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ALL STAR ISSUE

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MARCH 1935

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

VOL. 60 No. 5

Hawk of the Wilderness

NEXT month we present for your pleasure a remarkable novel by a new writer—"Hawk of the Wilderness," by William Chester.

Here is a fascinating new-found frontier land, the birthplace of the American Indian. Here is a white boy born in a strange forest of dreadful night, and growing to manhood among its wild folk—the Dire Wolf and the Great Bear, the Thunder Bird and all the other creatures of hoof and fang and claw.

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—*The Editor.*

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BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

MARCH, 1935 VOL. 60, NO. 5

All Star Short Stories

A Remarkable Novel

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Prize Stories of Real Experience

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

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Coming!

"The Wheels Of Doom"

The third thrill-packed story in the captivating "Arms and Men" series

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

"The King's Highway"

By ACHMED ABDULLAH

(A Pre-View)

THIS road, Ali explained, was the only direct link between East and West Africa north of the Gulf of Guinea; a road built hundreds—no!—thousands of years ago; perhaps by Pharaoh, perhaps by Hannibal of Carthage. A road so old that in parts, through the eternities of come and go, of men and horses and camels and bullocks and crunching wagon-wheels, the trail had sunk sixty feet below the original level.

"Down this road," he added, "all caravans must go and pay tribute. For in the European colonies north and south, the mountains are so high and steep that construction of a rival highway is impossible. At least, it would never pay for itself. My road had the only pass through the hills. There is no room for another across the wilderness of towering peaks. We call this pass the Echo of the Thunder Gods. Ah, this road—what has it not seen!"

Phœnicians it had seen—languid, supercilious men with braided beards, selling their very gods for cash. And hook-nosed African folk whose civilization, forgotten today, antedated the Ark of the Covenant. And the cavalcade of the Queen of Sheba, carrying spices and peacocks and lithe golden women out of the farther South. And angry Egyptians who complained that—by Osiris!—Moses, the barbarous Hebrew, had made black magic, smiting the land with seven plagues and miraculously crossing the Red Sea with all his people and half Pharaoh's wealth.

Romans the road had seen, marching in clash of armor, ruthless men who did heroic things so that their degenerate emperors might heap more jewels upon jewels. And suave Philistines who related how life, back home at Gaza, had flowed smoothly before Samson, the blind, truculent giant, had shivered their temple with the strength of his arms. And bronzed Saracens—so queer, with their hard faces and their scarlet, womanish lips. And men from Damascus, the mother of cities; from Jerusalem, the saint of cities; from Bagdad, the harlot of cities. And cunning men of Hindustan who put their daughters as well as their goods up for barter. And warriors of the Sahara, bringing the riot of galloping horses and thundering kettledrums and silver blades a-flash. And Syrian hucksters, sipping sherbet at a wayside stall, whispering the terrible tale of a new Prophet crucified at Golgotha. . . .

In an early issue!

THE first of a fine new series about that famous Anglo-American Intelligence officer who came to be called "The Red Wolf of Arabia."

The Planes That

"VANISHED completely. Four planes and eight men. No trace of 'em found. Damned queer!"

Group-Captain Gould, chief of the Royal Air Force Squadron at Aden, turned from the other three men in the room and stared through a glass screen at the airdrome spread before him.

"And yet, from the political point of view," said the Resident, Sir John Robbins, "there isn't an enemy tribe within five hundred miles of Aden. As you know, a regular subsidy is paid to each of the leading sheiks in the district. They take the money and keep order. Blackmail, if you like, but cheap at the price."

"Meaning that you don't need a garrison to defend Aden—only a few airplanes," growled the Group Captain.

"Exactly," said the Resident.

"Well, it may have been cheap before these airplanes and men began to disappear. Now it's dear—damned dear."

"It certainly is highly mysterious," pursued Sir John Robbins, stroking a cadaverous chin. "Airplanes don't disappear into thin air, do they?"

"Not my airplanes," the Group Captain snorted. "Or at least they didn't until a month ago. Then they began to disappear one after another, each with a couple of men."

"That's why I've brought Mr. Paul Rodgers, of the Intelligence, to see you, Gould," said the Resident quietly. "If anyone can discover that Sargasso of lost planes, I think it will be our friend here. The natives, you know, call him the Red Wolf of Arabia."

By
WILLIAM J. MAKIN

Illustrated by
John F. Clymer

Never Returned

The Group Captain gave a curt nod at the introduction of the slim sun-browned man with flaming red hair who lounged indolently in the room.

"Searching the desert for lost planes is a new problem," smiled Paul Rodgers. "It's easy enough to find a lost caravan of camels. They leave a trail. But not even the cleverest desert tracker could follow the trail of an airplane."

The leathery jaw of the Group Captain set grimly.

"That's where we beat the old *buddu* of the desert," he said. "We can trail each of our planes, once they climb the sky."

"How?"

He gestured to the fourth man, sitting at a table on which were ranged several shining instruments.

"By wireless. It is possible to keep in touch with each plane as it flies along the political boundaries. And that is what we're going to do with this particular plane now, from the moment it takes off. Have you fixed the wavelength, my man?"

The man at the table nodded briskly.

"Yes sir. As usual, sir."

"Good. And don't lose 'em for a moment."

"I'll do my best, sir. Atmospherics very tricky in parts, though, sir."

"Atmospherics be damned!"

Group Captain Gould was clearly annoyed at these mysterious happenings in his squadron. The loss of men and machines had led to a curt cable inquiry from the Air Marshal. And he was unable to send any explanation.

Now, with the exception of the wireless-operator, who remained tense at the table like one of his own robots, the three men were gazing down at the airdrome of Aden from the glass cabin poised above.

The engines of a Bristol Fighter plane were already clocking over rhythmically. The Flight Lieutenant, helmeted and goggled, was in the cockpit feeling the controls, and an observer, adjusting his parachute, was climbing into the machine.

"Reynolds, isn't it?" nodded Rodgers, in the direction of the pilot.

"Yes," replied the Group Captain. "A clever youngster. He volunteered for this flight."

"Then this plane is definitely attempting to find that Sargasso of the air wherein your other planes disappeared?" asked the Resident.

"That's so," said the Group Captain brusquely. "Our own attempt to solve the mystery."

"What's their orders?" asked Rodgers.

"To fly low over the whole circuit of the political boundaries, to keep in constant touch with us by radio, and report anything suspicious that they may see."

"And do you expect anything to happen to them?" asked the Resident.

"We shall know within an hour," said Gould grimly. "If they should meet anything in the air, or on the ground, they're well prepared. They're carrying two bombs, and there are belts of ammunition attached to the machine-guns in the cockpit. I can depend upon those youngsters to spot anything unusual even at eight thousand feet."

"And they're to follow the same route as the other four lost planes?" asked the Intelligence officer.

The Group Captain nodded.

"A purely routine flight."

As they watched the aircraftsmen taking the chocks away from the wheels, the Resident interposed his quiet voice.

"But why send only one plane, Gould? If the Arabs are shooting them down, surely it would be safer to send a formation, say three planes?"

"I did—yesterday. And a week previously."

"And what happened?"

"They returned safely."

"Nothing to report?"

"Nothing to report. That's the damnable queerness of it all. Each of those missing four planes was on a lone reconnaissance. Whenever our machines go out in the usual duck formation, three at a time, nothing happens. That's why I'm sending out another tempting solitary plane."

"Bait, eh?" mused Rodgers.

"Call it that," snapped Gould.

THERE was a roar from the Bristol Fighter on the airdrome; the brown desert dust swept up in a blinding cloud.

The aircraftsmen dodged away. A glimpse of a gloved hand waving farewell, the machine lifted its quivering tail, and within a hundred yards was climbing the pale blue silk of the sky.

It swung round, circled the airdrome, displaying to the watchers the color-circles on the wings and the bright sunshine glinting on the propeller. Next moment it was heading north for the desert that stretched away from Aden.

Gould watched it until it merged into the haze. Then he swung round upon the radio operator.

"You in touch with 'em?"

"First message just coming through sir," replied the operator, the earphones clamped over his head. "I'll switch on to the loud-speaker, sir."

A flick of his finger, and a raucous, somewhat distorted voice issued from the black trumpet.

"Bristol Fighter 55, G Squadron, reporting to Aden. . . . Flying north to boundary line. Visibility excellent at two thousand feet. Passed over camel convoy going to Aden. . . . Over."

Spluttering atmospherics followed.

"Got a map here?" asked Rodgers.

The Group Captain nodded. He produced a large folded linen map and spread it across another table. He jabbed a brown forefinger at Aden.

"Our flying-map of the area," he explained. "Here is where the machine should be at the moment, approaching Lahaj."

"Approaching Lahaj," spluttered the loud-speaker. *"Natives at prayer in the square by the mosque. Startled a few goats. All O.K. . . . Over."*

"Nothing ever happens at Lahaj," explained the Group Captain. "A good place to buy chickens, that's all."

His finger moved slowly northward.

"And now they should be getting near the boundary at Hawashib. Just sand, and dirt and lice."

"Not altogether," smiled the Intelligence officer, lighting a cigarette. "I spent a night there recently. At least the coffee was good."

"What in heaven's name were you doing in Hawashib?" asked the Group Captain.

"Just riding a camel," replied Rodgers. "But that's another story."

"Crossed Hawashib, and now approaching boundary," announced the loud-speaker. *"Visibility still excellent. We're down to fifteen hundred feet. No life visible. Request permission to turn and fly northeast. . . . Over."*

Gould nodded to the radio-operator.

"Acknowledge, and tell 'em to fly northeast."

"Very good, sir."

The operator turned to a microphone.

"Aden airdrome calling Bristol Fighter 55, G Squadron. . . . Aden Airdrome calling. . . . Your messages received. Group Captain's orders—fly northeast. Over."

Silence for some minutes.

"They should be halfway to Buthaina now," mused Gould. "That's our farthest point in the desert." He waited. "They're damned quiet. Give 'em a signal."

The operator tapped his Morse key. It brought the loud-speaker cackling into life again.

