective begin frantically assembling a blanket, bread, and canned beans from a shelf within.

"Places!" summarized Mr. Collins at high speed.

"Anybody ax me den, tells 'em I aint see you," floated back from a Mr. Ford remounted and already pedaling; around Amnesia in action was no place for even an innocent bystander.

COLUMBUS was not so fortunate; Wormholes had hardly disappeared when the penalty of neglect in not placing lookouts was upon him. His first intimation was a hand in his belt, a voice in his ear; while, *"And dar you is!"* resounded the wifely greeting above the wifely grip.

Hogs two counties away cocked inquiring ears toward their feed-troughs as Columbus' startled despair rang out across western Alabama.

"Now whar dat back-alimony you owes me, ape?" Amnesia established a bee-line to her point.

Knob-eyed, Mr. Collins searched the surrounding scene for just that. Finding that four dollars had been put up to Bugwine, and not even Bugwine was in sight.

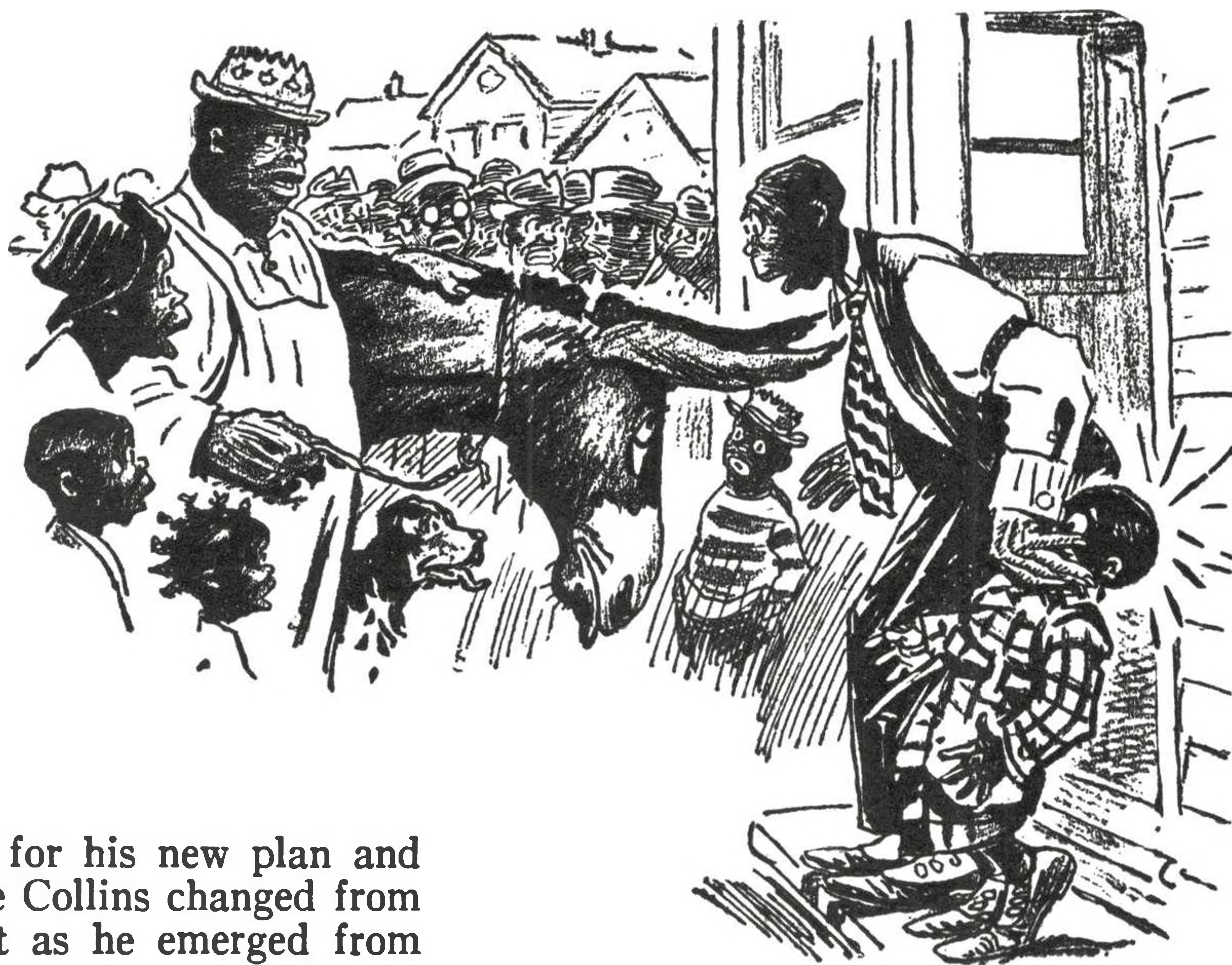
"Whar is it, I say?" Amnesia's patience was the sort of thing usually measured in split-seconds.

Wild and wilder roamed the gaze of the cornered Mr. Collins; past the somnolent form of Client New's mule, the littered alley wherein Samson G. Bates did devious business, the ominous sign of Sim Silver, the mortician. . . . Then again a great emergency produced a great idea—again the present had far outweighed the future for a husband in a jam! "Jest fixin' to git de money for you, honey, when you shows up!" he dissembled in the nick of time. "Cain't git my mind off you—"

"Huh! And don't you 'honey' *me,* you louse! I knows you: dat's why I quits you! Also, don't you disappoint me, neither, becaze I cain't stand it. And when I cain't stand nothin', I generally ruins him right in his tracks! *Now* what?"

Mr. Collins envied husbands whose wives misunderstood them: being understood was where his trouble came from. "Tell you I was jest gwine after dem four bucks when you come in," he reiterated hurriedly. "Stay here, and I be right back wid 'em."

"Stay here? I *moves in* here till you *is* git back wid it!" the able-armed Amnesia suited action to words. "Either I gits four bucks, or you aint git your agency back. Also gits your back broke. Now, git gallopin' before I remembers how ornery you is, and forgits myself!"



"Everybody here say you two boys is who can git me out my jam," said the stranger anxiously.

Barely in time for his new plan and purpose, Detective Collins changed from a slink to a strut as he emerged from his agency's rear door, to where Chitlings New was assembling a notable pile of fist-sized stones beside the four-footed cause of all his trouble.

"Jest as soon as Mist' Breck sniffs out whar I's gwine to," explained Mr. New malevolently, "I starts throwin' dese here rocks at de mule all de way dar."

"Better start packin' 'em to tote wid you den," countered Columbus breezily, "because you's as good as on your way now."

"Means you done found out whar us was gwine to?" Chitlings brightened.

"Soon as I gives de mule a break, you is."

"How-come a break?"

"Gittin' him away from you, so he can think. Bein' around you is maybe what stunts him so in de knob. Maybe he know whar he gwine den—"

"Dat's right. *He* de one dat e't de tag." Logic had a delayed inning with the oversized Mr. New.

"Detectives thinks of everything—dat's how dey detects," a great mind waved praise aside. "All you got to do now is slip me de mule's halter, and wait till I gits back."

"Waits right here," proffered Chitlings, along with the halter.

Reminding Mr. Collins of something else: Chitlings would be less apt to gum up coming delicate negotiations if he were parked elsewhere during them. No use stirring up a client who had been in jail for being too rough with wrestlers! So, "You see dat barbecue-stand yander?" he pointed. "De one what say 'Bees'-knees de Barbecue King.'"

Mr. New couldn't read but he could follow any finger pointing toward food.

"Well, git on over dar and tell him to build you up back of de belt-buckle. And charge it to me. Come back here and wait for me when you's through."

Downing vague misgivings at the visible size and strength of his disappearing client, Mr. Collins' mind and feet turned from future to present—and he found himself before the closed door of that room in the rear of the Sweet Papa barber-shop Number Two to which his latest inspiration had pointed.

On the dusty window beside this door was crudely but comprehensively painted in white letters:

SAMSoN G. BATEs, BUsiNEss

"Come in!" came an answering rumble as Columbus knocked there.

"I cain't," negotiations got under way.

"How-come you cain't?" accompanied the audible lumberings of a large and irascible darky toward the door. Then Samson himself flung it open, to stand blinking and belligerent on its threshhold.

"Cain't git de mule in de door."

"Who de hell craves no mules in de door?" Mr. Bates' nature in the raw was seldom mild.

"Aint nobody is. But says *Business* on your door: comes to do business wid you."

"Aint buyin' no mules—

"Aint sellin' none, neither."

"Den for what," glowered Mr. Bates,

"is you messin' round my place wid dat buzzard-bait on de hoof for?"

"Craves to pawn him—till tomorrer." Columbus' great idea was out at last!

"As collateral, I counts a mule de same as a spavined polecat wid de pip." Mr. Bates shouldered through the doorway and into the next stage of a Darktown business deal. "But I all time listens to reasonable offers before I turns 'em down."

"Dis here mule worth more *dead* dan I craves on him—"

"How sick is he?" Suspicion rode Mr. Bates like a jockey.

"Aint sick. Sound as a four-dollar bill. And dat's all I aims to borrer on him, till tomorrer when Bugwine solutions a case and I gits paid off. Four bucks."

"Makes de ticket out for six. You gits four; rest is interest, account de risk."

"Gimme four bucks and de ticket, fast!" a detective's future and his client's mule went into hock simultaneously and irretrievably. Redeeming that mule would be tomorrow's—and Bugwine's—business. Meantime, crowed Columbus to himself, old loan would be carrying itself like a horse!

"Hitch him around back; den come in and git your money," Samson cinched it.

"Brains, you done noble! Git yourself a fish on me!" Mr. Collins with four dollars in his pocket headed happily for the stand of Bees'-knees to reward an organ that had just served him well.

NOW that he had what it took to tame Amnesia, why not let her wait? Chitlings New also was unfinished business that a bright sleuth could take up better on a full stomach. Subtraction further smoothed and shortened a smart man's road: six dollars to bail out the mule, deducted from the eight that it was now up to Bugwine to earn from Chitlings New, still left two dollars net profit for a boy who knew how to put a mule to work for him without owning him. For in pawning the client's mule Columbus had torn even the possibility of the word *failure* from the bright lexicon of Mr. Breck. After that *coup*, Bugwine had to solve the missing-town mystery: to do less was unthinkable.

Bees'-knees met Mr. Collins amiably, as befitted a suddenly-best customer-by-proxy. "Send me couple more boys like dat last one, and I can lock 'em up in here and not let nobody else in and *still* do a big business! But what Bugwine gwine do *next?*" he chirruped.

"Bugwine? What dat halfwit set fire to *now* wid dat blowtorch?" a raw wind of cold fear blew across Columbus' warm glow; his flair for fish faded.

"Aint set nothin' afire. Jest in here after dat fish-hound boy leave, to tell me he's quit detectin' and got hisself a job till times—"

"Quit *detectin'?* In de middle of a *case?*" Visions of trying to explain to a client who was rough with wrestlers that a detective had pawned his mule and couldn't redeem it—or solve his destination—because a moronic helper had let him down, got into Columbus' vocal cords and harshened them. Also, when Samson discovered that it wasn't Columbus' mule—

"Bugwine say he aint doin' no good wid de case, and gittin' too hongry to hunt," interrupted the answer of Bees'-knees. "Den a white gent'man offer him four bits to wash a old car he's tryin' to sell—and Bugwine run over two chickens, takin' him up! He busy down on Franklin Street wid de hose now."

Mr. Collins buckled badly. So again the classless Mr. Breck had failed him! Abandoning an eight-dollar case for a fifty-cent car-washing job, just when his chief had staked everything—including a far-bigger client's mule—on getting that eight dollars!

"Is you gwine git sick, git sick outside," Bees'-knees misunderstood the ensuing symptoms.

"Aint *me* gwine be sick!" Columbus' wrath by now had mounted to a bellow. "Jest wait till I finds dat runt! Layin' down on me in de middle of a case like dat! Time I gits through wid him, his own gizzard aint fit him no more! Starts slow, but I tames fast! Mess wid *me,* and undertakers drives up! Anybody tries doin' *me* out my money dat way is jest de same as fixin' lean up against a buzz-saw! I— What de matter wid you, Bees'-knees?"