"Bristol Fighter 55 G Squadron reporting to Aden. . . . Visibility not so good. Queer dust-storm near the ground. Have dropped to one thousand feet. Something very queer. . . . Can't see distinctly. . . . Looks like—"

The message ended in a spluttering of atmospherics in which Morse and howls mingled in a shrieking crescendo.

"What's the matter now?" snapped Gould.

"Sorry, sir. Signals usually fade out in that area. Dead patch, sir. We should hear them in a moment."

"It seems to me that signals are definitely fading in," murmured Red Rodgers.

"Sound like a P. and O. liner in the Red Sea sending a love-message by wireless," growled the Group Captain.

"And a very hot one," smiled the Resident.

A tearing, as of a sheet of silk, and the loud-speaker was silent. Equally, silence fell upon the four men, listening. The Group Captain accepted a cigarette from Rodgers, and lit it jerkily.

"Damn it! Eight minutes gone," he announced, looking at his wrist-watch. "They must be at the other end of the boundary line now. Give 'em a call!"

Obediently the operator leaned toward the microphone.

"Aden airdrome calling Bristol Fighter 55, G Squadron. . . . Aden airdrome calling. . . . Where are you?"

His fingers twitched at the volume dial. Only a high-pitched whine. . . .

"Are you on the right wave-length?"

"Yes sir."

"Well, try 'em on another."

"Very good, sir."

Once again the voice of the operator intoned:

"Aden airdrome calling Bristol Fighter 55, G Squadron. . . . Aden airdrome calling. . . . Where are you?"

Still no response but atmospheric gabble from the loud-speaker.

"They should be on their way back now," said Gould, but his harsh voice was hushed.

It was Paul Rodgers who announced calmly what they all had in their mind, but feared to utter.

"They should be on their way back," he said. "But they never will come back. Those poor fellows have gone the way of your other lost squadron."

The Group Captain feared to believe it. He stood there, his sun-reddened face sweating as he waited, tensely, for the sound of the roaring engine that would tell him of the Bristol Fighter returning. But a tropic stillness had fallen upon that glass-screened room.

With a futile effort to control himself, Gould turned to the operator.

"Don't sit dumb!" he snarled. "Keep on calling 'em!"

"Yes sir."

Like a wound-up automaton, the operator began his gabble:

"Aden airdrome calling Bristol Fighter 55, G Squadron. . . . Where are you? . . . Where are you?"

INTO this broke the quiet voice of the Resident, Sir John Robbins.

"Well, it's your turn to step onto the stage now, Rodgers. What do you propose to do?"

Rodgers dropped the end of his cigarette and ground it beneath his heel.

"I propose to join the Royal Air Force, sir."

Something like a sneer crossed the Group Captain's face.

"Going to fly another machine into that Sargasso, eh?"

Rodgers shook his head.

"No sir. I don't intend to fly. I'm going to join the non-flying section of the Royal Air Force. I apply for permission to join as aircraftsman."

"Safer, eh?"

Rodgers ignored the remark.

"I venture to think," he added quietly, "that this mystery of the air will be solved on the ground."

The Resident looked at the Group Captain.

"Well, what do you say, Gould?"

The Air Force man shrugged.

"If it amuses you—by all means."

And he turned moodily to the glass screen again.

The radio operator was still repeating monotonously:

"Bristol Fighter 55 G Squadron. . . . Where are you?"

AIRCRAFTSMAN JONES was a character. Even the sergeant of B hut, where the men slept, blasphemously admitted as much.

"Gawd knows where you come from, Jones," he growled, after a month's commanding of this blue-uniformed figure with red hair.

"I'm not entirely sure, myself, Sergeant," said Rodgers without the tremor of a smile.

"You're a damned good mechanic, and you know it."

"Yes, Sergeant."

"And I've never heard anyone play 'Stormy Weather' better on the canteen piano."

"Thank you, Sergeant."

"But"—and here the sergeant's face took on a purple tinge—"if I hear any more of your drunken gallivantings in Arab dance-halls in Aden, you're for the high-jump, my lad."

"Sorry, Sergeant."

"Sorry be damned. You've been thrown out of two places within the past week. Nice thing for the Air Force to have one of their kind handled by these *budus.* Lucky for you, the patrol w sn't there to pick you up."

"I observe the patrol keep to the respectable parts of Aden, Sergeant."

The sergeant went a shade more purple.

"Cut it out, my lad, that's all," he warned as he stamped out of the hut.

There was a general grin among the assembled mechanics.

"I guess you're going to stay in barracks tonight, Jones?" ventured one.

The steel-gray eyes of the Intelligence man opened wide in wonderment.

"On a Saturday night? Not me!"

"Taking a pal?"

"No. I like to find my own trouble."

And having buttoned up his uniform, Aircraftsman Jones gave a casual nod and swaggered after the sergeant. . . .

The swagger departed from Rodgers as he started along the dusty road leading to the Arab quarter. For a month he had been seeking a solution of the mystery of the lost airplanes, without result. Nothing had happened. Not even another airplane had disappeared since the Bristol Fighter had been lost on lone patrol. Once, on parade, Paul Rodgers had caught the eye of the Group Captain. There was a suggestion of contempt in the glance. It rankled.

"Somebody in Aden knows and will spill the secret," decided the Intelligence officer. "And that somebody is sure to be a woman."

And with a tipsy hiccough he circumvented a squatting camel in the darkness, passed along a narrow alleyway, and stumbled through a doorway into one of the dirtiest Arab coffee-houses of the town.

"The mad Ingleezi," he heard whispered in Arabic as he lurched toward a table.

"Gimme some of that poison you call palm-wine!" he demanded thickly.

A squinting Arab with dirty beard reached out for a bottle beneath the rickety counter. At the same time a barefooted Arab girl, a tawdry piece of yellow cloth twisted about her bosom, padded over to him.

"You—geev—me drink?" she whined, with a pretence at a smile.

RODGERS yawned at her. "If you want to get drunk, take a chair," he indicated. "What's your name?"

"They call me—Zubayah," she said, seating herself.

"Sounds good," he nodded, taking the bottle from the bearded Arab and pouring the wine liberally into two glasses. "I like Arab girls."

"And I—I like Ingleezi."

They drank. Paul Rodgers, his cap jammed on his head in military fashion, was a strangely incongruous object in this Arab coffee-house.

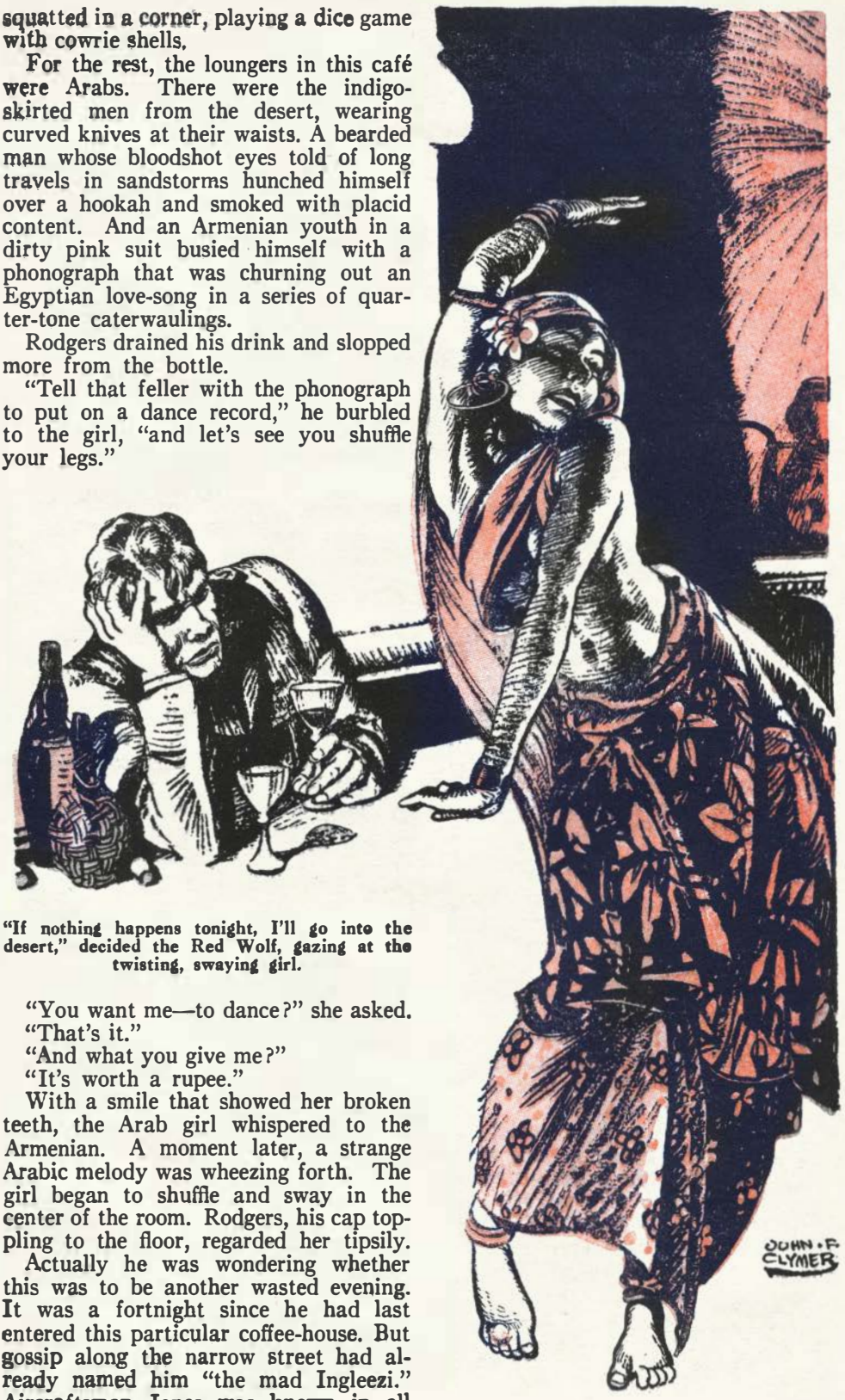
Surrounding the table was that queer polyglot mixture that the extinct crater of Aden seems to attract. A fezzed Egyptian, whose bleary eyes told of the last stages of hashish-smoking, sprawled in a broken cane chair. *Dhoti*-clad Hindus scratched their hairy brown legs. A Parsee adjusted his spectacles over a hooked nose. Three fuzzy-haired Somalis

squatted in a corner, playing a dice game with cowrie shells.