FOR just here the barbecue-king was suddenly making frenzied signs that didn't mean anything to Columbus until too late—not until he whirled in the direction of Bees'-knees' horrified gaze. Then, with a startled yelp, Mr. Collins saw all. Blocking his only exit and putting a wrong personal application on the latter portion of a whole mess of big talk was—Amnesia!

"So *here* you is!" that irate divorcée

filled the silence that instantly followed. "While I's waitin' up de alley for my money, you is down here braggin' 'bout what you thinks you is! Well, I *knows!* And I's so fed up wid you dat I's got a stomach-ache every time I looks at you! Nigger, *kick in*—before I gits tired of you sho 'nough now, and starts bustin' you down to your right size wid dis barbecue-stand!"

Columbus kicked in.

"One—two—three—four dollars; and sho Gawd lucky for you dat you had it!" Amnesia acknowledged receipt in full. And an elastic snapped with grim finality.

"Whuff!" And the awed Bees'-knees emerged from beneath his sink as Amnesia steamed from the scene. "Boy, you backed up so fast I hears you sizzlin' as you went by!"

"Wait till I comes up on dat runt now!" Mr. Collins' venom against his aide had but doubled, beneath his humiliation at Amnesia's hands.

Then, in Franklin Street, Columbus saw his one-time assistant, but so far off that his wrath had become deadly cold before he could come within shouting-distance of him. Never had the overalled Bugwine looked more loathsome to his superior. Eyes shining and garments soaked, Mr. Breck was wetting down approximately half of Demopolis in his zeal to win a tip on top of a fifty-cent fee, while the car beneath his ministrations evidently needed not only washing but a new top, fenders, tires, and a lot of lying to make it merchantable, as its owner reputedly planned.

Mr. Breck looked up apprehensively as Columbus approached. "Doin' de white gent'man a swell jȯb wid de wash," he advanced placatingly.

"Detectin', huh?" Mr. Collins' scorn blistered at close range, as Mr. Breck's prized blowtorch, now sitting near him, had once done in its prime.

Bugwine wriggled. Dropping an eight-dollar fee in the bush for four-bits in the hand no longer seemed the good idea it had at the time.

"White man say he aint doin' no good sellin' dis car as is," Mr. Breck's nervousness got into his tongue, "so he gwine try washin' it for luck."

"So you hires out to *him,* and lays down on *me!* Right when I *got* to git Chitlin's' eight dollars."

"Cain't even sniff out no clue to whar dat nigger was gwine, nohow," demurred Bugwine.

"Whar dat back-alimony you owes me, ape?"

"So you starts washin' a car—forgittin' dat Chitlin's has been in jail for what he done to wrastlers a whole heap bigger'n you is, when dey aint suit him! Layin' down on me—layin' down on Chitlin's—"

MEMORY supplied for the blanching Mr. Breck the other wall to a *cul-de-sac* he hadn't seen before. "Yeah, but you aint seen dis white man what own dis car, neither," he shuddered. "—One dem big, jut-jawed gent'men what you says 'Yessuh' to—and *means* it. Monkey wid dem kind, and dey runs you through a rock fence wid your hat on! He say, 'Boy, wash dis car.' And I say, 'Cap'n, it's wet a'ready!'"

Columbus scowled at his hapless aide.

"And *I* say, git bayin' on dat town's trail before I busts you! I *got* to git dat money now—"

"Why aint you stand Amnesia off some more—"

"It's wuss'n Amnesia *now!"*

"Wuss dan *Amnesia?"* Bugwine's brain balked at the impossible.

"Yeah. . . . It's Chitlin's! I done pawned his mule to pay Amnesia wid, countin' all time on you solvin'—"

"You pawned his *mule!"* Mr. Breck whirled gaping, stricken at the vista thus opened. "Pawned it to who?"

"Samson G. Bates, de business boy!"

Bugwine's apprehension grew audible for a block. "But Samson," he wailed, "collects or cripples! What you pawns, he keeps—"

"Gittin' you right smack up to de main point!" Columbus' contention was back at a bellow. "You *cain't* quit now! Not

Earth, sky and Demopolis joined in the explosion . . . . that engulfed the far-flung Mr. Breck.

when I banked all de time on you solvin' de case, so I could bail de mule back out wid Chitlin's' money—"

"Chitlin's' money?" Mr. Breck's dim-bulb mind was longer passing a given point than a parade would be.

"Yeah. Fee us was to git for you findin' out whar Chitlin's was gwine—"

"But I aint *know* whar—"

"You better start findin' out powerful quick, den!" Columbus moved in menacingly on a car-washer-in-error. "To-morrer's gallopin' right *at* you now!"

MR. BRECK dropped his hose, that he might better attend to his suffering. Unconsciously, he lighted his blowtorch too, as though to let in new light from it upon the darkness of his dilemma.

"Put dat thing out!" snarled an infuriated employer.

Bugwine's brain was limping in aimless circles about an insoluble case, while the maladjusted blowtorch hissed forth a sickly yellow flame.

"Boy, why aint you do somethin' besides stagger round and squall?" Columbus menaced him noisily.

"Tryin' git my mind off de white man what owns dis car, so I can think—"

"Better git it *on* Chitlin's—when he finds out us done pawned his mule!"

Bugwine ducked before that "us": success was singular, failure plural in the annals of Columbus Collins. "Us could finish dis car-washin'—den take de four-bits and run—" hazarded Mr. Breck in further betrayal of his caliber.

"And git how far?" Mr. Collins ruined *that* idea promptly.

But association of ideas had been started—a train of thought: so fatal a predicament indicated absence; absence indicated transportation; and transportation indicated—

Columbus leaped a foot in the air, as again inspiration bit into him. "Will it run?" he demanded excitedly.

"Will what run?" Bugwine was still far behind him.

"Aint nothin' else to do!" By now Columbus' intellect was taking obstacles like a steeple-chaser. "Hangin' aint hurt no wuss for a sheep dan for a lamb. And aint nothin' but a good State-line do us no good now, nohow, when Chitlin's and Samson starts tanglin' about who own dat mule . . . before dey *both* gangs up and commences lookin' for us—"

Mr. Breck's fears began pushing his eyes still farther out of his head, as the fuller facts swept him. A lilac hue limned his lower jaw. "You means—you *means*—" he struggled with the incredible amid mental morass.

"I means dat if dis car you's washin' will run, us is got to run it now! Borrer it till it gits us a fur piece from here—fast. How's de gas in it?"

"Gauge is busted—"

"Look in de tank. And look snappy! —Uh! Who dat strange white gent'man comin' yander now?"

"Ulph!" Bugwine, gazing, gagged in new terror. "Dat's *him!* What owns dis car!"

"Runt, step on it!" hissed Columbus in fresh access of haste. "Us travels fast or aint travel fur, now! Look in de gas-tank, I say! Quick!"

"Lookin' now!" Mr. Breck was fumbling frenziedly with its cap.

"And lay down dat blowtorch! Aint crave—"

Earth, sky, and Demopolis joined in the explosion that here interrupted a hurtling Mr. Collins. Flames preceded and shot dazzlingly through the blackness that engulfed the far-flung Mr. Breck. A roar rocked all things.

And after that indeed the dark.

YET New Dealers would have envied the speed of Columbus' recovery. From the thorny depths of the hedge that had intercepted him in his soaring, he wiped the car-seat upholstery from his face, spat out a spring—and sought out Mr. Breck, that he might slay him before the ex-car's owner beat him to it. Bits of wood, glass, steel, and tires were

still raining all about. A wheel rolled drunkenly from a distant roof, while a delayed door crashed heavily, to flush Bugwine, squawking raucously, from the culvert-mouth where he had been blown. From everywhere amazed onlookers were coming on apace.

"Dawg-gawn! What hit me, nohow?" Mr. Breck—his overalls blown to trunks —was demanding from a reeling world.

"Dat flop you calls your *brains* did!" raged the reviving Mr. Collins from his hedge. "Lookin' in de gas-tank *wid a blowtorch!"*

OTHER complications, other aspects of a bad situation suddenly made hideously worse, were already overwhelming Columbus. "Borrowing" a car from a strange white gentleman under his very eyes was bad enough. But blowing it up right under his nose added fatal insult to injury—added him to the pursuing pack that would soon be on their trail.

And here came the jutting-jawed owner now—in the forefront and on the run!

"Finishes washin' your car, Cap'n, just quick as I finds de rest of it, suh!" the still-stunned Bugwine was scrabbling idiotically on the site of the disaster. Columbus bowed to the storm. If he knew white-folks, tornadoes and typhoons could start taking lessons in a moment more.

But, incredibly, the expected failed to occur. Instead, this formidable-appearing white-folks was kicking quizzically, speculatively, at the dissembled parts of what had a few seconds before been his car, for sale. And feeling oddly in his inner coat pocket, before bringing forth a slender book.

"I believe the *little* fellow really ought to be the one to get the commission," he then added a decision to the mystery, and a pen to his hand.

"Commission? *Suh?"* The Collins agency gasped in puzzled unison.

"I don't care who I sell my car *to,* do I?"

"Naw, suh; sho don't!" croaked Bugwine from his fog.

"Well, and since I've sold it all right *now*—to the fire-insurance company, as a total loss, the minute you looked into its gas-tank with that blowtorch—" The white man was writing in his book while he talked; now he tore out a leaf. "Here you are: a check to bearer for two dollars and a half, for selling it."

As president, treasurer, and the stronger man, Columbus took it. Only to go crazy on that instant—as the forthwith-fleeing Bugwine had been momentarily fearful would happen when it occurred to Mr. Collins that no two-dollar-and-a-half commission check could keep Chitlings and Samson off their necks about that mule. That took *six* dollars—and six they did not have. Leaving nothing for a five-foot failure now to do but to get as far back beneath the old freight-depot as possible, and hope his body would not be found before the spring thaws set in—

But scarcely an hour had passed beneath the freight-house floor when across the restricted level covered by Mr. Breck's bug-eyed gaze strode an odd, an incredible, assortment of feet—so impossible yet so unmistakable, that curiosity outpulled his fears, and Bugwine crawled forth. Whereupon his gasp at what he saw was that of one kicked in the stomach—and he galloped after Demopolis' version of the Big Parade.

FOR in its rear, as he came up with it, strode Columbus Collins—a Columbus with the cigar of victory in his mouth. Just ahead of him—unmistakably redeemed—ambled Chitlings' mule. While at the forward end of that animal's halter stepped an evidently no-longer-lost Chitlings New. And ahead of *him* was none other than the jutting-jawed owner of the blown-up car!

"Wh-wh-what—" Mr. Breck struggled beside Columbus with questions he could not ask, let alone answer.

"Brains!" Mr. Collins blew cigar-smoke airily toward his triumphant procession on ahead. *"Yourn's* so dumb you blows up de car—but mine's so smart I puts two and two together, and—"

"What two?"

"De *Uniontown* I sees on dat check he gimme, and de *George Ross* what he signed it! See dat, and I gallops—to make Chitlin's pay off wid de eight becaze he's found; I bails out de mule wid dat, and I *still* got four bucks and a half left after I pays Amnesia! Business plumb to de tonsils! Dat's me all over!"

"Yeah—" and even as admiration welled up in Mr. Breck's doglike eyes, a sense of incompleteness re-dulled them —"but Chitlin's is still lost—"

"Chitlin's," Mr. Collins crowned his masterpiece, "never was lost—"

"Wasn't lost?"

"Naw! He was *found*—and didn't know it! Demopolis—whar he *is*—was whar dat nigger *was gwine all de time!"*

"The crippled man tossed something on the hot coals. . . . When the blue smoke cleared away, the ape had disappeared!"

The

A weird and fascinating story of the jungle by the famous author of "The Splendid Thieves," "Raft on the Sargasso" and other well-remembered stories.

Illustrated by J. Clinton Shepherd

THE night, heavy, thick, and strangely personal, shouldered the lonely bungalow of Jan Kromhout, the big Dutch naturalist. Far off, beyond the thirty-mile stretch of jungle, sheet-lightning played over the Sawah Mountains, suggesting the attempts of astral photographers to take flashlights of celebrities on the low-swinging planets.

There was no wind. It was the last week of October; the east monsoon had died down, and the west monsoon that ushers in the rainy season was overdue. In this transitional period—known locally as the "canting" of the monsoons—there are strange irregularities in Javanese weather.