For the rest, the loungers in this café were Arabs. There were the indigo-skirted men from the desert, wearing curved knives at their waists. A bearded man whose bloodshot eyes told of long travels in sandstorms hunched himself over a hookah and smoked with placid content. And an Armenian youth in a dirty pink suit busied himself with a phonograph that was churning out an Egyptian love-song in a series of quarter-tone caterwaulings.

Rodgers drained his drink and slopped more from the bottle.

"Tell that feller with the phonograph to put on a dance record," he burbled to the girl, "and let's see you shuffle your legs."



"If nothing happens tonight, I'll go into the desert," decided the Red Wolf, gazing at the twisting, swaying girl.

"You want me—to dance?" she asked.

"That's it."

"And what you give me?"

"It's worth a rupee."

With a smile that showed her broken teeth, the Arab girl whispered to the Armenian. A moment later, a strange Arabic melody was wheezing forth. The girl began to shuffle and sway in the center of the room. Rodgers, his cap toppling to the floor, regarded her tipsily.

Actually he was wondering whether this was to be another wasted evening. It was a fortnight since he had last entered this particular coffee-house. But gossip along the narrow street had already named him "the mad Ingleezi." Aircraftsman Jones was known in all the dubious places of Aden.

Yet so far, it had been useless. Though Aircraftsman Jones' face was blank when anyone spoke Arabic, his ears were very much acute. Not a word had he heard whispered in these coffee-houses regarding the missing airplanes. That, in itself, he decided, was suspiciously significant. In the ordinary course, every camel-man with a water-cart would have discussed the mystery of the missing bird-men.

"If nothing happens tonight, I'll go off into the desert," decided the Red Wolf of Arabia, gazing at the twisting, swaying Arab girl before him. As she swung round, he surreptitiously emptied the contents of the bottle on the floor and called out, drunkenly, for more.

THE whining cacophony reached a crescendo. The Arab girl whirled and spun like a dancing dervish. She was spinning toward the drunken, leering aircraftsman. As the music blurred to an end, she shrieked with delight and flung herself into the inviting arms of the blue-uniformed figure. A gasp of exhaustion, and she sank, laughing hysterically, onto his knees.

"Get up, you abandoned one!"

The stern command in Arabic came from the doorway. Instinctively Rodgers' grasp on the Arab dancing-girl tightened. But she struggled desperately.

"Leave me, Ingleezi!" she cried. And then, in Arabic: "It is the Brown Angel!"

The Brown Angel! Still holding the struggling girl, Rodgers leered across her shoulder. He glimpsed a tall, powerful Arab in a white burnous glaring at him with somber eyes.

"Leave the girl!" commanded the Arab in perfect English.

"Go to the devil!" burbled Rodgers in reply; and with a quick twist of his arm he brought the brown face of the girl to his own and kissed her.

A gasp of horror went round the coffee-house. Everybody became tense. Without hesitation the powerful man in white burnous strode forward, stretched out a brown hand and tore the girl away.

Rodgers staggered to his feet. His hand clutched the neck of the bottle on the table. He lurched forward.

But the Arab was quicker. One twist of his hand sent the girl spinning into a corner. Then he leaped forward. The bottle swished through the air, but missed and smashed against the wall. Rodgers did not try to avoid the impact of that leaping figure in the white burnous. He made an effort to ward off the powerful brown hands groping for his throat, and with a kick of his leg brought the table, himself and his opponent to the floor in a crash.

Rodgers was beneath. He allowed his body to go limp. At the same time through half-closed eyes he was aware that the Arab in the white burnous had whipped out a knife and poised it with deadly intent in the air.

"No, O Great One!" screamed a voice.

It was the dancing-girl who had struggled to her feet.

"Jackals must die!" snarled the Arab.

But the squinting Arab with the filthy beard had thrust his face forward and whispered something.

"By Allah! If what you say is true—" hesitated the figure in the white burnous.

"I swear it on the Koran!" was the reply. "He is the best mechanic among the white bird-men. He gives life to the machines. But he drinks, fights, and makes love to our women."

A grim smile crossed the somber face.

"We'll soon change that." His slippered foot kicked the prone figure on the floor. "Get up, you drunken dog!" he commanded in English.

Rodgers did not stir. From beneath the cap on his head a streak of blood dripped to the floor.

"He is stunned," nodded the man in the white burnous. "Carry him to my camel. See that he is hidden. Stretch a saddle-cloth over him. He will be useful to the Brown Angels."

"Yes, O Mighty One!" hastily replied the squinting Arab.

The Red Wolf felt himself lifted and carried, sacklike, through the door and along the narrow passage. There he was dumped across the mangy back of a camel, and a blanket thrown over him.

INSIDE the coffee-house a quick transformation was being effected. The table was righted. The broken bottle was swept aside. The dancing-girl was smoothing her yellow sash. The Armenian put another mournful record on the phonograph. The fuzzy-haired Somalis resumed their dice-game. The man in the white burnous gave a casual nod and strode toward the door.

But even as he reached it, there was the stamp of feet. A curtain was flung aside, and a patrol sergeant of the Royal Air Force, followed by four men, entered. He glanced round.

Nobody spoke. The sergeant turned to the squinting Arab behind the counter. "You seen one of our fellers here?" he asked.

The Arab shook his head. "No white man come here."

"This one did. He was seen coming here half an hour ago."

The dancing-girl started forward. But from behind a brown hand closed swiftly on her mouth.

"No white man come here," repeated the squinting Arab.

"Have a look round, lads!" ordered the sergeant.

They searched quickly, but they found nothing.

"All right!" said the sergeant. "Maybe we'll call again."

"You like drink?" smiled the squinting Arab.

"Not your poison," growled the sergeant, and stamped out after his men.

SILENCE reigned for a few seconds. Deliberately the Arab in the white burnous reached for the dancing-girl, and hit her brutally across the face. She fell to the floor, whimpering. Then, without another glance, he strode out of the coffee-house.

A few minutes later he was mounting his camel. Dark, hooded shapes on other camels closed about him. With a grunting and slobbering of beasts, they ambled toward the gateway of the town. Tied securely beneath a blanket, Rodgers was jolted into acute consciousness.

They passed the patrol.

"If I lay my hands on that aircraftsman, I'll teach him something before the Group Captain sees him again," growled the sergeant. "Wasting my Saturday night!"

Rodgers grinned.

A queer sight in the early morning sunshine of the desert. . . . Rodgers saw it as he dismounted stiffly from the camel he had been riding.

During the night, some miles away from Aden, he had been released from beneath the blanket and made to ride on the back of a spare camel. With the Arab in the white burnous and the attendant warriors, they had ridden swiftly through the darkness, and had now reached a point near the political boundary.

As the order came to dismount, they had reached the outskirts of an Arabic village. The cupola of a sheik's tomb gleamed white in the starlight. But it was not this at which Paul Rodgers gazed curiously. It was a palm tree, beneath the clustering leaves of which were hidden several black mica trumpets. He knew the thing at once. A detector set for airplanes.

"Ingenious, eh?" chuckled a voice at his elbow. "Gives us good warning, of the approach of your planes."

Bleary-eyed and unshaven, Rodgers turned. Standing at his side was the Arab in the white burnous.

"What's the game?" he asked sullenly. "Why have you brought me into this damned desert?"

The Arab smiled.

"Because you are Aircraftsman Jones, said to be the best mechanic in Aden. I hope you prove yourself such. Otherwise, I personally will have great pleasure in slitting your throat."

"I don't understand."

"You will," nodded the Arab. "It may interest you to know that in this desert oasis we possess three European planes of excellent workmanship. For reasons which I will not discuss, they are used to battle against patrol planes coming in this direction from Aden."

"So this is where our planes disappeared!" muttered Rodgers, instinctively gazing toward the sky.

"Exactly," went on the Arab. "These detectors warned us of their approach. If it was a solitary plane, our own airplanes took off and climbed above it. Our men are becoming expert in the use of machine-guns."

"Three against one, eh?"

"The odds are very necessary to us for our purpose," said the Arab, unperturbed. "But we won't discuss that. All that is necessary for you to know is that one of our planes was badly crippled in a fight about a month ago."

"Good old Bristol Fighter!" muttered Rodgers involuntarily.

Anger showed in those somber eyes.

"The Bristol Fighter was shot down and promptly destroyed," he went on. "One of our own planes, as I have said, was badly crippled. But it landed safely. Unfortunately, the machine-gunner, who was also our best mechanic from Europe, had been killed in the air. You are to have the honor of taking his place."

RODGERS blustered. "You expect me to fight against our own men? I'll see you damned first."

"Exactly what I expected you to say," sneered the Arab. "But if you persist

in that attitude, your death will not be a pleasant one. I have reserved to myself the pleasure of slitting your throat. But we do not kill our enemies until we have exacted the last amount of amusement from their tortured bodies. I think I make myself clear?"

Paul Rodgers eyed him narrowly, determined to find out what plot was being hatched in this desert village. He must play the part of Aircraftsman Jones with all the realism he could command.

"Gimme a drink!" he begged hoarsely.

"That's better," smiled the Arab. He nodded to one of the bodyguards. The fellow thrust a bloated skin bag toward Rodgers, who gulped at it greedily.

"Water!" And he spat disgustedly.

"And only water for you to drink until that damaged plane is mended and ready to take to the air again. Make a good job of it, and I might dig up a bottle of whisky for you."

"Say! Where d'you get whisky in this *budu* village?"

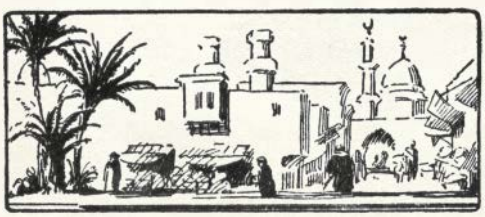
"Loot of war," replied the Arab grimly. "And now walk into that tomb. It's going to be your quarters while you are with us."

"A tomb! Can't you find me a hut?"

"The tomb may surprise you," nodded the Arab. "Get a move on!"

He had slipped back the white burnous and displayed a Sam Browne belt with a military revolver attached. Also loot of war, decided the Intelligence officer with a feeling of cold hatred against this educated Arab. The hooded bodyguard were closing in upon him. With a shrug of his shoulders, Rodgers staggered through the sand into the cool darkness of the tomb.

BUT on the threshold, he rubbed his eyes. Instead of bare white walls and a stone coffin, he found himself gazing at a model little wireless station with electric plant attached. The instruments gleamed in the semi-darkness. A lamp glowed, and revealed a man in European clothes bent over the receiver. He stood up as the Arab entered. A Syrian, Rodgers decided.



"A companion for you, Tatiyah," introduced the Arab. "A drunken Ingleezi, Aircraftsman Jones. He's got to work for us. Also he may be of help to you. Keep a close watch on him. You know what to do if he tries to escape. Moreover, I'm leaving several of my bodyguard outside while I go on to meet the Sultan. You understand?"

The words were snapped out in Arabic. So was the response.

"You may leave him to me, O Exalted One."

Without a further glance at his captive, the Arab leader turned away and left the tomb. The Syrian regarded the blue-uniformed figure with contempt.

"Do you know anything about radio?" he asked in English.

"Not a thing," lied Rodgers, cheerfully. "Airplanes are my job."

"They'll be your job here, all right," said the Syrian.

"You fellows seem to have picked up English very well," said Rodgers carelessly.

The praise wiped the contempt from the Syrian's face.

"I worked for many years in Cairo," he explained. "I was a guide for tourists. That's where I learned to hate the English as well as speak English."

"And the fellow in the white dressing-gown who kidnaped me?"

"You are speaking of Sheik Subbaihah," warned the Syrian. "He has lived and studied in London, at the university there. It was in England that he learned to fly. Then he went to the Continent for the Sultan and there purchased the three planes that we now possess. He also has trained other Arabs as pilots. But good mechanics are scarce. Young Fritz Beisel was killed in the last air fight. That is why you are here."

"But what's the game?" asked the Intelligence officer, calmly seating himself in a chair.

"Chiefly, hatred of the English," said the Syrian grimly. "The rest you will learn for yourself." He pulled over a switch and bent his head in a listening attitude. Rodgers judged the detectors were in action. Apparently satisfied that nothing was disturbing the ether, he switched off again.

"And so this is where our planes vamoosed," murmured Rodgers aloud.

The Syrian nodded. "And we hope to get more yet! . . . Have a cigarette?"

He flashed a cheap case in front of Aircraftsman Jones.

"What really puzzles the fellows at our end," said Rodgers, accepting a light, "was the way the radio petered out when a plane was in this area."

Again the Syrian accepted the praise. "Thanks to me!" he smiled. "With this set I jammed all their messages, played up atmospherics and generally made it impossible for Aden to get in touch with them. Cute, isn't it?"

"Very," agreed the Intelligence officer, puffing the cigarette with enjoyment.

A moment later one of the bodyguard entered the tomb. He had received orders to take Aircraftsman Jones into the village. Once again Rodgers mounted a camel and, surrounded by the hooded figures, rode through the cluster of white houses and overhanging date palms.

Within five minutes he had, as the Syrian had said, learned much for himself. The little cavalcade of camels and men entered what appeared to be a large *suk* or marketplace, covered in the usual Arab fashion with matting as a protection from the sun. But this was no ordinary marketplace: it was a miniature arsenal. Boxes of ammunition, machine-gun parts, rifles, hand-grenades—all the fiendish appliances of war—were stored carefully beneath that overhead matting. And one glance upward revealed to the Intelligence officer that the matting was brown colored cloth, desert camouflage dusted with sand, which would appear merely as a strip of waste land to any airplanes flitting above.

At the end of this desert arsenal was a huge hangar in which three fighting-planes were housed. One of the planes had a wing badly patched. This apparently was not the real trouble. The engine had been dismantled and lay upon a wooden platform. By that engine stood the Arab in the white burnous, Sheik Subbaihah, a smile on his somber face. Rodgers dismounted from the camel and was led toward him.

"There's your job," said the Sheik, nodding toward the dismantled engine. "Get that fixed, and I won't forget your bottle of whisky."

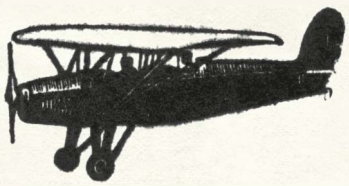
Rodgers gave it a professional glance.

"It looks a difficult job!" he said.

"If it is not finished in three days, you die," the Arab said bluntly.

With a sigh, Aircraftsman Jones unbuttoned his tunic.

"Who's going to fly the machine if I get it going?" he asked.



"I am," said the Sheik simply. you are going to be my first passenger . . . Get to work!"

The group of wondering Arabs clustered round the sweating mechanic.

IN three days the job was finished. Even Rodgers was pleased with it. He had discovered in himself an uncanny skill with engines. Those long, lean fingers that had so often strummed Debussy and Ravel from the rare but cracked pianos in the Red Sea region were also capable of tuning an engine to the correct pitch.

More than once, as Aircraftsman Jones, he had sat with grimy hands and oil-smeared face listening to the whine of an aëro engine in full blast. His face had the rapt expression of one listening to a César Franck symphony. He knew every *motif*, every crescendo of the piece. And the throaty *clock-clock* of an engine half-throttled was to him as enjoyable a sound as a Chopin Polonaise.

"You'll take the forward cockpit," nodded the Brown Angel, Sheik Subbaihah, adjusting his flying helmet. "And remember, my friend, my pistol is ready for action.

Secretly, the Red Wolf admired the Sheik. This Brown Angel did not lack courage. He must have realized as they took off, that his life was in the hands of this drunken aircraftsman whom he had picked up in a brawl in a coffee-house in Aden. But he showed no sign of trepidation as he maneuvered the machine with easy skill in a sky that was warm and featureless like blue silk.

For his part, Rodgers was able to look down at the Arab village beneath and admire the skill and ingenuity that had camouflaged a modern arsenal in the desert. He had learned much during those three days of working on the plane. The Arab assistants had chattered much among themselves. The grandiose plan of the Sultan—whom Rodgers had never seen—was revealed. It was to drive the hated British out of Aden and overrun the peninsula with hordes of brown men.

Arabia for the Arabians! That was the catch-phrase. For the moment they

One glimpse, and Rodgers knew the worst. It was the girl Zubayah, come to seek revenge!

could only content themselves with a guerrilla war in the sky. They hoped to deplete the air squadron at Aden to a point below the margin of safety. Three other planes were on order in Europe, and a group of pilots being trained there, secretly. The day of attack would synchronize with the arrival of the incoming and outgoing P. and O. steamers at Aden. There would be a rising in the town itself. In twelve hours the massacre would be complete. . . .

The desert slanted toward him. In the distance, Rodgers caught a glimpse of shining sunlit sea. . . . Aden, its hotels

and comfortable civilization—built in the crater of an extinct volcano! He wondered whether the chattering white men and women realized the upheaval already preparing in the desert. . . . A bump—and they were taxying back to the hangar.

"You've made a good job of it," nodded Sheik Subbaihah, tearing off his helmet. "Now you can get back to the tomb until you're wanted again. That bottle of whisky is waiting for you there."

"And I've earned it," said Rodgers.

Fifteen minutes later he was seated amidst the shining instruments of the radio set, convivially pushing the bottle toward the Syrian.

"Take a swig, Tatiyah," encouraged the dirty, blue-uniformed figure. "It's good stuff. I know, for it comes out of the officers' mess at Aden."

"And the only thing you live for, eh," said the Syrian, sullenly, but nevertheless pouring out a liberal drink for himself.

Cigarettes were produced. The bottle began to empty, quickly. Rodgers plied the Syrian with the liquor, but only to find that the renegade became even more sullen. While the fellow was helping himself from the bottle, the Intelligence officer strolled casually to the radio set.

"Guess I can put any fool airplane engine to rights," he chuckled thickly. "But these gadgets beat me. How d'you start her up, Tatiyah?"

"Connect to the motor with that switch to your right," said the Syrian carelessly.

Rodgers stretched out a hand, pulled down the switch, and the whole of the mechanism hummed with life.

"Here, that will do!" protested the Syrian, seeking to rise from the chair.

"Don't worry," grinned Rodgers. "I won't electrocute myself. Finish off the bottle. This is damned amusing."

HIS eyes had narrowed toward the sending key. With a quick glance over his shoulder, he adjusted the wavelength: Aden. The mechanism was still humming. Cautiously he stretched out a long lean hand toward the key. Gently he tapped. The splutter of a spark, and a high-pitched squeak from the aërial, caused the Syrian to rise angrily.

"I told you not to fool with it!" he said.

With a laugh, Rodgers took his hand from the key and gently pushed the Syrian back into the chair. He poured out drinks for two. At the same time his gaze slanted through the doorway, and saw, in the sunshine of the desert, the squatting bodyguard who always surrounded the tomb.

The radio was his only chance.

Tatiyah had slumped back in his chair. He was still mumbling aloud.

ONCE again the Intelligence officer stretched out a hand and sent out the call signal to Aden.

With feverish energy his fingers worked. He repeated the call signal five times. He prayed that the operator at Aden was on duty. With a quick gesture he slipped the earphones over his head.

"*Aden. . . . Aden received,*" came the faint Morse message.

Painfully, slowly, because of his lack of skill, Rodgers began to send out the message.

"To Group Captain Gould. O. C., R. A. F. Aden. Paul Rodgers reports captive in village 16 degrees point 20 cross 46 degrees point 8. Send fighting squadron immediately. Bomb village. Large stores munitions. Arabs possess three fighting planes. Desperately urg—"

"That's Morse you're sending out, damn you!" yelled a voice in his ear.