From the bungalow there filtered out into the listening night the protesting litany of imprisoned things: The weird cry of the *wou-wou,* the dry cough of the *lutung,* the teeth-grating swish of restless lizards and snakes that were compulsory guests of the big naturalist. And with the low chorus of the captives came a pathetic undernote: A little maroon-tinted hanuman monkey had lost her baby that afternoon, and now she cried pitifully in the darkness.

Jan Kromhout sprawled in his big chair on the veranda, a bottle of schnapps and a tumbler resting in the circular openings specially cut in the arm-rests. The night, by its rather aggressive and eavesdropping quality, forced him to be unusually talkative.

"There are countries that look nice and beautiful and friendly, but they feed on men who are not born to them," he said slowly. "They are eaters of flesh. *Ja!* They are eaters of souls. They are cannibals that consume the flesh and the spirit. This country, Java, is one of them."

Jan Kromhout had a peculiar manner of expressing himself. He thrust an assertion into the conversational ring, so to speak; then, after waiting for a few minutes, as if hoping for contradictions, he proceeded to back up the introductory statement by an amazing narrative. If the slightest doubt was hurled at the affirmation, one never heard the story.

"There are many clean countries in this world," he began. "There is North America from the Bering Sea down to the Rio Grande. And there is Europe, and the southern part of Australia. A little bit of Africa around the Cape, perhaps. The rest is not too clean; but it is the East, and particularly the Malay, that is bad. *Ja,* particularly the Malay.

Blue-Nosed Vampire

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

"You have seen those plants that botanists call *Drosera,* but which ordinary folk call sundew? They are flesh-eaters. They are short of hydrogen, so they catch flies and small insects. They put nice syrup on their tentacles, and when a fool fly takes a sip, he goes on the menu. It is the same with the Malay. Just the same. But often in this place the human fly does not know that he is being consumed. Very often.

"I will tell you a strange story. It is one that you cannot tell on Broadway or Fifth Avenue, because you must have the atmosphere. It would be unbelievable without the things that are around us tonight—the odors and the heaviness and the mystery. The air of your United States is too thin, too clean, too— What is that word that you say about everything American? *Ja,* that is it. It is too hygienic. Everything is so hygienic in your country. That is good, very good. Here the filth of the centuries is sitting on the doorstep. The place has the quality of the *Drosera.* It is flesh-eating.

"Belief is a matter of finding things to act as mental digestives. When you see water that is supposed to run uphill, because Krishna wanted a drink and was too lazy to go down to the stream, it helps a little in this business of believing. When you see a tiger that was turned into bronze as he was springing upon Buddha, it helps a little. And when you see native women taking offerings to the Sacred Cannon at the Penang Gateway because they think it will bring them children, you are getting ready to swallow a lot. You are cultivating the digestion of the East. . . .

"Five years ago I was trapping at a place beyond Papandagen. It was a lonely place. Sometimes in the hush of noon I would think that all the peoples of the world had died suddenly, and that I was alone. It was frightening. The loneliness was a thing that walked with you. *Ja,* it did. It breathed; it whispered; it touched you with fingers that were the fingers of the dead.

"While I was trapping in that place, there came up the valley an American. He was from Richmond, Virginia, and his name was Kenyon: Jefferson Lee Kenyon. He was a rich sportsman, and he had been all over the world with his guns and his rifles. He had shot everything that walked or flew, from the white rhinoceros to the big bats of Java that we call *Kalongs.*

"This Kenyon was the finest-looking man I have ever seen. Six feet and a bit, with broad shoulders and the waist of a woman; and he was so hard and so tough that he did not know fatigue. *Neen.* He would tramp fifty miles through the jungle in a day; then, after he had his supper he would say: 'I must have a little exercise before I go to sleep. It is bad, Kromhout, for a man to go to bed without a little exercise.'

" 'But you have walked fifty miles!' I would snap.

" 'Oh, that is nothing,' he would laugh. 'I feel funny unless I stretch my legs.'

"Kenyon had a white servant who waited on him. And he had a Chinese cook, and he had five native servants.

Three of those natives were Sundanese, and the two others Madoerese.

"Those five natives did nothing but talk about the strength of that American. They would argue about it amongst themselves. They thought it was not right, that it was queer. To them, it was the strength of a god. When they were so fatigued that they could hardly pull their legs along, that American would say: 'Let's walk a little faster. We are moving like sore-footed lemurs.'

"Those five looked for an explanation for Kenyon. *Ja,* and they found it. In a ruined temple, about a mile from the camp of that American, the five found a stone statue that was the statue of a hunting god. A terrible fellow, nine feet high, a big spear in his right hand, and the left hand raised and turned outward in what is called the *abhaya mudra* pose, which means: *Fear not, all is well.*

"The five thought that Kenyon was the god born again. They were certain that he was. It was a simple way of explaining his strength; it also made excuses for their laziness. How were they to keep up with a god who would not get tired if he walked a thousand miles?

"I heard of that belief. One day I went into that ruined temple to get out of the heat of the sun, and I took a look at that stone god. I was surprised. *Ja,* I was much surprised. No one had taken any notice of that god for hundreds of years; but now, suddenly, he was what you call popular. Mighty popular! There were little heaps of rice-powder and tapioca, and packets of cinchona, around his stone toes; and there were blossoms of the *Rafflesia* and the ylang-ylang hanging on his arms. I knew what they were. They were offerings of the native women to the god whom they believed had come to life in the person of that American—possibly from childless women who were in disgrace because they had no children.

"At times I thought I would tell Kenyon about that business, but I stopped myself with the words on my lips. I thought he might be worried if he knew of the offerings, and so I kept quiet. Three times I went into the temple and hid behind the stone pillars. In the gloom I saw half a dozen native women slip in, one after the other, lay their little offerings at the feet of the god, and glide away noiselessly. Some of the women I recognized; others I had never seen before.

"It was three weeks after I had first seen the offerings that Kenyon came over to my little bungalow. He sat around for a while without speaking, but I knew that he had come to tell me something. He had the look of a man who is ashamed to confess. He looked like a little boy who has stolen some plums.

"'Kromhout,' he began at last, 'you have been out here a long time, haven't you?'

"'*Ja,*' I said. 'I have been out here so long that sometimes it is hard work to make myself believe that I am a Dutch cheese-head born in the shadow of the Oude Kerke at Amsterdam.'

"He did not speak for some minutes; then, with his face turned away from me, he said: 'I have come to ask your advice.'

"'You can have it,' I said. 'Have some of the boys been stealing food?'

"He swung round on me and snapped out his answer. 'Some one is stealing the food, all right,' he cried; 'but the food is *me!*'

"I did not understand what he meant by that, so I waited. 'Listen,' he said, 'some one—who the devil it is I don't know—is feeding on me! Feeding on me! Oh, damn! It seems silly to tell you, but I've got to. You are the only white man except my fool valet, and I've got to speak about it. Some one is feeding on me while I sleep! Taking the strength out of me!'

"'It is a touch of malaria,' I said.

"'Rot!' he cried. 'Do you think that I don't know what malaria is like? This—this is human! Something—something of the vampire order!'

"I looked at him as he sat in the sunshine: A big man in shorts and khaki shirt, sun-helmet, and boots of porpoise hide. He was a fine man, that Kenyon.

There is a painting of one of De Ruyter's captains in the Ryks Museum at Amsterdam. A big fearless man. Always when I looked at Kenyon, I thought of that fellow that had sailed with De Ruyter. They were much alike. They were men who spat in the eye of the world, and laughed as they did it.

"'Tell me,' I said to him.

"He started to speak quietly to me. His temper had passed. He was facing that business as he would face a tiger. He had nerves of steel, and although he was puzzled, he was not scared. No, he was not scared.

"HIS story was very strange. For seven nights he had been wakened just after midnight with a sharp pain in the left shoulder. When he grabbed his torch, there was nothing in his tent; but he had a feeling that some one or something had been sucking the strength out of him while he slept. Sucking the force out of him—the vigor that puzzled those natives.

"'It is the most terrible feeling in the world,' he said. 'The most damnable feeling. It is like a creeping death. I have to crawl back to life when I wake—crawl back like something newborn.'

"'Do you hear anything?' I asked.

"'It's funny,' he said. 'Each time as I'm crawling back to life, I have heard the tinkling of a little bell—faint, very faint. It is gone before I am fully awake.'

"'Let me see your shoulder,' I said.

"Kenyon stripped back his shirt. Just beneath his left shoulder-blade were seven marks of a faint scarlet color. They were in a straight line, about one inch apart, and it was easy to tell the new ones, because they were of a more brilliant color.

"I got a magnifying-glass and examined those spots. I was interested. *Ja,* I was very much interested. Each one of those marks was the size of a man's thumbnail, scarlet, as I said, with the center a deeper tint. And that central spot looked like the thrust of a single tooth. A single tooth! That was funny—damned funny.

"Now, I did not believe in human vampires. I knew much about the blood-sucking bats, *Desmodus rufus* and *Diphylla ecaudata,* that we call vampire bats. Darwin has written of that fellow *Diphylla ecaudata.* He is bad, very bad. His teeth are built so that he can pare off a piece of skin the way you do when you shave too close, and then he sucks at the small capillary vessels that are exposed. He is clever. He has to have blood, that fellow. His gullet is so small that nothing solid can pass through it, and he has no money to buy milk or schnapps to keep him alive. So he must get blood, or starve to death. But those marks on Kenyon's back were not made by bats. *Neen.*

"'You have been bitten by something,' I said, 'but I do not know what that something is.'

"'It is human,' said Kenyon, looking me squarely in the face.

"I shrugged my shoulders. What could I say? I had no explanation to offer. There were seven marks where something had bitten him seven nights running; and if he thought they were made by a human being, why should I contradict him? Around us were leagues and leagues of country in which funny things were happening every day. Very funny things! This Malay is the mortar in which the devil mixes his drugs. *Ja,* I know.

"We sat there in the hush of noonday, and my mind went over all the tricks of the Malay *pawangs.* Those medicine-men, after they have doped themselves with drugs, become possessed of the tiger spirit. I have seen them do things that I could not explain, but those marks on Kenyon's shoulder did not look like the

work of a *pawang*. Not much. The thing that was biting the American wanted strength; it wanted force. It wanted the vitality that allowed that fellow to walk fifty miles without tiring.

"I thought of the stone statue in the ruined temple—of the childless native women slipping into the gloomy place with their little offerings. I thought of all that, as I looked at Kenyon, so big, so strong, so splendid. And I was a little afraid—just a little afraid.

"'Why don't you sleep here tonight?' I said.

"'I'd like to, if you have room,' he answered.

"'I'll make room,' I told him. 'But don't let any of your boys know that you are sleeping here. Slip out quietly after you have had your dinner.'

"He came over to my bungalow about nine o'clock. He was just a little solemn when he arrived. He did not like those bites. They made him mad. It is not nice for something to nip you like that when you are asleep.

"I fixed him up a cot in a small room where I kept my specimens. The window was screened, and there was a bolt on the door. 'Nothing will bite you here,' I told him. 'You will sleep well.'"

JAN KROMHOUT paused in his recital, lifted himself from his chair and entered the bungalow. He spoke softly to the little hanuman monkey that had lost her baby, and when her moanings died down, he returned to the veranda.

"I must have been asleep for two hours or more," said Kromhout, again taking up the tale. "It was noises in Kenyon's room that roused me. He was moving about, and I saw the flash of his torch beneath the door. I jumped up quick and called out to him. He flung back the bolt, and I stepped inside the room.

"'I've been found, Kromhout,' he said quietly. 'Got nipped again. Look at the window.'

"He held up the torch, and I saw the window. The wire screen had been torn away at one corner, so that there was a hole big enough for a good-sized dog to get through. The tacks had not been pulled out. The wire had been torn.

"'Didn't you hear the tearing of the screen?' I asked.

"'No,' said Kenyon. 'I heard nothing but the faint tinkling of a bell as I tried to wake. I found then that I had been bitten. Look at my shoulder, will you?'

"I swore softly as I looked at his shoulder. *Ja*, he had been bitten. There was a fresh mark exactly in line with the others. Exactly in line.