Rodgers swiveled round to find the Syrian swaying before him, an automatic pistol in his hand. It pointed menacingly toward his blue uniform.

"Just amusing myself," laughed Rodgers, bluffing desperately.

"You don't bluff me," snarled the Syrian. "Paul Rodgers, eh? The man they call the Red Wolf of Arabia! Oh, yes, I've heard about you. It is going to give me great pleasure to kill you!"

A brown finger curled on the trigger, Rodgers drew himself tense for a leap forward. It was his only chance. But even as he raised himself on his toes, a harsh voice shouted from the doorway, in Arabic.

"Drop that gun, you dog!"

Both men whirled round. A somber-eyed figure in a white burnous stood there. It was Sheik Subbaihah.

"Is this a drunken brawl, you misbegotten son?" he went on in Arabic to the radio operator.

The Syrian babbled wildly. While he talked, Rodgers prepared to spring for the door of the tomb. But even as the thought came to him, two Arabs with rifles materialized and blocked the way.

With a mixture of tears and wails the Syrian explained. The name *"Rodgers"* was shrieked aloud. At this, the figure in the white burnous turned and gazed fixedly at the Intelligence officer. The somber eyes were relentless. There was no amusement glinting them now.

"The Red Wolf of Arabia!" he murmured slowly. "So you have dared to match yourself against our brains?"

Rodgers made an ironical bow.

"But the airplanes, Exalted One!" babbled the Syrian. "He has commanded a bombing squadron from Aden."

The Arab in the white burnous nodded.

"Yes, and within half an hour they will be sending our stores sky high," he said.

"I sincerely hope so," agreed Rodgers.

"In which case I can promise you a seat at the show," said the Sheik. He turned to the Arabs in the doorway. "Seize him!"

IN a few minutes, securely bound, Rodgers was being carried through the village to that camouflaged marketplace where the stores of ammunition and hand-grenades were collected. The Arab in the white burnous gave him a brief farewell.

"You will be able to judge whether your friends of the Royal Air Force are the excellent bombers they pretend to be," he murmured.

Then he turned his back upon Rodgers and moved swiftly to his airplane.

All around was bustle and confusion. Camels, whimpering and slobbering, were being driven into the desert. Men were seizing rifles and machine-guns. Women staggering under huge bundles were moving out of the mud houses.

A trumpet blared. A group of Arab horsemen, waving their rifles, galloped past. Behind them staggered some twenty black slaves, carrying a huge palanquin with curtains drawn, within which crouched the rebellious Sultan.

The dust of the desert rose in the air. It smothered the man in dirty blue uniform, who sprawled, hands and legs tied, in the midst of boxes of high explosives.

And through the detectors hidden in the palm tree near the white tomb with its cupola, came the faint thrumming of approaching airplanes. Then this sound was lost in the roar of three planes taking off from the airdrome near the village. The Brown Angels were climbing the sky.

Perspiration trickled down the face of the Intelligence officer as he tried desperately to free himself. Impossible! The bonds were strong and well tied. Above him was the stretched brown cloth that had camouflaged this arsenal as brown desert. A few chinks let in the sunlight. For the rest, it was hot and stifling.

In the midst of his futile struggles, he inclined his head sidewise. He had heard something: the approaching drone of airplanes. He knew the sound of Bristol Fighters. It was a familiar symphony to him. So his radio message had got through, and the squadron was flying in formation to avenge their lost comrades!

The Arab plot had failed. But in a few minutes he himself would be blown sky-high. Once again he struggled desperately, and then he heard the first shots fired—the rattle of a machine-gun. It came from the sky. The Brown Angels had engaged in conflict.

But even before the rattling hail of bullets had ceased, there came the thud and detonation of the first bomb dropped by the squadron. It was followed by yells and screams of pain. Then came the whining tear of a plane zooming. The battle had begun.

Another bomb crashed in the desert. Nearer, this time. A groan escaped from the solitary man twisting himself among the boxes of explosives. But even as despair escaped from his lips, there was the slither of bare feet in the sand. A woman, an Arab woman with a dirty yellow scarf about her body, was bending over him with a knife.

One glimpse at those passionate, oblique eyes, and he knew the worst. It was the dancing-girl from Aden, the girl who called herself Zubayah. The dirt of the desert had drenched her. Obviously she had trailed after the caravan when he had been kidnaped. But weariness could not hide the gleam of her dark eyes. She had come to seek revenge.

Wearily Rodgers closed his eyes, and waited for the knife to plunge into him. Better death in this fashion than to be blown to pieces. . . . Another bomb crashed within a few yards of them. It shook the ground, and a thick shower of sand smothered them.

TO his astonishment, Rodgers found his hands free. He opened his eyes. The dancing-girl was cutting the thongs that bound him.

"I like—Ingleezi!" she said, grinning.

There was no time for ceremony. Rodgers struggled to his feet, seized the girl and ran madly with her from out that desert arsenal.

"Where—we—go?" she panted.

He did not answer, but dragged her along, unmercifully. His head was down. He dared not look skyward. A hundred, two hundred yards they stumbled. The next bomb came screaming through the air.

It was a direct hit. An ear-splitting crash, and the whole desert heaved. The explosion flung them like dolls to the earth. They lay there while the sky rained sand—and other things. Then, slowly and painfully, they struggled to their feet. Through bloodshot eyes they could see the village crumbling as though a tornado had struck it.

"The jinn are loose!" gasped the girl.

BUT once more Rodgers was dragging her ruthlessly toward the desert. They reached a sand-dune; and there, breathless, they crouched. A sky drama was unfolding before their eyes.

Rodgers could see the three planes of the Arabs diving down upon the two bombers that had released their bombs upon the village. Once again machine-guns rattled furiously in the sky.

But above those diving machines was the Aden squadron, flying in perfect formation. A wave of a gloved hand, and the British machines swooped down for the attack. Zooms, loops, the scream of overdriven engines, and the constant rattle of machine-guns. Smoke came from the tail of one of the Brown Angels. The plane seemed to hesitate for a moment, and then it nose-dived to the desert, streaming flame and smoke. It crashed, a heap of blazing wreckage.

A moment later a second machine was twisting and spiraling downward. A figure detached itself and jumped. A parachute burst open, and began to trail slowly downward. The clinging figure was wearing a white burnous. But there was no mercy for the Sheik. An airplane droned past; there was the rattle of a machine-gun; and the figure in the white burnous went limp.

The third machine was trying desperately to escape. It side-slipped, looped, banked and zoomed. But there was no escape. That hail of lead caught it; the petrol-tank burst into flames; and it came shrieking through the air to crash within a hundred yards of where Rodgers and the dancing-girl were crouching.

The trail of men and camels was being harried by two other machines. They flew low; then fire swathed the line of figures, crumpling them in the sand. The black slaves beneath the palanquin dumped their load in the desert and fled for their lives. The rest stood helplessly with their hands raised above their heads in token of surrender.

It was the end. One by one the British machines landed in the desert. Blue-uniformed figures began to appear amidst the wreckage of the village. Among them, a cane in his hand, strode Group-Captain Gould. He prodded with the cane among the wreckage with the distaste of a man walking amid dung-heaps.

Suddenly he stopped.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "It's—"

"Aircraftsman Jones, sir," said Rodgers, drawing himself up and saluting smartly.

There was something like a twinkle in the eyes of the Group Captain.

"And this?" he asked, pointing his cane at the disheveled Arab girl.

"My lady friend, sir," replied Rodgers without a smile.

The Group Captain nodded curtly.

"You will report to me in the morning, my man."

"Yes sir."

Another salute, and the Group Captain strode on.

LATE that evening they reached Aden.

"And what now?" asked Rodgers, regarding the Arab girl at his side.

"I go—to dance!" she nodded.

"But you've saved my life," protested Rodgers. "And the least I can do is—"

He fumbled in his pockets for money. But she shook her head.

"I no want money. It is only good for drink. But Ingleezi, you can do one thing for me."

"Yes?"

"Kiss me, as you did that night the Brown Angel took you away."

In the darkened street of Aden, Paul Rodgers clutched the girl to him and kissed her gratefully and passionately. Then she broke away. There was a happy sigh in the darkness, and she was gone.

Thoughtfully Rodgers plodded back to the barracks.

Another colorful adventure of the Wolf of Arabia will appear in an early issue.

The Last Shot of

Our energetic friend Horseface Maud is back on the job as cook for a Nevada prospector's camp—and again she puts over a hot one.

By GEORGE F. WORTS

THE old Model T truck, with its heavy load of vegetables, canned goods and other camp supplies, stopped on the next rise. Its driver swung its head around into the hot tail-wind, stopped the engine, and let the radiator boil.

The driver, a horse-faced, black-haired woman of fifty-eight with gimlet eyes, mopped her face with a red bandana and glared down the long winding cañon, and far below, into a Dante's Inferno with purple and black side-walls and a yellow floor that seemed to heave.

A flawless blue sky smiled down on her, and a white-hot desert sun made the very Joshua trees vibrate with heat-devils. It was Horseface Maud Tackaberry's fifth stop, with a boiling radiator, in less than half a mile. She was disgusted. The toughest part of the climb was still ahead. She would reach camp after dark. Her headlights weren't working, and there would be no moon tonight. . . .

For years Mrs. Tackaberry had supported her improvident but lovable husband Tellurium in his hopeful career as a prospector, by cooking at boom camps and the like. Recently, by a shrewd *coup*, she had acquired a small chicken ranch, that she might give her young daughter Nevada a home. But she'd had to leave the girl there alone in order to ride herd on her wandering husband.

When life got Mrs. Tackaberry down, it made her feel better to sing. In a raucous voice, she bellowed:

Oh, I love these wild flowers in this dear land of ours;
The eagle I love to hear scur-ream.
I love the red rocks and the antelope flocks
That graze on the moun-tins so gur-reen!

A whisper halted her. It grew louder and louder until it became the exhaust of a car grinding up the long grade from that yellow hell-hole below. The high walls of the twisting cañon blocked it from sight for quite a while, thereby giving Horseface Maud a good chance to speculate on its identity. These wheel-tracks from the lower desert and up into the parched mountainous wastes of southern Nevada were not used oftener than once a week at the most. It was probably some prospector.