"IT was a queer business, very queer. We Dutch have a proverb that says: '*Geen ding met der haast dan vlooijen te vangen.*' It means that you should not do anything in a hurry except catching fleas; but there was something bigger than a flea biting Kenyon, so he would not listen to me when I told him to move slowly. *Ach*, he was raging!

"He grabbed his revolver and charged out into the dark night. He was so angry that he would have fought all the devils in the Malay. Devils and tigers and vampires! Never have I seen a man as angry as that American.

"I chased him as he ran around the bungalow. I was a little scared. I could not understand that torn screen. It was in my mind as I followed that fellow through the darkness. The darkness that had a laugh in it! Do you understand? The Malay was laughing at Kenyon and myself—laughing like the flesh-eating plants when they are eating up the fool flies that are clutched by their tentacles.

"Kenyon circled the bungalow twice; then he started for his own camp. I followed him through the black night. Lawyer-vines tripped me up a dozen times, but I was close to him when we got to his tents.

"Those servants of his were asleep, but he dragged them out so that he could feel the bedding to see if it was warm. It would have been bad for one of those boys if that American had found cold blankets. He was insane with temper. He wanted to kill some one to cool himself off. He just hoped one of those natives would give him an excuse to strangle him. . . .

"When it was daylight, I brought him back to my bungalow. I was afraid to leave him alone. His pride was hurt. I thought to tell him about the stone statue in the temple, and the little offerings that the women brought to it because they thought the god had come alive again in the person of Kenyon, but I was afraid to tell him. I think he would have gone to the temple and smashed that god into a million pieces if I had told him.

"He could not eat; he could not drink; and he would not sit five minutes in the same place. And around us was the Malay, breathing quietly as it is breathing tonight, watching the human flies

that are tricked by the nice syrup it spreads for them. It is a giant *Drosera,* this Malay. It is the cannibal land.

"I begged Kenyon to stay with me. I was afraid that he would do something silly, if he went back to his camp. 'The thing knows that you are staying with me,' I told him, 'so you can shoot it as easily here as you could at your camp. And it is just as well to have a white witness. It is silly to kill without having a friend to swear that you did it in self-defense.'

"'Listen, Kromhout,' he cried: 'I'll never close my eyes again till I fill that thing with lead. No more sleep for me till I get it, whatever it is, man or beast.'

"I had a madman on my hands. *Ja,* a fine madman. The best specimen of an angry man I have ever met. For five days and five nights he did not sleep one wink. He would lie in the dark on his cot, waiting for that something that wanted some of his fine strength. In the dark, but with his eyes open and his gun in his fist.

"Twenty times in those five nights I crept to the door of his room, but he heard me. 'All right, Kromhout,' he would say. 'I'm awake. Nothing doing yet.'

"His pride and his anger kept sleep away. I wanted him to sleep during the day while I stood guard, but he wouldn't. He was pig-headed. He wanted to be the one who would catch that bloodsucker when he made another call.

"I went to that ruined temple three times. I thought I might find out something. I crouched in the gloom and watched those soft-footed women sneak in with their little offerings. They were like ghosts in the half-darkness of that place. *Ja,* like brown ghosts. They made no noise. They slipped up to the statue that they thought was Kenyon in his god-like state, placed their rice powder, cinchona, or flowers, at his feet—and then padded away.

"There was one woman, slim and supple and beautiful. I saw her in the temple twice. She made little prayers when she brought presents—little whispered prayers to the stone god. I thought she was complaining about something.

"THE afternoon of the sixth day of Kenyon's watch I was in the temple when that slim woman came in. I was hiding behind a big stone pillar—quite close to her when she knelt. I heard her prayers: She wanted a child, a man child. She wanted one that was strong

"When they were so fatigued that they could hardly pull their legs along, that American would say: 'Let's walk a little faster. We are moving like sore-footed lemurs.' He did not know fatigue."

and beautiful. She told all this to the god. In the silence of the place you could hear her faintest whisper.

"She was rising from her knees when she said something that startled me—startled me a lot. She looked at the god with her big black eyes, and she said in the softest whisper: *'But you do not sleep! O Holy One, you do not sleep!'*"

AGAIN Jan Kromhout heaved himself out of his chair and entered the bungalow. The whimpering of the little hanuman monkey that had lost her baby disturbed him. In a few minutes he returned with the small mother in his arms. He stroked her and talked to her, and when he seated himself, the monkey curled up on his lap and fell asleep.

Kromhout took up his tale. "When she left that temple, I followed her," he said, his voice lowered as if a little afraid lest the listening night might not approve of his conduct. "Followed her through the jungle! She did not know that I was on her trail. *Neen.* I am good at that work. She slipped through little paths that were not paths at all. Twice I lost her, but I picked her up again. I was excited, much excited. Those words about sleep had stirred me. I would not have lost her for a million gulden. Curiosity made my throat dry.

"I must have followed her six miles, perhaps more. We came to a clearing in the jungle, and in the middle of that clearing was a hut fenced around with split bamboos. She slipped through the fence and into the hut.

"I crept up to the bamboos and waited. There was something that was not nice about that hut, not nice at all. It was very silent in that patch in the jungle. It had the weird expectancy that dries up your mouth and makes your throat like a lime-kiln. It cannot be explained. It is the reaction of nature against matters that are not normal. *Ja,* that is it. The hut or the persons in the hut were a little over the edge. They were queer, and the jungle that watched them knew that they were queer.

"I kept my eye to a hole in that bamboo fence. The words the woman had whispered to the stone god were running round in my brain like little red beetles. Those words, *'Holy One, you do not sleep!'* were startling.

"An hour went by—two hours. The silence was choking. Not a sound came from the hut. It was then about two o'clock in the afternoon. For the first time in many years I was scared—scared of nothing! I was scared because it was too quiet in that little clearing—too damned quiet.

"It was nearly three o'clock when that place woke up—suddenly. The woman came out of the hut at a trot, carrying a dishful of red coals. She placed the coals in a circle on a piece of ground that had been beaten flat—in a circle that was about six feet in diameter. She was in a great hurry. She was acting as if they had suddenly got news of great importance.

"Then I saw the man. He was her husband. He came out of the hut on all fours; he was crippled so that he could not stand upright, and as he crawled, he pulled behind him a blue-nosed ape. *An ape with a little tinkling bell on his neck!*

"That ape was not in a hurry. Not much! When he saw the smoke rising from the hot coals, he hung back, and the man cursed him. Cursed him a lot. They were in a great hurry to do something. The woman kicked the ape to make him move, and I did not blink my eyes as I watched. I knew that I was going to see some business that was out of the ordinary. My skin told me that—my skin and the watching, listening jungle. Bad stuff was in the making, in that place.

"When they got the ape close to the circle of coals, they lifted him up and tossed him into the ring. He was pretty mad, was that ape. He spat some ape curses at that pair as he sat in the circle with the saliva running from his mouth. He did not like that business.

"The crippled man tossed something on the hot coals. A blue smoke went up,

like the incense smoke that the *pawangs* use. It was so thick that I could not see the ape. The man lowered his head so that his forehead touched the ground, and he commenced to chant in a dialect that I did not know. The woman covered her eyes with a corner of her sarong.

"After about five minutes the smoke cleared away, and I looked at the circle within the coals. . . . Now, you must have that belief I spoke of, the belief that is necessary in the East. That circle was empty! The ape had disappeared!"

KROMHOUT paused and leaned forward, listening to the chorus of imprisoned things. A new note had come into the protests of the captives, a note that suggested fear on the part of the monkeys.

Kromhout, holding the sleeping hanuman in his arms, entered the bungalow, swung a torch over the cages, listened to the chattering for a few minutes, then returned to his chair.

"They think they smell something," he said. "Something that is prowling around. A panther, perhaps. They know so much, and they are sure that I know very little. And they may be right. . . .

"I told you that the ape had gone. *Ja.* I tried to figure out how he had gone, but I could not. The loop of green-hide that had been around his neck was in the circle, but he was not there. I wet my lips and waited. The silence hurt my head. The man had his face on the ground; the woman stood like a statue, her eyes covered.

"An hour went by; then the man made a quick clucking noise to the woman. She dashed into the hut and brought fresh coals. They were in a hurry now, the way they were before. She spread the coals in a circle, and the man sprinkled the powder on them. Up went the smoke, and the man chanted.

"I was watching close then, watching the smoke drift away. I expected something. *Ja, ja.* I expected that ape to come back, and I was right in thinking that he would. When the smoke cleared away, he was there in the center of the ring—lying down in the center of the ring.

"He was a mighty tired-looking ape. He was wet with sweat, and he was gasping for breath. He looked as if he had run all the way to Batavia and back during the hour that he was absent. He was all in, was that ape.

"The man and the woman lifted him out of the circle and carried him into the hut. They shut the door, and I knew that the business was over. I squatted at the fence for a while; then I felt that I should hurry back to the bungalow. Do you know why? Those words that the woman had whispered to the stone god were pricking me. Those funny words: *'But you do not sleep! O Holy One, you do not sleep!'*

"Those words were whips that flogged my legs as I ran back along that jungle path. Whips that hurt me! I knew that I had been a fool. I cursed my stupid Dutch brain as I ran through the trees, the creepers clawing at my face and hands. I had heard, and I had not understood. *'O Holy One, you do not sleep!'* And I knew that the natives thought Kenyon was that stone god who had come to life. The French call us Dutchmen, *têtes-de-fromage.* Just then I thought the French were right in giving us that name. *Ja,* I did.

"I came in sight of my bungalow, and I ran faster. What had that ape been doing while he was away? I was sweating with fear.

"Kenyon was sitting on the veranda of the bungalow. As I ran, I saw that he was asleep. Asleep! His chin was on his chest, and his revolver had dropped from his hand to the ground.

"'Kenyon!' I cried. 'Kenyon! Wake up!'

"I shook him by the shoulder. That was the first doze that he had had for six days, and it was a hard business to rouse him. He came out of his sleep as a man would come back after being knocked unconscious.

"He opened his eyes and looked at me—looked at me as if he did not know me; then with a little yelp of terror, he flung his right hand around to his left shoulder-blade. His face was not nice to see at that moment, not nice to see at all.

"I knew before he spoke, before he unloosed the curses that he flung at himself for being so foolish as to go to sleep.

"'He got me again, Kromhout!' he cried. 'The swine has bitten me again!'"

THE mother monkey whimpered in her sleep as memories of her little one came into her dreams. The big hands of the naturalist stroked her gently. The ceaseless thresh of the lizards and snakes suggested emery paper applied to a rough surface.

"That afternoon I was in charge of a madman," continued Kromhout. "I had

to do something. Toward dusk I gave Kenyon a sleeping-draft. *Neen,* he did not know. I slipped it into a peg of whisky. It was strong enough to make him sleep twelve hours.

"When he had dropped on his cot, I pulled down his shirt so that the bites showed. I made a paste of strychnine crystals. Because strychnine is bitter, I put in some sugar—a lot of sugar. Then I put that paste on Kenyon's shoulder, in line with the other bites. That is what I did. And I said a little prayer for myself, asking the Almighty to forgive me for what I was doing. After that I went to bed. . . .

"*Ja,* he was bitten. I looked at him before daylight while he was still asleep. And before the effects of that sleeping-draft had worn off, I washed his shoulder and put some iodide of potassium on the new bite. Then I waited, wondering what I would hear.

"About eight o'clock I heard the news. A native running by my bungalow called out to me: The crippled fellow in the hut who played tricks with the blue-nosed ape was dead. He had eaten something, so they thought; and he had died in great pain. The blue-nosed ape was dead too. The native thought the ape had died of grief.

"Kenyon woke up an hour later. He was mad when he found he had been bitten again, but I quieted him. 'It is the last time,' I said. 'Nothing will touch you again.'

"'Why do you say that?' he snapped.

"'Just because I know,' I answered.

"And I was right. He stayed around there for five months, but he was not troubled again. Not once!

"The wife of that cripple married again—married a big strong man. She had lots of babies; and when I saw her with them, I did not worry so much about that strychnine paste that I had put on Kenyon's shoulder. I thought I had done something that the Almighty approved of. I had that feeling in my heart." . . .