Sunlight suddenly flickered on a windshield, on dull and blistering black paint, and a weatherbeaten 1931 Chevrolet sedan swung around a high gravel bank and came laboring up the wash. It had Michigan license plates so covered with dust as to be almost illegible, and the windshield was mended with strips of adhesive tape.

A man was hunched over the wheel. He pulled up beside the truck, stopped his engine and climbed out so stiffly that Mrs. Tackaberry at first thought he was an old man. Then she saw, under the dust with which his face was caked, that he was a young man—no older than twenty-five, a tall, rangy young fellow in a rumpled and soiled white shirt and wrinkled blue pants and scuffed brown oxfords.

Horseface Maud took in these details and others with experienced eyes. He was a city feller, all right, and he looked absolutely all in. His mouth had that cracked and swollen look, and there were dark circles under eyes that looked burned out.

But he managed a grimace of a grin as he said: "Hello! Are you Mrs. Tackaberry?"

"Ayop."

"You left the Indian Springs filling-station just an hour ahead of me. I've got a—a sort of letter for you."

And he took from a hip pocket a

Dynamite!

Illustrated by
Monte Crews

"I *was* in a rush. You see," he said huskily, "I—I— Well, the truth is, I killed a man."

sealed, soiled envelope and gave it to her. Mrs. Tackaberry opened this and read the brief note it contained—a note hastily scrawled in the handwriting of her sister Nellie.

Dear Maud:

This will introduce Tony Billings. Maybe you've heard of him. You can't do too much for him. Take him under your wing. Hide him. Believe me, Maud, he is the victim of outrageous persecution, if ever a man was. I vouch for him 100%.

Your affectionate sister,
NELLIE.

The horse-faced woman looked up from the letter with a frown. She looked at the young man's weather- and travel-worn vehicle, then at his tired-looking, dust-caked face.

"You from Merchant City, Michigan?" she barked.

He nodded.

"This letter," she said, "is dated day before yesterday."

"That's correct," he affirmed.

"You mean to say you drove all the way from Michigan—nigh onto two thousand miles—in two days?"

"Yes, Mrs. Tackaberry."

"Well, I'll be damned! How did you do it?"

"By driving twenty-four hours a day and averaging forty an hour all the way. The roads were pretty good."

"You must have been in one hell of a rush."

"I was." His eyes had a bleak look. He made a wry grimace. "You see," he said huskily, "I—I— Well, the truth is, I killed a man."

HE stopped, staring at her uncertainly. Horseface Maud merely said grimly: "Oh, you killed a man. Then you drove somewhere around two thousand miles in two days flat. You sure move fast, Mr. Billings."

He licked his swollen lips. "Your sister said this would be the best place in the world to hide, if I could just make it." And when her eyes did not soften, he hastily added: "I—I've got a few hundred dollars that I saved, Mrs. Tackaberry, and I—"

"What was this," she barked, "a hit, pick and run?"

"Oh, no. It was accidental. This—this man was one of the political bosses. He—"

"Shoot him?"

"No. Punched."

Mrs. Tackaberry looked at his wide shoulders and said: "Nellie is an old fool. This is the worst country in the world for a wanted man to hide. You can't lose a hat without the whole country knowin' about it. When a man buys a pair o' overall pants, it's news. Tell me about this killin'."

"HIS name was Nick Murlow," Tony Billings said huskily. "I worked in his law-offices as a clerk. I was working overtime—that night—when he came in drunk and started throwing things around."

"Anybody else there?"

"Two stenographers, but they won't dare testify for me, and it wouldn't do me any good if they did. It's the crookedest town in the State. Nick Murlow was a criminal lawyer and the smartest crook in his gang. It took me three years to find out just how crooked he was, he covered up so well. About a year ago, I found it out—and resigned. He wouldn't let me resign. He said if I quit he'd have me wiped out."

"What happened night before last?"

"It was the night before that. He started raising hell, insulting the girls and cussing at me—his usual performance. He reached over the desk and slapped my face. I punched him. He backed off, couldn't get his balance, crashed through a window and fell twenty stories to the street."

"That's self-defense."

"Not in that town, Mrs. Tackaberry. Nick Murlow's gang knows what I could tell. Once they get their hands on me, I won't tell much of anything."

She nodded. "I guess they want you pretty bad, all right. I heard about it on the radio. They've broadcast it all over the country. There's a reward on you. What I can't figger out is, how you got through the cops of all those States."

"I took back roads wherever I could. I must have been stopped a dozen times, but I guess I don't tally with the first description they flashed out."

"Where'd you get this car?"

"After I saw your sister, I hitch-hiked to Detroit, and bought it in a used-car lot."

"I see," Mrs. Tackaberry drawled. "And just what did my sister tell you?"

"She said your camp was in the most sparsely settled section of the United States. She said you were eighty miles from the nearest highway, a hundred and twenty-five from the nearest town, and forty from your nearest neighbor. She said I could get lost up here forever if I wanted to, and that's what I want to do."

The gimlet eyes were boring into his, and the lady's mouth was thin-lipped.

"What did Nellie tell you about me, Mr. Billings?"

The fugitive seemed a little nervous. "She said you were very kind," he faltered. "She said you were all the time doing things to help people out." And when the gimlet eyes did not relent, he said hastily: "She told me you were the most famous gold-camp cook in Nevada, and that you'd recently bought a chicken ranch, but you got tired of it and went back prospecting with your husband."

Mrs. Tackaberry looked thoughtfully at the fugitive. She suddenly reached out and felt his nearest biceps.

"Hmph! You're soft as lard. I'll bet the only other thing you ever punched in your life was a time-clock!"

Tony Billings grinned wryly. "I hate indoor work. I like this country."

"Married?"

He shook his head.

"Where's your folks?"

"My mother and father are dead. I haven't any relatives that I know of."

She looked at him awhile longer. He looked honest, and he looked intelligent. He had good blue eyes and a nice grin. He was quite blond, and that gave him a boyish air.

"The way you drove out here ought to prove something," she grumbled at last. "I don't know what we can figger out, young feller. I don't have to tell you that you left a trail into this country wider and plainer than the track of a prairie fire. But I'll do some stewin'. Pile into your car and follow me."

IT was dark when they reached the rambling little cañon that led up and into Gold Valley. A gasoline lamp in the cook-shack sent hard white light streaking into the branches of juniper trees, thick with steel-blue berries. Tony Billings saw, in his headlights, several shacks with canvas roofs. The air had turned sharp and piney. The blue-black sky was crowded with brilliant stars, and the Milky Way was like a cloud of fuming phosphorus.

A dog barked. A man came out of the darkness with a briar pipe in his teeth. He was a chunky little man of sixty, with a round brown amiable face,

the soft blue eyes of a dreamer, and a pink bald head with a fringe of white hair growing upward in feathers.

Horseface Maud and the fugitive alighted. Tony Billings was informed by the lady that this was her well-known husband Tellurium. She briefly explained the young man's predicament to Tellurium, who agreed that it was mighty fortunate no one else was in camp. It would give them a chance to concoct some story.

Tellurium puffed at his pipe, asked mild questions and seemed not at all surprised that his wife should be arranging to harbor a man wanted by the law. He took Tony Billings to a shack containing a cot, a chair and a box, on which stood a tin basin, a candle and a cake of soap.

"You better hit the hay, son," Tellurium said. "Don't worry. We'll figger out somethin'."

Tony Billings thanked him, undressed, blew out the candle and got into bed. He was so exhausted he could not relax. But for the first time in forty-eight hours, he wasn't afraid. These Westerners were wonderful people!

THE next thing he knew, it was noon of the following day, and the shack was hot under the desert sun.

He washed, dressed and traced a raucously singing voice to its source. Mrs. Tackaberry was singing while she worked up a batch of bread-dough. She stopped singing when he went into the cook-shack. She didn't look happy.

"They're certainly combin' the country for you, Mr. Billings," she said. "We just got it on the radio—a special broadcast from our Las Vegas station. They've raised the reward on you to twenty-five hundred, and they think you're somewhere in the West. They've checked your trail as far west as Cheyenne, Wyoming. Set down and eat."

She gave him hot cakes, fried eggs, bacon and coffee.

"I've been doin' some figgerin'," she said when he had finished. "Take off your shirt and set down in that chair. You're gonna get a beauty treatment."

There was a black mess brewing in a saucepan at the back of the stove. It proved to be homemade hair-dye. With it she dyed Tony Billings' hair. And while she rubbed the black stuff into his blond hair, she talked.

"Here's your clothes," she said, indicating a pile of clothing on a near-by chair. "I'm going to make a prospector of you."

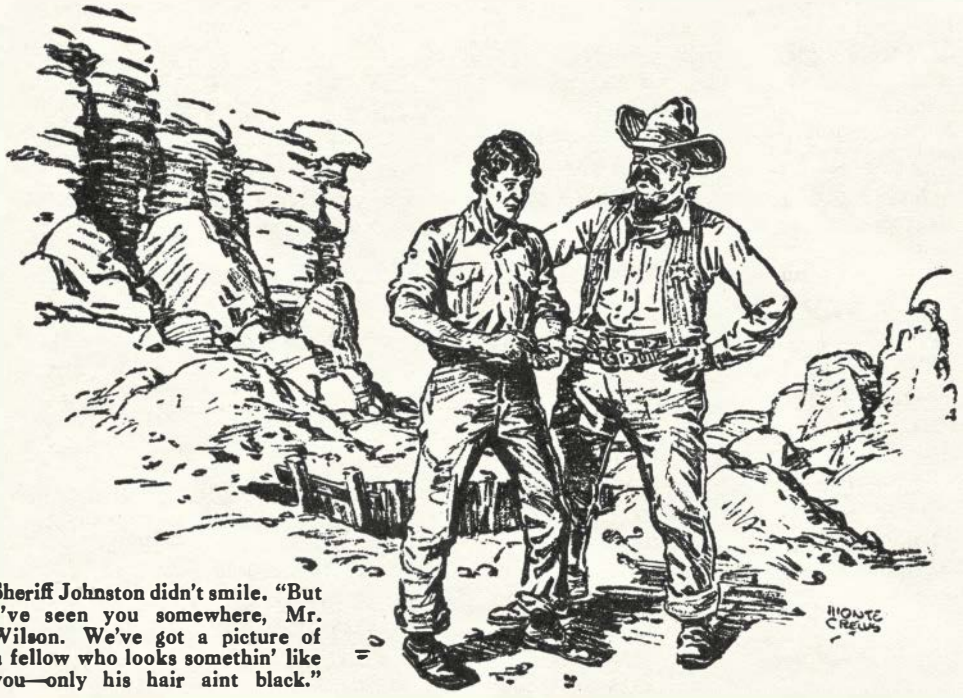
A black mess brewing in a saucepan proved to be home-made hair-dye. And while she rubbed the black stuff into Tony's blond hair, she talked. "I'm going to make a prospector of you," she said.