Kromhout gathered up the sleeping hanuman and rose from his chair. At the door of the bungalow he paused and looked at the thick darkness. "That is a small matter when compared to the things that have happened here," he said quietly. "The Malay is bad. Always when I think of it, I remember the *Drosera* that eats the little flies. We who live here are the little flies too. Now I go to bed."

REAL

In the belief that every man has had at least one adventure so exciting or unusual as to deserve record, we print each month five stories of Real Experience. (For details of this prize contest, see page 3). First a power-plant electrician tells what happened after the flywheel let go.

By VERNON D. BROWN

WHO would think that a flywheel, one of those big wheels you see on the side of a stationary engine, could explode? The text-books call it centrifugal force. It certainly is a force which will shatter a great steel wheel measuring eight feet in diameter, and weighing many tons. I was standing beside one of these babies when it let go—and I was too scared to run.

Buster Haddon and I were just returning to our shop from the boiler-room, where we had been stealing a smoke. We came up through the engine-room, and through habit I glanced at the instruments on our main switchboard.

I saw the needle of the ammeter of one of our large direct-connected, direct-current units, flop from approximately full load, back to zero. The generator had dropped its load! Needles on the other instruments fluctuated madly, as the other machines, already loaded almost to capacity, attempted to pick up the nine hundred-odd amperes suddenly thrust upon them. Automatically my hands sought the rheostats, trying to help the overtaxed machines adjust this unexpected load. In my mind formed dire pictures of circuit-breakers tumbling out —of a power shut-down running into heavy money, which the electrical department would be asked to explain.

But barely had I touched the rheostat knob, when a low moaning forced itself upon my consciousness. Buster Haddon gripped my arm, and we both stared at the ring of sparks running around the commutator of the faulty generator. These sparks told us of a speed much too high. That moan was the protest of

EXPERIENCES

A Flywheel Explodes

tortured metal—the engine was running away!

Even as we stared, that moan rose to a shriek impossible for human ears to endure. Then hell broke loose!

To us, it did not seem an explosion. We felt the air suddenly sucked away from us. Our stomachs came up into our throats, and we gasped for breath. The dull boom, which ensued, we were barely conscious of. That flywheel had shattered into thousands of projectiles, each flying with the speed of cannonballs, all in a straight line. We, standing beside that runaway engine, were unharmed.

Why the engine governor failed to function was never known. No part of it was found. Live steam spurted from broken lines. Water from the sprinkler system flooded us. Through the steam fog continuous arcs from another electrical unit shot toward the ceiling. Its commutator had been smashed by a flying projectile.

This we learned afterward. Then we were busy yanking switches, trying to save tortured generators from burning out. When the steam was finally turned off, the fog which enveloped us grew cooler. But something had happened to our alternating-current system, coming in from the outside. This took care of our high-pressure fire pumps, and our emergency lights, and was never supposed to be off. We were in darkness!

Our foreman sent a man to the switch-house, located in the yard. The constantly jingling shop telephone, we disregarded, but messenger-boys reached us sent by various foremen. These told of panic in some departments as projectiles, believed by some of the workers to be meteors, crashed through the roof, and tore their way down through the floors to the basement. One of these pieces, weighing about five hundred pounds, tore jagged holes through five floors and cracked the concrete floor of a storage cellar like an eggshell. Engineers estimated that it must have soared to a height of at least five hundred feet to acquire the velocity necessary for this.

IT was after four o'clock. Darkness was coming on rapidly, and the plant must be emptied of some five thousand excited workers. Then came rumors of fires—with our fire-pumps useless.

The man returned from the switch-house, and reported that he had reset the oil-switch. Still not half the emergency lights were on, and there was no power. The trouble undoubtedly lay between us and the switch-house. If it could be located and rectified, we could not only start the fire-pumps, but also our auxiliary one-hundred-kilowatt motor generator set, and operate some of the elevators, thereby relieving the congestion on the stairways.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Buster, and pointed to where, behind our switchboard, wisps of smoke were ascending.

Down there was the main distribution chamber, from which ran cables to all parts of the plant. Somewhere a gas main had been smashed, and down there something was smoldering!

Buster and I went down into that hole—and landed in hot water up to our knees. I mean literal hot water, almost hot enough to scald. One of those con-

founded pieces had crashed through here and had snapped one leg of our 2300-volt three-wire system—our outside power. The broken ends of that cable were submerged in water, forming a ground, not quite strong enough, as yet, again to trip the oil-switch.

"Rubber gloves, and rope!" we yelled to those above.

Tenderly, using more care than a nurse would in handling an incubator baby, we lassoed the ends of that sizzling cable, and raised them above the water. A flash-over from the wires to the lead casing would have blinded us, probably for life. We tried not to think about what it would do to that gas-laden air. Not until those ends hung from the ceiling, clear of the rising water, did we dare to breathe freely. But our real work had not yet commenced. By this time those above had rigged up some lights for us.

BUSTER looked at me, a question in his eyes. People were on the verge of panic. If we plunged the plant in darkness, many would be injured.

"I'm game!" I told him, and without another word we went to work.

To the uninitiated, that cable is best described as about two and a half inches in diameter, with an outside sheathing of lead. The many-stranded wires of the core were insulated from the lead by many layers of varnished cambric, impregnated by an oil intended to keep this insulation from drying. The primary idea of this construction was to make it flexible enough to be drawn into ducts, and stand bending without injury. Once the lead sheathing is broken, the insulation will gradually soak up water; and as we worked, we expected every moment to have it arc over in our faces. I have seen a hundred-pound manhole-cover blown fifteen feet into the air, because that manhole was allowed to become full of water, and work its way into a junction-box supposedly waterproof. Twenty-three hundred volts needs very little excuse to short-circuit.

Each of us took an end, and wiping the insulation as dry as possible, after rigging shields to protect them from the water, which was still pouring down from the flooded engine-room, we laid back the lead a good three feet; then, starting a foot away from the lead, we cut away the cambric, leaving the wires bare. Both ends were alive. Buster's came directly from the oil-switch, and mine fed back through the transformers because of the many light and power switches closed throughout the plant.

Meanwhile those above us had been preparing many lengths of wire about a half-inch in diameter, stranded. We could not handle heavy cable in the situation we found ourselves in. To make a cable splice necessitates the use of a copper sleeve, inside of which the two ends of the cable are butted together; then boiling lead is poured into the sleeve, making the joint absolutely solid. After sufficient insulation is applied, a lead sleeve which has already been slipped loosely onto the cable before the work is started, is forced over the splice, and after shaping is sealed to the cable sheath by "wiping"—the same method plumbers use to seal a lead joint in a water-pipe. The moisture which had soaked into this cable would have to be boiled out by pouring boiling paraffin over it, before it would be safe.

Needless to say, we had no time to do this. Neither dared we use a fire to melt solder on account of the gas-filled air. Consequently we used the smaller stuff, counting on using enough to equal the carrying capacity of the larger cable.

Buster took care of the bare ends of those five-foot lengths of wire as fast as I spliced them to my end of the cable. One flash, and the air about us would have blown up. If they touched our sopping wet clothing—well, you know what happens to the guy in the electric chair when the juice is turned on. If anybody wonders why the sweat was streaming off us, just let them try working with something where you only have to make one very small mistake to die horribly.

The drain in the duct was not large enough to carry off the water as fast as it poured in, and although we had that cable pulled as high as possible, it was only a question of time before the water reached it. We did not want to be there when that happened.

MY end was finished. We figured eight lengths as enough. Buster began on his; I passsed the ends to him. As he made ready to attach the first length, I fanned the air with my hat, trying to blow away some of that gas. Quickly he gave the wire a wrap around the cable. We got the arc we expected, but we were still breathing air, not flame; so one danger was passed. Just as he was finishing his second wire, the

rubber insulation of the two lengths began to smoke, and melted rubber struck the water with a slight hiss.

"Some fool has started the fire-pumps!" Buster groaned. Those pumps were in a distant section of the plant, and there was no way of getting word to shut them down, for our wires were melting before our eyes.

There were two pumps, each operated by a thousand-horsepower motor, and we had only two lengths of No 0 wire to carry this load. We had to do something before that other pump was thrown on the line!

Feverishly we worked, choking and gagging from the fumes of burning rubber insulation which blinded us. Buster's heavy rubber gloves began to smoke from handling that hot wire. I pulled him away, gave him the ends to guard and went on with the work. As additional lengths of wire were added, things began to cool down, but it had been touch and go with us for a minute. Now we had given them their fire-pumps and emergency lights.

But not yet could we rest. The water was up to our waists, almost up to our splices. The wire we had used was ordinary rubber-covered, intended for ordinary voltages, and that 2300 volts would leak through it like sand through a sieve, if it was immersed for any length of time in water.

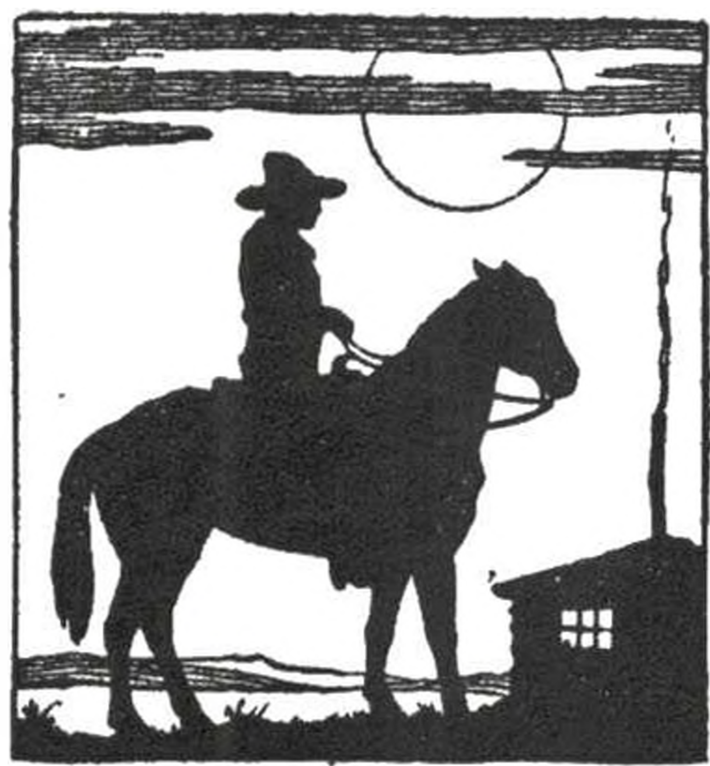
"Tape!" we shouted to those above.

I shivered as I saw Buster wrapping that wet tape with his burnt gloves. We thoroughly taped that part of our job which was likely to be submerged. Then what slack we had left was suspended from above out of harm's way. Then we climbed out of that death-trap. We did not care to be there when that water reached our splices. But they did not have to stand the test; for our boss, having power at last, had started the motor generator set; soon a suction pump was pulling the water out of that chamber.

Now the elevators could be run, and it was not long before everybody who had no business in the plant was out of it safely. By some miracle no one had been killed. A few had been slightly injured, from being knocked down on the stairs.

On my way home I slipped and fell on the ice and broke my arm. Ice is treacherous stuff to monkey with. . . . I went to the hospital for two weeks.

A Son of the Frontier



"Catch-'em-alive Jack," who has caught over a thousand wolves with his bare hands, carries on his exciting story.

By JOHN ABERNATHY

ABOUT December 1, 1891, I decided to go into the business of wolf-catching. I realized the value of my ability to catch them alive with my hands, for live wolves were worth fifty dollars and coyotes five dollars.

Quitting my job as bronco buster for the J-A outfit, I secured three new dogs, and was able to catch any wolf or coyote that jumped up in front of me. Live animals which I caught were sold to parks, zoos, traveling shows, and to firms which used them for breeding stock. I used only two dogs in catching a wolf or coyote. Too many dogs made it dangerous for me. In the fighting sometimes a dog would accidentally bite at me while trying to bite the wolf. . . .

I have been amused often, by the way the dogs acted when nearing the climax in a wolf fight. The dogs, when the wolf bristled and showed real fight, frequently would look back to see how close I was following them. If I was not close to the dogs, they would not make the attack, but if I was at their heels, it was no trouble to get the dogs to enter the fight in earnest. When I started after a wolf with my bare hands, the dogs always got out of the way.

Leaping for my throat, is the way the wolf always started to fight with me. In turn, I always gave the wolf my right hand. Usually I wore a thin glove—the thinner the glove, the better. But I have caught many wolves without a sign of a glove. I wore this glove merely to prevent the sharp canine teeth of the wolf from splitting open the skin on my hand. In thrusting my hand into the mouth of a biting wolf sometimes the sharp teeth would scratch the skin if I didn't have on a thin glove. These canine teeth are sharp as a razor. I preferred thin gloves because it required all my strength to grip the wolf's jaws. If I had used thick gloves, it would have made the job more difficult.

There is no damage whatever done to the hand by placing it in the wolf's mouth, if this operation is carried out just right, but it is extremely dangerous if one fails.

IN catching more than a thousand wolves alive with my bare hands, I learned from experience that quickness of the eye, strength of the man, combined with determination to win, had more than anything else to do with conquering a wolf. When a daring wolf sees a game fight, sometimes he will give up and quit, just as some game men will quit a fight, while others will battle on till absolutely forced to surrender.

I was blessed with unusual physical strength. During my youth, I contested with some crack wrestlers—and my wrestling experience was a great help in catching wolves. I depended on my ability as a wrestler, as much as on strength and skill, in making a catch.

Men whom I have tried to teach the art of wolf catching, have failed to accomplish the feat. I have tried to teach a large number, for I did not want a monopoly on this feat. It was with no small degree of disappointment that I found all my students had failed to make a catch bare-handed. Nearly all were able to make the catch so far as letting the wolf have their hand. But when the savage animal would clamp down on the hand, the student would become frightened, and instead of holding fast to the lower jaw and taking a little harmless pinch, he would quit. Consequently, the wolf would almost ruin the hand. . . .

During the winter, I lodged at the J-A Ranch headquarters at Goodnight, during the time I followed the profession of catching wolves as a means of livelihood. I usually caught two wolves in the forenoon and two in the afternoon of each day. Time was allowed for a rest at noon. Two sets of dogs were used, and occasionally there was a change of horses, especially if there was a long race. No chances were taken if the animals gave signs of being exhausted.

Nearly all of the wolves that I captured while at the Goodnight ranch headquarters, were found in the breaks just below the cap-rock. When wolves were not plentiful below the cap-rock, I took horses and dogs along with me on trips into New Mexico and Colorado. On many of these trips I was accompanied by lovers of outdoor sport from big cities, among them being bankers, doctors and other business men, who went just to see the performance.

My father sold the ranch in Briscoe County after living there nearly two years, and I decided to quit wolf-catching, to enter school. Strange as it may seem, I wanted a musical education, so I decided to enter Patterson's Institute, Hillsboro, as a piano student.

(*After pursuing his musical studies for some time our Son of the Frontier fell in love with a fellow-student, and after an exciting elopement and parental pursuit, they were married. A few years of quiet domestic life followed.*)

I sold pianos and organs, did some farming, broke wild horses and chased wolves, after moving to the town of Cross Roads. It was while attending the county fair at Mangum, the county seat of Greer, that I bought the famous iron gray horse, known as Sam Bass, from J. W. Tucker, a race-horse man. And Sam Bass, the horse, eventually was equally as well advertised as was Sam Bass, the outlaw, since newspapers and magazines all over the nation had published photos of the horse and of his owner, during famous wolf chases.

TWO million acres, including some of the richest farm land in America, located in beautiful creek valleys surrounding the Wichita Mountains, was to be given away through a turn of fortune! This vast area was the famous Kiowa-Comanche-Apache and Wichita-Caddo Indian reservations. History records this land-drawing as "President McKinley's Great Land Lottery." Millions of homeless people in all parts of the nation read of the huge drawing.

August 6, 1901, the cities of Lawton, Anadarko and Hobart, were opened and

the auction of lots began. I was at Lawton, having been sworn in as under-sheriff; and I had my first real experience as a peace officer, on the night of the opening. Two murders were committed; also two were held for insanity, during the opening nights, and the prisoners were chained to a wagon and guarded. There was no jail of any kind. The entire camp was in darkness at night, except for lanterns in tents. Nearly everybody carried shotguns or pistols. Shooting and yelling could be heard all night long, from persons who were inside the camp. I arrested one of the murderers the first night.

NOT all of the land was filed upon at once by homesteaders. I had not drawn a good number, but I filed on one of the overlooked tracts, in Comanche County. I had plenty of opposition in establishing my right to the claim: Six others sought to claim title to the land. The race started about 11:30 o'clock at night, from the west bank of North Fork of Red River. The riders forded the river, then running east about two miles, they raced to the land.

I was driving a span of big horses hitched to a wagon containing a camping outfit, a large piano-box, bedding and cooking utensils. My wife looked after the children, all of whom were small. She rode beside me, holding two of the babies in her arms as the team raced for the land. I unloaded the wagon and started digging a well. The piano box was used as a house on the claim. It was large enough to hold my wife and the children. This served as a "habitable house," in the meaning of the law, and was a big feature in sustaining my right to win title to the rich land.

The three other contestants who had squatted on the land that night, kept up a gun-fire at frequent intervals while it was dark, thus attempting to frighten us. I was uneasy because of my wife and children, fearing they might accidentally shoot toward our claim-shack. However, I pacified my wife by telling her I would open fire on them, if they fired on us. I had a small arsenal close by, while working in the well all night. I sunk the hole, hitting the top of the water sand at twelve feet, before quitting that early morning.

Three days after we had moved on the claim, four of the contestants who did the firing during that night, met me on the road as I was returning from Frederick—about two miles from the claim. This group stopped me, riding in front of my covered wagon. I was expecting trouble from these men, for I knew that two of them were notorious killers. I was riding on the dashboard when these men stopped. They got off their horses and walked to within six feet of me.

"Well, Abernathy, some one has got to move," said one of them.

"You are not tied, are you?" I asked.

Another of the killers then chimed in, saying: "I have been tried three times for murder, and it isn't what it's cracked up to be."

I stepped out of the wagon, on the ground, right in front of them, and said: "Well, boys, I am going to tell you something, but you probably won't believe it: I never killed a man in my life."

All this time Blue Johnson, an old time frontiersman, had been concealed inside the covered wagon. He had two double-barrel shotguns loaded with buckshot. Blue was a regular sharpshooter, and was well known by this crowd of four as a real fighting-man.

"Wow! Wow! Jack! Let's kill 'em all now!" shouted Blue, as he leaped from the back of the wagon to the front and took the drop on the quartet with one of the loaded shotguns. The other shotgun was within easy reach.

"My God!" cried the leader of the quartet, as he looked down the barrel of Blue's shotgun. "You don't mean to murder us, do you?"

I asked Blue not to shoot; then said: "Now boys, I moved on that claim to stay; when I move off, I'll be hauled off; so if there is any moving going to take place, I would advise you to move—and move in a hurry."

SIX weeks following this race for the land, our fifth baby was born—in the little dugout on the homestead. This baby, a girl, was named Jack by her mother. In the trial of the contest before Land Office officials at Lawton, I was awarded title to the land, after they heard the story about the piano-box house, and the birth of the baby. Those two incidents, the Land Office officials said, established beyond doubt all question of actual settlement. I immediately started building a house, hauling the lumber a distance of fifty-eight miles.

Next month Mr. Abernathy will tell of his difficult capture of a man more dangerous than any wolf.

Andes Flight

Getting over the mountains was not so bad; but making a landing despite fog and ice was something else again.

By JACK THOMAS

THE air-line ran between Buenos Aires, Argentina and Santiago, Chile. It operated without radio, weather reports or good sense, and with haywire maintenance and broken-down instruments—in the good old-fashioned, pioneering way. The six-hundred-mile stretch over the flat pampas between Buenos Aires and Mendoza could be negotiated without much danger in spite of most weather. At least, the thunderstorms, misty fogs and *pomperos* (wicked line-squalls) were conditions that you could see for yourself and fly in, or not, as you chose. But the Andes, between Mendoza and Santiago, were something else. . . . This story isn't concerned with the high winds, turbulent air currents, terrific cold and other conditions met at almost every crossing. The Andes' mean average height is higher than the best peaks of the Rockies. They are a big pile of rocks to climb over—and it may be enough to say that the few successful crossings made prior to 1929 usually were given world-wide notice.

Our company agent managed to have Santiago weather reports ready at Mendoza for the westbound trips. That removed one worry: if you got across, you knew what to expect on the other side. The return trip, two days later, was another thing. We had never been able to arrange for a satisfactory report from the Argentine side. . . .

Taking off from Santiago early one morning, the mountains stood out so clearly against the sky as to lose their third dimension, and seem a paper-thin stage setting. Even twenty-four thousand-foot Tupangato looked small in the distanceless perspective of the morning air. There were six passengers, and the Wasp-motored Ford climbed easily to eighteen thousand feet on the short run north to the pass that rambled eastward across the mountains. The pass itself wound upward to fourteen thousand feet midway across the mountains.

The engines were running sweetly, the air was smooth, and none of the passengers had felt the altitude, so it promised to be a comfortable trip. The pass spread out into the Upsallata Valley, a rock-strewn plateau cut off from Mendoza by a narrow ridge of mountains twelve thousand feet high. We were at about fifteen thousand feet in a shallow glide, and halfway across the valley, when I noticed that the vague grayish color on the far side of the last ridge was not the pampas. We soon passed over the ridge and it was like leaving the shore and flying out over an ocean—an ocean of weird, still waves. All our speed seemed lost, and we hung as though suspended over an expanse of clouds that lay like a lifeless sea to the circle of the horizon.

Mendoza might have been a lost city of Atlantis, resting on the bottom of this ghostlike ocean, where the pampas met the Andes. We had to go down through for gas before starting for Buenos Aires, six hundred miles east. The only flight instruments working were the compass, bubble and altimeter. Flying blind with only these was rather a delicate job, but by listening to the motors and checking their revs I could hold the ship in a fairly smooth glide, and with the bubble centered and the compass on a point, or slowly turning, the ship would be flying straight or making a wide spiral.

AT eleven thousand feet we hit the tops of the waves, and were soon submerged in a quiet, unreal whiteness. After ten minutes of gradually dropping lower in the depths of this ocean, the altimeter registered five thousand feet. The whiteness seemed, in an unexplainable way, to take on a solidity that amounted almost to weight and was pressing in on all sides of the ship—almost as though through some hypnotic power of the elements we had become a sinking submarine. It required an ef-

fort of will to watch the compass and bubble instead of gazing out the window looking for strange monsters.

The pampas around Mendoza were arid, almost a desert, and had an elevation of twenty-two hundred feet. It had been my theory that there would be no danger of fog or low ceilings. This was the winter season, and though it might be raining, the ground should be visible from one thousand feet above. I flattened the glide on an easterly course for several minutes.

"Keep an eye out for the ground, Gerry," I said to my co-pilot.

We were down now to three thousand feet—only eight hundred feet above the ground, and still blind. It was dangerously low flying, and my theory about thousand-foot ceilings was certainly wrong. The clouds indicated that possibly the barometric pressure was lower here than on the Chilean side of the mountains. This meant the ship might even be closer to the ground than the altimeter showed.

WE were two hours out of Santiago, and in coming down through the clouds should have passed twenty miles beyond Mendoza. That would put us well out over the desert, where the ceiling should be higher than close up to the mountains. If Gerry had seen a hole he would have let me know, but I couldn't help asking: "Haven't you seen the ground?" He shook his head.

We had three hours' gas left, enough for a safe return over the mountains. There was no use in burning any more looking for a hole, and the strain of flying blind so close to the ground was beginning to tell. I turned the motors full on and pulled up in a steep climb.

The altimeter read eleven thousand feet after a fifteen-minute climb. But still the ship was pushing through whiteness that was more oppressive by now than any Stygian darkness could possibly be. I tried to open the window at my side, but holding the wheel with one hand, I had only the awkward use of my left.

"Open your window," I yelled in Gerry's ear. He pulled at the window by his side—it was stuck. He tried the glass in front which served as a windshield, without success. They were frozen tight! Closer examination along the frames showed an inch or more of white frost ice on all the glass. We had been flying around close to the ground wrapped in a blindfold of ice—when it seemed likely we might have been in the clear all the while! That was bad enough, but up here at twelve thousand feet the situation was no better; I couldn't hope to guess my way through the Andes peaks, blindfolded.