"But I don't know anything about prospecting."

"You will before I get through. You'll have to work hard—but hard work never hurt anybody. You're gonna change your name to Jim Wilson. If any sheriff or anybody else comes snoopin' around here, you're Jim Wilson, the prospector, and you've been here diggin' a shaft for five weeks. That's because the last visitor we had went through here five weeks ago. Now shuck off them clothes and get into these."

Tony Billings took the clothes to his shack. They consisted of a pair of faded and patched overall pants, a denim shirt and a pair of miner's shoes with composition soles. The shoes were too large, and the shirt and pants were too tight. But when Mrs. Tackaberry saw him, she declared that, except for his city man's color, and his hands, he looked like a typical prospector.

"Somebody's bound to come up here lookin' for you sooner or later. There aint a minute to lose. I'm gonna give



Sheriff Johnston didn't smile. "But I've seen you somewhere, Mr. Wilson. We've got a picture of a fellow who looks somethin' like you—only his hair aint black."

you a group of four old claims o' mine, just beyond that big yaller hill. We'll change the name on the location notices to yours. Come along, and I'll show you your ground—and bring along that pick and shovel."

On the way up the big hill, she said: "I'll tell you somethin'. All the old stories you hear about the big gold-strikes, it's always the last stick o' powder that opens up the pay-streak. Why? Often because most o' life's battles are won with the last wallop. Remember that, son: In this country, it's a good philosophy. You're up here fightin' for your life. Sooner or later, you're gonna be tested. Don't forget that last stick o' powder!"

They reached the top of the hill. Beyond was a rolling country of washes and hills, with red and yellow mesas in the background. Mrs. Tackaberry proceeded to a neat pile of stones, which she told Tony Billings was the discovery monument. She picked up some stones and removed a tobacco tin from which she extracted a folded slip of paper. It was a location notice, containing her name, the name and a description of the claim, the date of location, and her signature.

Mrs. Tackaberry busied herself with an eraser, and had him fill in the blank, back-dating it five weeks. He signed it "*Jim Wilson,*" and named the claim the Wildcat Number Three. The other three claims in the group, which they visited in turn, he named the Wildcat, the Wildcat No. 1 and the Wildcat No. 2.

Then they went to an old location-hole, where, Mrs. Tackaberry said, he might as well begin digging his shaft.

"The deeper it is, the better things'll look to the first sheriff who comes snoopin' around here. These Western sheriffs look dumb, but they aint. They see more with one squint of the naked eye than any city detective will see in a week. And if there's one thing they see quick, it's somethin' unusual, somethin' that aint fittin'. You've gotta work hard, son."

"I'll work hard." Then, as a thought struck him, he cried with alarm: "Good Lord! How about my car? Those Michigan plates!"

"If your eyes was as sharp as they're gonna be, you'd have noticed that those old plates are gone and a pair of '33 Nevada plates are on instead. Tellurium attended to it last night. Lots o' prospectors don't bother to buy new plates, and they get by with it as long as they don't get into town too often.

"Now measure off a four-by-six hole and dig. You won't do much at first. You're soft and this air is thin. I noticed you puffin' on that hill. When you're tuckered, come back to camp and I'll begin you on mineralogy."

As she started to leave him, he said: "Mrs. Tackaberry, I want to pay you for these claims. This land must be valuable."

She protested that it was worthless, and that she was going to let it go anyway. But he insisted, and Horseface Maud at length agreed to take ten dollars a claim, which she said was highway robbery, and she agreed to accept an interest in the mine, if he struck gold. She would, she said, board him for thirty dollars a month.

YOUNG Billings fell to work. He had never swung a pick or a shovel in his life.

But he was disgusted with himself for tiring so quickly. In an hour he was so exhausted he could hardly stand. He returned to the cook-shack, where Horseface Maud gave him a lesson in geology and mineralogy.

"You've got to learn rocks and formations," she said, "and the whole lingo. You got to be letter-perfect, so you won't make a slip."

Just outside the cook-shack was a pile of rock samples—a pile that had been accumulating since the camp had been established three years previously. Tellurium and other prospectors had brought these samples in from ledges all over the surrounding country. They ranged from black limestone to rose quartz.

Mrs. Tackaberry told Tony Billings the names of a dozen different specimens. She let him see them, highly magnified, under a prospector's glass. She pounded up several pieces in an iron mortar, and panned down the dust in a gold-pan, then gave him some lessons in the use of that tool.

All of it was, to the young man from Michigan, interesting and exciting business. He had a quick brain; he learned rapidly; and he was, he said, beginning to live for the first time in his life. He had always hated the grime and noise and ugliness of cities, and the dreary humdrum of work in an office. The quiet of the desert, the stark beauty of these mountains, the simplicity of this kind of life—all of it appealed to him powerfully. If only, he reflected, they'd leave him alone!

After supper, Horseface Maud primed him on the past she had invented for him. He was, she said, a California boy. She even gave him the address at which he had lived the past ten years in Los Angeles. He had been a truck-driver until a strike had forced him out of work a year ago, and since then he had been a prospector.

"You was at the Eldorado boom, but you didn't strike anything there," she said. "Tellurium, tell Tony about the Eldorado boom."

Tellurium obliged. But it was Tellurium's gloomy opinion that all of this was wasted effort. You couldn't make over a city man into a prospector who would fool any Western sheriff. And those Michigan license plates had left too easy a trail. All anybody had to do was to look under the hood at the number stamped into the engine—and Tony would be linked to that crime.

"Didn't you high-grade a set of steel dies for stamping numbers into metal out of Dan Sheehan's tool-shed about a year ago?" Horseface Maud interrupted. "Where are they now?"

"In the tool-box."

"Get 'em out!" Mrs. Tackaberry bellowed. "File off the old numbers and stamp on a new set!"

"Now, Maud," Tellurium protested, "you don't understand what kind of a job that is."

"I'll do it," Tony suggested.

"Nope. You're to save your strength for that shaft. Get busy, Tellurium."

Thus did that remarkable woman plug that loophole. But it was all rather hopeless. According to the radio broadcasts, the chase was getting hotter and hotter. Yet Maud would not admit discouragement. She was in this fight, she declared, to the finish. And she insisted that, if they just gave her a week or two, she'd make Tony into a Nevada prospector who would fool any expert. She was a stubborn woman. And she had decided that Tony Billings was a "fine young feller," worthy of all this bother and more.

THE young man from Michigan repaid her faith in him by working harder than she had ever seen a man work. Once he became used to the altitude, and once his disused muscles began to toughen up, he dug that shaft with the energy of three men. By the end of two weeks, his sunburn had turned brown, and he was working eight hours a day. Evenings he devoted to a study of mineralogy and geology. He talked, dreamed and thought of nothing but prospecting. Even Tellurium, who had thought it could never be done, was impressed.

"If you ever get clear of this mess, Tony," he said one day, "I and you'll make the finest prospectin' team in Nevada."

"With him to do the workin', and you to do the dreamin'," Mrs. Tackaberry said tartly.

She was singing a great deal these days, for she was growing more and more worried. The radio reports of the man-hunt were disheartening. Merchant City—or rather, the political gang that ran it—was determined to have its pound of flesh. The reward for the capture of Anthony Billings dead or alive had been boosted to five thousand dollars. The authorities believed he was in Arizona or Nevada. All citizens of these States were warned to be on the lookout for Anthony Billings, murderer.

Tony said one evening, after one of these broadcasts: "I'm going to give myself up. They're closing in. It's only a matter of time, and you'll both be arrested for harboring a fugitive from justice."

Horseface Maud lost her temper. She called him a damned idiot. She considered him, she said, practically a son, at least a nephew, and she'd be damned if she'd give any nephew of hers to those Eastern crooks.

Then she became silent, and her black eyes began to glitter and gleam with inspiration. She said suddenly: "You heard me tell you about the last stick of powder. I'm gonna shoot it off now."

She refused to tell them what her plans were. She got into her truck and drove away. That night, the radio would not work. Tellurium and Tony took turns fiddling with it, but no sound came from it.

ON the following morning a shadow fell across the deepening shaft in which Tony was working. The hole was then about fourteen feet deep. He looked up and saw, silhouetted against the blue sky, the brown, wrinkled, hard-bitten face of a man of about forty-five —stockily built, with a gun at his hip and a badge on his breast.

Tony's heart began to thump, and the hot sweat of honest toil on his back turned icy.

"Howdy," the stranger called down.

"Howdy," Tony amiably called back.

"Pretty good-lookin' hole you got here."

Tony did what Horseface Maud had told him to do, if this emergency should arise. He climbed out of the hole and into the sun, shaking rock-dust out of his coal-black hair and trying to grin as if he weren't grimly commanding every muscle to stop jumping.

THE man with the badge gave him a slow, hard look from eyes clearer and harder than any other eyes Tony had ever seen.

"Yeah," the Sheriff drawled, "this is a pretty good-lookin' dump you got here. Wouldn't surprise me but what you might make a mine." He stopped, then added quickly: "I'm Sheriff Johnston, from Tonopah."

"Oh, yes," Tony said pleasantly. If Maud were only here to help him! But she wasn't! And Tellurium was at his diggings, a mile away.