It was a frying-pan-and-fire sort of jam. The best course seemed to be another descent through the clouds, and if we couldn't do anything else, break the windows. At three thousand feet I came out of the gliding spiral and flew in wide circles for thirty minutes. Gerry had been working at his window and finally broke it loose. We were still in the clouds!

Gerry's head was half out the window, but I yelled at him, anyway, "Look for a hole," and almost laughed—I don't know why—perhaps because the situation was entirely out of control.

On account of the possible error in the altimeter, it was out of the question to drop any lower. But by this time there was only one hour's gas left—not enough to get back over the mountains. It certainly seemed that we had all been tagged by fate. I thought of the passengers, and took a quick look into the cabin. Again I almost laughed—at their unconcern.

A few minutes more, and luckily, the compass began to turn too fast, startling me out of this dangerous detachment. I was trying to concentrate on the antics of the bubble and compass, when Gerry grabbed my arm:

"There's a hole!" he shouted, pointing out his side of the cockpit. I was afraid to look before getting the ship under control. Then I saw the ground through my own windshield—the ice had melted off. We were less than three hundred feet from the ground at our twenty-two-hundred-foot level, with the altimeter reading three thousand—a five hundred-foot error. We had been flying all this time that close to the ground—and carelessly too, at times.

I DON'T recall in what manner I offered thanks that we had come out over the only railroad running east from Mendoza. It had saved us a landing in the desert—out of gas. I followed it back to the city through a misting rain, and from there worked my way out to the field along the highway.

The passengers alighted to stretch, and I followed them out. One came up to me and said: "You know, this was my first time up, and I enjoyed every minute of it. I used to think flying was dangerous and frightening."

My Ten Years

Having recovered from a severe wound, this Iowa boy fights on in Syria under the tricolor.

MY new company, the *Vingt-neuvième Compagnie de Marche,* became famous. There were two reasons for this: one was the terrific fighting it did; the other was the character of its soldiers. They were of all sorts—French, Russians, Germans, Poles, an Englishman or so, two Americans. The bulk were old soldiers.

Two things pleased me when I reported to the Twenty-ninth: It was commanded by Lieutenant Vernon; as a rule you find a captain in command of a company, but there had been no captains to spare, and he had been placed in command. It was lucky for me; I had come from Marseilles with him. He had a great black beard that came to the middle of his chest. He must have been thirty-five. On his jacket were the Croix de Guerre and the Legion of Honor. At first I wondered how he could control his hard-boiled command. But he did. He shared all their hardships, overlooked a lot of little faults. When he was killed at the last taking of Suweida, his company swore oaths that would burn any printed page. . . .

When I reached Damascus I found Sylvestre in the Twenty-ninth. It was dark when I reported, and he was a little drunk. When I came into the barracks, he threw his arms around me.

"Slim!" he said. "This is a hard company. They fight; they drink. You will like them."

Damascus was an interesting city. It lay in the midst of an oasis. There were orchards, and great clumps of palm trees around the city. The last were not so good. Snipers were there. All day long they tried to pick off the French troops. I was told about three hundred thousand people lived in the city. They must have left out half the population when they counted them. And I did not see much of the city. The population was in a state of rebellion, and we were kept in the barracks. Later, after a few battles, I was back in the city—at the time the French bombarded it.

With several other companies of the Légion we were ordered to Mousseifré. This was an advanced post, a little village in the desert. We had to march there, miles over thick, hot sand. On our backs were heavy packs, and our *bidons* were filled with water. They hold a little over two quarts, and we needed it all.

Mousseifré was a little town of flat-topped houses and a mosque. Most of the people had fled, and what were left hated us. They were giving the Druses information about every move we made. And the first order given when we halted was: *"Aux murailles!"*

As a rule we build only one wall. Here we built six or seven. Anyway, they were placed around the town. Then we built another behind them. Each wall was a camp, holding a number of men. We put wire before them. I will never forget building those walls. We had put up our tents, in which six men sleep, beforehand.

It was hot; there was no shade. We had been told to be careful of our water. All we could get would have to come over the desert on the backs of camels. And the water was thick enough to make a plaster. Worms and mud instead of liquid. For once there was no wine. As a rule when the Légion goes out, a canteen follows. There was none here. We got about eight quarts of water a day. Half of that we had to give to the cook. The rest went for washing and drinking. I did not shave, nor did most of them.

I think we worked a day on the walls. We swore and complained. Whenever the Légion does not complain, something is wrong. When the walls were done, we were ordered to clear a field for airplanes. This is always done. It means picking up all the stones, filling in every hole. And after it is done, no planes ever come. But always we have a landing-field ready.

We could see Suweida from our camp. This was a post being besieged by the Druses. It had been lost by the French, then retaken. Now it was besieged. General Michaud's army had marched to its relief, and had been cut to pieces. It was in the hills; we could see the walls.

in the Foreign Legion

By ORVAL CHENEVOETH

They had no wireless, but they did send signals by heliograph. You could see the tiny flashes of light all day long. And we heard what they were flashing: "Water getting low. . . . We will hold out till aid comes." All of us knew they *had* to hold out. If the town was captured, everyone would be put to death. Not a pleasant death, either. It was about this time the Druses started the habit of cutting off the heads of the wounded.

I think it was two days after we built the wall we sent a company out on a reconnaissance. I did not go, but I heard about it. About an hour after the company had vanished over a hill, we heard firing. Soon they returned. They had several dead and a few wounded. They had run into the enemy, hiding behind the high rock of the hillside. And when we saw the results, we knew we were in for trouble.

Orders were given to sleep on our rifles. Inside our walls we had about seventy men. Each group had two machine-guns. I never knew how many men we had in all. Not over six hundred, if that many. And what was expected, happened. At three in the morning, "*Aux armes!*" cried a corporal.

We made a rush for our holes in the walls, and waited.

FOR a while nothing happened. Then a shot—and suddenly, in the air, a light. On the side of the hill we saw shadows, creeping downward. The light, of course, betrayed them, and the silence was broken by their loud cries. The Druses always yell as they come into battle. At the sound, Sylvestre, who was beside me, lifted his voice and shrieked back insult.

The fighting at first was not only confusing, but absurd. We were sending up rockets. Dawn had not yet come; the hillsides were indistinct. There would come the spurts of flame from their rifles, and we fired at these. But at first they had luck. We had a number of horses in the village, and the Druses managed to capture them. We could spare these. But they killed over thirty of the men—cut the throats of most of them.

Yet their capture of the horses helped us. Dawn had come by then, and we had a target to shoot at. The procedure was simple: we shot at the horse; it would fall, and the rider for a moment would be helpless. Then we would get him. I doubt if more than five horses and riders got to the hills.

At daybreak there came a silence for a few moments. Then suddenly the cry again, "*Aux armes!*" I looked through my peephole. Never will I forget what I saw. Down that mountain-side, like a raging torrent, was pouring an endless stream of men. The Druses were coming. How many I never knew; later they said five thousand. In front were men on foot, behind them cavalry, ready to charge if the chance came. And every one of them yelling and shrieking in frenzied rage.

We were six hundred, separated by the forts we had built. Our machine-guns spluttered into action. But they came on. It was like firing at a solid target. We saw them drop, but still they kept on, yelling like the very devil himself.

Of course there was a plan in what they were doing. We heard, and always believed, that the Druses had been trained by German officers. Their guns were English, their methods much like what we had seen in the great war. We had six forts, not including the church where Lieutenant Vernon had decided to make his headquarters. But as I looked out through the wall, it seemed all those thousands were coming at our fort and our seventy men.

On they came, like the waves of the sea. Again and again they would reach the wire, then fall back. On every side was a tumult of sound. Rifle-fire, machine-guns, and above it the yells of the enemy. When our rifles became too hot to fire, we threw grenades. They did a lot of damage.

Again and again the Druses charged. Wave after wave we beat back. Suddenly a man at my side said, "Hell!" and sank to the ground. At that moment we dis-

covered that every house in the village had become filled with snipers.

The position of our forts was a little odd. They surrounded the village. Inside our lines were flat-roofed houses. None of these did we occupy. Only the church, the mosque in the center of the village, was in our charge. Now, on every flat roof, was a sniper. And they could shoot down into the forts.

ALL morning we held off the assault. Time had vanished. We loaded our rifles, fired, loaded, fired again. When an attack came too close, we dropped the guns and picked up the grenades. They did more damage at close quarters. Long before noon the Druses changed their tactics. Now they were hiding behind rocks, sniping from the houses, with every little while a wild attack.

The noise was terrific. Always the Druses were yelling. Most of their cries were some sort of prayer; the rest were threats of how they would torture us after the forts were taken. We yelled back, of course. And there was the snapping of the machine-guns, the crack of the rifles, and the dull sound of the grenades, the cries of the wounded.

We were losing men all the time. One lay just by the open entrance of our fort. He was unable to move, and cried constantly for water. We had thrown him a *bidon,* but he seemed unable to use it. Above the sound of the machine-guns, the crackle of rifles, rose his pitiful cry, "Water! Water!"

Sylvestre had been stationed by my side. The fighting had driven him to a frenzy. He would poke his rifle through its hole, fire, then yell like a savage. When the wounded man began to cry for water, it got on Sylvestre's nerves. He would look at the man, then cry:

"Son of a pig, shut up! After all, one does not live forever." Mingled with this would be remarks reflecting upon the wounded man's mother, and her taste in children. Then all at once, he dropped his rifle, took his *bidon* in hand and with an oath darted over to the wounded soldier.

It was a desperate thing to do. The man lay directly in the line of fire. For some reason he was still alive. I watched Sylvestre drop by his side, saw the slight figure place its hands under the man's arm. With a jerk and a pull, he brought him to the shelter of the stone walls. Bending down, he placed the flask to the man's lips, and when he had finished drinking, came back to his peephole. As he picked up his rifle, sighted, then shot a Druse off a horse, he said:

"The fool! He got on my nerves with his, 'Water—water!' "

Noon came, and with it a slight lull in the fighting. True, the snipers were firing from the houses. This we could not prevent. We still held all our stone forts, though we had been unable to keep the Druses from slipping between them and getting into the village. But for the moment, the attacks from the mountain had ended.

This mountain, or rather this series of hills, towered above us, a mass of hard earth and rocks, but broken by many gullies. It was out of these that again and again the Druses had charged. We knew little of what was happening, save for our own fort.

There were five others, and in the village the officers were fighting from the church. After all, each fort was fighting its own battle. I always thought it was the barbed wire before our fort which saved us. Their charges would end at that wire. As a barrier it was not much. Just four lines of wire. But it saved us.

Lieutenant Vernon was everywhere. Fear was something he did not know. Again and again he would walk to the side of a soldier, pat him on the shoulder, remark that after the battle was over a bottle of wine would be good. He never bothered to take cover. Many times he went outside the wall and coolly picked out a victim for his revolver.

But we were losing men. One by one they would drop. No one complained. Hard-boiled, the company was; but they had heroism and devotion. We had charged several times, and there were wounded lying on the sand in front of our fort. They seemed a long time dying.

Afternoon came; things looked bad. Lieutenant Vernon went from man to man, saying: "Only shoot when you can kill a man. Wait until they are close to the wire. Then fire. Our supplies are low. And remember, save one bullet. You may need it yourself." As he told us this, another mass attack was coming. It had no sooner started, when we heard a welcome sound: Airplanes were above us.

SO at last it was known we were being attacked! The nearest relief was at a little post miles away. It would take four hours to reach us. Could we hang on for that time? Evidently the Druses

were thinking the same thoughts. Their maneuvers changed.

At dawn, and through the early morning, they had attacked in mass formation. Now they did what they should have done hours before: Running from our fort to the hills were a number of fields, broken by low stone walls. The Druses now crept down the hillside, reached a wall, and stayed there. From wall to wall they would creep, gradually closer. And our ammunition was getting low.

IT was during that afternoon Sylvestre decided he did not like the Druses. He talked about them. Listening to him, I wondered at the language he used. He expressed himself regarding their families, mothers, and even their god. And he became violent when he spoke of their women. For he could see their women. Far up on the hill were the Druse women, waiting for victory, to torture our wounded.

Always the Druse women were behind their men. I have often been asked if we killed the women. Of course we did. When we attacked one of their towns, not only the men would fight, but behind them, fighting also, would be the women and children. We could not make any distinction. If we lost, there would be a horrible death ahead.

But we never tortured the women—or the men, for that matter. I have read stories, supposed to be about the Légion. They tell of hanging women and that sort of thing. It never happened, anywhere, at any time. But in battle, if they were too close to the line of fire, we never withheld our shots because they were women. After all, the Druse women were far worse than their men.

That afternoon was the longest I ever spent. It seems now like a bad dream. Time vanished; every sensation seemed to have passed away. The heat was terrific; the smoke blinded our eyes, the noise never ceased. And we were waiting, waiting and hoping for the first sight of the companies coming to our relief.

Hours passed. Long since, the relief should have come. Ammunition was almost gone. And in the sudden lull that came, we knew there was to be another attack. For us, it would be the last. Our machine-guns were now silenced, their gunners dead. Ahead, and behind in the village, we could hear the loud cries of the enemy, could even see them gathering in mass formation. They presented a splendid target. But we could not fire. We had been told to save our ammunition for the charge that was coming.

No one had any illusions as to what would happen. We had been told that we would make one bayonet attack. It would be the last. Water was gone and we were thirsty. We must have looked like the devils of hell, with our black, smoke-stained faces. Yet no one was complaining. There were being passed hard-boiled comments. I remember Sylvestre speaking to Brix, an Austrian:

"You," he said, "will be boiled in oil. If not, the Druse women will cut you open. And you are so thin, they will find no stomach!"

Then as we waited, there came a sound. Over the hill beyond us was drifting a shrill, wailing noise. We knew what it was, even though we saw nothing. The sound rose and fell, closer every moment. The stirring bugle-cry, sending men into a charge. As we heard it, the enemy was forgotten. From every fort men were cheering. The relief was at hand.

Over the crest of the hill, machine-guns barking, men on a run, came the soldiers of the Sixteenth Regiment. On and on they came, bugles urging them forward. The tirailleurs were yelling. Well they might! They had arrived in time. Down the hill they came, forming before the village. Then they went to work.

As for us, our fighting was over. The Druses fled, but many were trapped in the village. For hours there was house-to-house fighting as the tirailleurs swept from building to building. And they spared no one. All they found were shot down. All night long it went on.

WE of the Twenty-ninth were worn out. Not till morning did we really see the ravages of the battle. Before our wall lay hundreds of the Druses. For a while prisoners were used to pick up the dead bodies—the bodies of our own men, not the enemy. Those we left where they lay.

We searched the dead. Every knife, every gun was taken. And once in a while money would be found. If there was no money there were silver ornaments, watches, and once in a while, jewels. Sylvestre, in a house which we destroyed, found almost six hundred dollars. . . . We slept that night.

Further stirring episodes in the career of this American soldier of France will appear in our next issue.

Mining and Mice

By WILLIAM DAVIDSON

I AM a civil engineer; but since 1931 I have, by necessity, been a coal miner. The depression? Of course.

On this particular day I had finished my work and driven home. I ran my car into a shed back of the house that I had been using as a makeshift garage, took my dinner-pail into the house and went out to the spot where I was building a new garage. After working awhile I saw I was about to run out of nails.

"Listen, Jimmy," I said to my three-year-old son, who was diligently watching me work. "You run down to the house and get Daddy that paper bag full of nails on the back porch."

"O. K., Dad," he returned, and went scampering off down the driveway.

Soon he returned with the paper sack; but to my disgust most of the nails had spilled out of a large hole in the bottom of the bag. I saw at once from the ragged edges of the hole that a mouse had been responsible for the damage done. One could trace Jimmy's path from the house by the scattered nails.

I stopped my work and picked up all the nails I could find. I was particularly careful in picking up all the nails in the driveway, so there would be no danger to the automobile tires. By the time the task was finished, it was dark, so I collected my tools and called it a day.

Next morning I finished breakfast as usual with just time enough to get to the mine without being late. I got in the car, started it, and backed it down the drive.

Bang! The car lurched to the left. Evidently I had missed one of the nails. A quick examination verified my fears. The left rear tire was flat. A bright, shiny nail was deeply imbedded in it.

Cursing my luck, I grabbed a jack and started taking off the flat tire, preparing to substitute the extra. No matter how fast I worked I could never make it to the mine on time now.

My wife came out to see what was holding me up. I showed her the nail and explained the hole in the bag.

"I've been telling you how bad the mice are getting around the house. I hope this will make you remember to get those traps today," she commented.

"I guess so," I agreed sheepishly.

At last the change was completed. I glanced at my watch. Five minutes to seven. I would be at least thirty minutes late now. I stepped on the gas.

True to my guess, as I rounded the last turn and the huge mine tipple swung into view, the hands of my watch said seven-thirty. I drew up to the commissary just below the tipple and prepared to park my car. And then—

All at once I saw a huge puff of smoke and flame shoot forth from the mine opening. A roaring concussion followed. The ground shook, and my eardrums seemed to burst as the roar of a blast came to my ears. I barely managed to keep the car from swerving into the ditch.

An explosion!

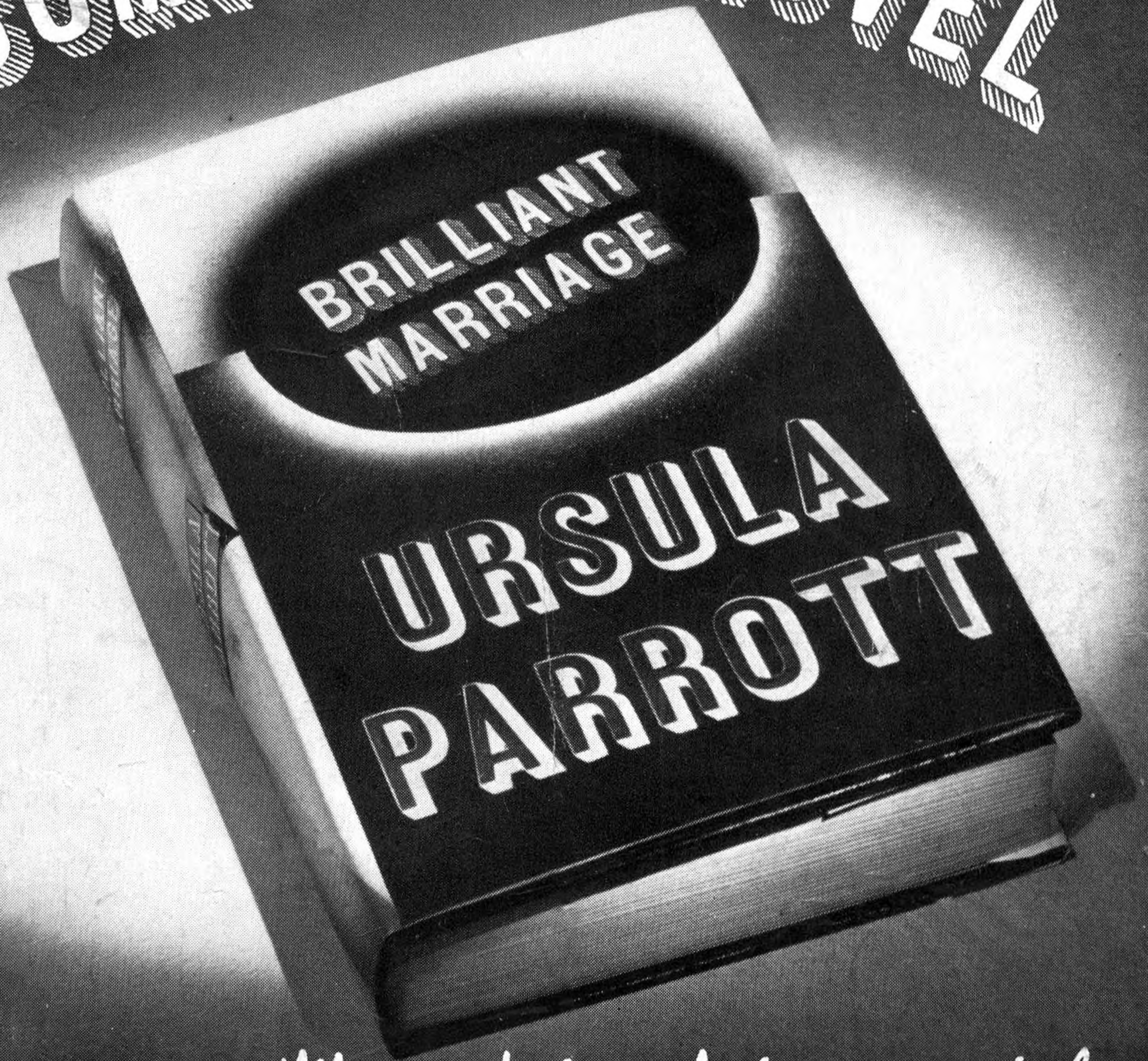
Slamming the brakes on hard, I slid to a stop, jumped out and headed for the mouth of the mine. I reached the opening just ahead of the boys from the off shifts. Desolation and ruin greeted my eyes. Mine props were strewn all around the opening. The narrow-gauge tracks running into the mine were twisted into a gnarled mass. Two miners, evidently near the surface when the blast occurred, came staggering out of the mine, bleeding from the nose and mouth.

SUDDENLY I realized how close I had come to sharing the same fate of the men inside. Only the fact that I had been late had saved me.

Ninety-three men had gone into the mine that morning at seven A. M. Eleven men never came out alive. Others were injured, but recovered. What would have been my fate, I wondered, had I been in the mine as usual at the time of the explosion? And then I remembered what had made me late.

Did I get the mouse-traps?

Well, what do you think?



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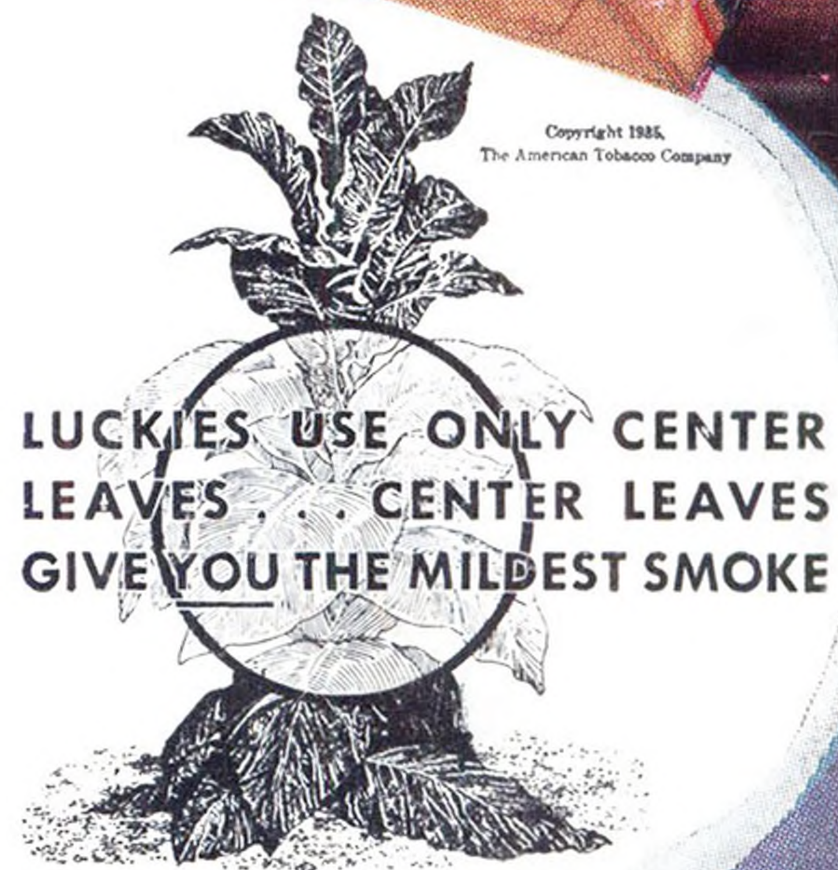

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