"I'm lookin' for a 1931 Chevvy sedan with Michigan plates," Sheriff Johnston said, still drawling. "Might of come up this way coupla weeks ago. Didn't happen to see it, did you?"

"No," Tony said, squinting his eyes in the manner of a man trying to remember. "Nope, I didn't, Sheriff. Fact is, there hasn't been anybody through here now for goin' on seven weeks."

"That so? How long've you been here?"

"Since about then—since I set out these claims."

Tony had already seen, thanks to the sharpening observation he was acquiring, that stones in the near-by discovery monument had been moved. Evidently Sheriff Johnston had already looked at the location notice.

"They said, down at Tim Harnedy's filling-station, a '31 Chevvy came up this way about two weeks ago."

"Might have gone over to Tempiute," Tony suggested, as casually as if his heart weren't banging out every word he uttered.

"Whose Chevvy sedan is that back of the cook-shack with the old Nevada plates?"

"It belongs to Tellurium."

"H'm. That's funny. Didn't know Tellurium had a Chevvy. Thought he always used Maud's truck."

Tony shrugged. How many times had Maud rehearsed him in this conversation!

Those blue, clear, desert-trained eyes were searching his face; and Tony knew that, once they narrowed, he had made a slip. So far they hadn't narrowed. They were just steady, watchful.

"You're a clever woman, Mrs. Tackaberry," said the Sheriff. . . . "But this old sedan—it's got your last year's truck license on it, but the engine number shows it was shipped to China right after it was made."

"I don't think I caught your name."

"It's Jim Wilson, Sheriff."

"That so? Done much prospectin' in this State, Mr. Wilson?"

"A little. I was at Eldorado."

"Funny I didn't see you there."

Tony managed another grin. "Funny I didn't see you there either, Sheriff."

Sheriff Johnston didn't smile. "But I've seen you somewhere, Mr. Wilson. We've got a picture of a fellow pasted up in my office who looks somethin' like you—same eyes, same nose and same mouth. Only, his hair aint black."

Tony grinned again. "That aint funny, Sheriff. That's pretty serious, I'd say. What's he wanted for?"

"Murder—in Michigan, a couple o' weeks ago."

"Oh," said Tony, "you mean this guy Billings."

"Yeah," the other slowly answered. "This guy Billings. You couldn't be him, of course."

"It's pretty hard," Tony agreed, with a laugh, "for a man to be in two places at once."

Sheriff Johnston didn't laugh. His eyes, for at least three minutes, had not left Tony's eyes, and Tony could have sworn that they had not blinked once during this lengthy scrutiny.

"You from the East, Mr. Wilson?"

Tony shook his head. "Nope. I'm a Californian—native son. Los Angeles."

"That so? Where'd you live there?"

"For the past ten years at fifteen-hundred and five South Figueroa."

"What was your line o' work, Mr. Wilson?"

"Truckin'. That is, I drove a truck until the strike; then I starved around and decided to try this. That was about a year ago."

Sheriff Johnston's eyes suddenly narrowed. Tony's heart gave a wild leap. What had he said? Had he slipped? The Sheriff thrust a hand into his pants pocket, brought it out with—a small fragment of pale-gray rock.

"What do you make of this, Mr. Wilson? I'd like to get your opinion."

Tony accepted the sample in a hand compelled by sheer will-power to be steady. He turned the little chunk of rock over in fingers that felt paralyzed. He heard his voice speaking casually. "It might have been a nice piece of porphyry-quartz once," he said. "But it got too hot."

"Too hot?" Sheriff Johnston snapped.

Tony nodded thoughtfully.

"It looks so, Sheriff. Too near to volcanic action. Whatever values it might have had were all burned out. Looks like a piece of Goodsprings rock to me,

but not anywheres near the Smith boys' diggings."

"Then you don't think it would assay, Mr. Wilson?"

"Not a nickel's worth, Sheriff."

The Sheriff tossed the specimen to the dump and drawled: "I guess you're right, Mr. Wilson. Don't let me keep you from your diggin's. It sure looks like a nice prospect you've got here."

He abruptly turned and walked away. Tony's heart continued to hammer. He saw the Sheriff vanish over the rise. Cautiously, Tony followed. From the hilltop he saw the tall man with the gun at his hip stroll behind the cook-shack, then saw him lift the hood of Tony's sedan. He was taking down the engine-number!

Tony returned to his shaft. He felt cold and sick and defeated. You could never fool these Western sheriffs. Sheriff Johnston would check up on that Los Angeles address and the engine-number—which he'd find was phony—and he'd be back tomorrow!

Tony rejected the impulse to run—to hide in any of these countless cañons. He'd have to have water, and these sheriffs knew every spring in the whole parched country. They'd get him sooner or later. . . .

Horseface Maud returned that evening, dusty, tired and cross. She said it had been a terrible hot trip; and my, but it sure was nice to be home. Then she saw Tony's worried eyes.

"What happened?" she snapped.

"Sheriff Johnston was up here this morning."

"What did he say?"

Tony told her. She questioned him. She made him repeat every question, every answer.

"And he looked under the hood."

"Oh, hell! But he went away, didn't he? You foxed him, didn't you?"

"He'll be back. He'll check up on everything. He's smart."

NEXT morning, Tony went to his shaft as usual. It was useless to work, but he had to do something. He couldn't stand the agony of waiting, doing nothing.

He attacked the bottom of the hole in a very frenzy of desperation, as if he might, by sheer energy, burrow his way out of this harrowing problem. He swung a singlejack hammer savagely against the head of a steel drill. It was the last hole he would ever drill, for there was only one stick of dynamite left in camp.

As he tamped this stick into the hole, he recalled bitterly what Maud had said on his first morning in Gold Valley. "It's always the last stick o' powder that opens up the pay-streak. Why? Often because most o' life's battles are won with the last wallop."

There weren't, he bitterly reflected, any more wallops left in him. He'd given his last in that cross-examination by Sheriff Johnston.

He lit the fuse and scrambled out of the hole. He waited for the explosion, then returned to the hole and waited for the smoke to clear. You got a headache when you went down a hole too soon after shooting, but even a headache might be a welcome diversion.

AS he climbed down the ladder into the thinning blue haze, he saw the gleam on the chunk of rust-stained rock on top of the muck.

He swarmed down the ladder, picked up the rock and climbed back into the sunlight. The rock was as large as his fist, and there was a thin streak of gold in spots like tiny rivet-heads clear across the face of it!

He ran down the hill, yelling: "Maud! Maud! I've struck it! It's high grade!"

She appeared in the cook-shack doorway. Tellurium was sharpening steel at the forge beside the cook-shack. He dropped hammer and steel and came running.

When they had jubilantly examined the specimen, they started up the hill for Tony's diggings. Halfway up, they were stopped by the sound of a car grinding up the grade from Emigrant Valley. It was Sheriff Johnston's car.

"This is one time," Tony remarked, "when the last stick of dynamite went off too late."

They returned to the cook-shack. Sheriff Johnston, with a grim look, got out of his car.

"Howdy, Tellurium. Howdy, Mr. Wilson," he drawled. And to Horseface Maud: "You're a mighty clever woman, Mrs. Tackaberry."

Her gimlet eyes struck against the flint of his.

"Thanks, Sheriff. I always figured I was."

"This young feller here—this Mr. Wilson—he's a sort of relative of yours, aint he, Mrs. Tackaberry?"

"Yes. Sort of, Sheriff."

"He grew up with your sister Gertrude in Los Angeles, as I understand it."

"That's right. She raised him like a son."

"So she told me over the phone yesterday. I guess you must of put in your phone-call to her just ahead of mine."

"I don't know what you mean, Sheriff Johnston."

"Well, let's forget it, Mrs. Tackaberry. There's something else—this old Chevvy sedan out in back here. It's got your last year's truck-license on it, but the engine-number shows it was shipped to China right after it was made, and is now bein' run by a gentleman in Shanghai by the name of How Gung Fat. But another one just like it was sold by a used-car lot in Detroit to a young feller called Tony Billings, who drove out here and sort of got lost a couple weeks ago."

"You don't say!" Mrs. Tackaberry murmured.

Sheriff Johnston looked at her for a long time before he went on. Her face was pale, and her black eyes resembled the eyes of a cornered bear.

He drawled: "I heard that radio speech you made in Las Vegas night before last, Mrs. Tackaberry. You sure ought to be in the U. S. Senate."

"I figure on being there some day, Sheriff."

"What speech?" Tellurium barked.

"DIDN'T you hear her speech, Tellurium? It was some speech. I don't think I ever heard a speech like it. It began something like this: 'Feller-citizens of Nevada and feller-citizens of this great unspoiled West of ourn.' Then it went on to say what a hell of a nerve a dirty, corrupt sinkhole of a place like Merchant City, Michigan, had—to ask us clean, wholesome and whole-hearted Westerners to waste our time lookin' for a innocent young feller who just happened to push a vile ogre out of a twenty-story office-building.

"She knew the whole story inside and out, she said, and why in hell don't the citizens of Merchant City get busy and wash their dirty linen at home instead of involvin' this big, clean West of ourn. Why didn't Merchant City citizens get busy and clean up the graft and corruption that had sent a pore, innocent young feller scurryin' away from his home town, and why did they pass the buck to us clean, wholesome, whole-hearted Westerners.

"It went on for a good half-hour solid like that, Tellurium. She got real indignant."

"I was indignant!" Horseface Maud snapped. "I was mad."

"You sure sounded mad, Mrs. Tackaberry. You sure worked yourself up to a lather on that microphone."

"YOU mean to say," Tellurium interrupted, "you went down there to the Las Vegas radio station and bellowed all that into the ether?"

"I sure did."

"What did it cost you?"

"Not a dime. I walked in on a Happy Yeast Hour program and just took the mike away from a little blonde hussy who was singin' cowboy songs all wrong, anyway. I had a gun on me, but I didn't need it. The station manager is practically a nephew of mine."

"Like Mr. Wilson, here?" Sheriff Johnston asked.

"Ayop. I was castin' my bread on the water."

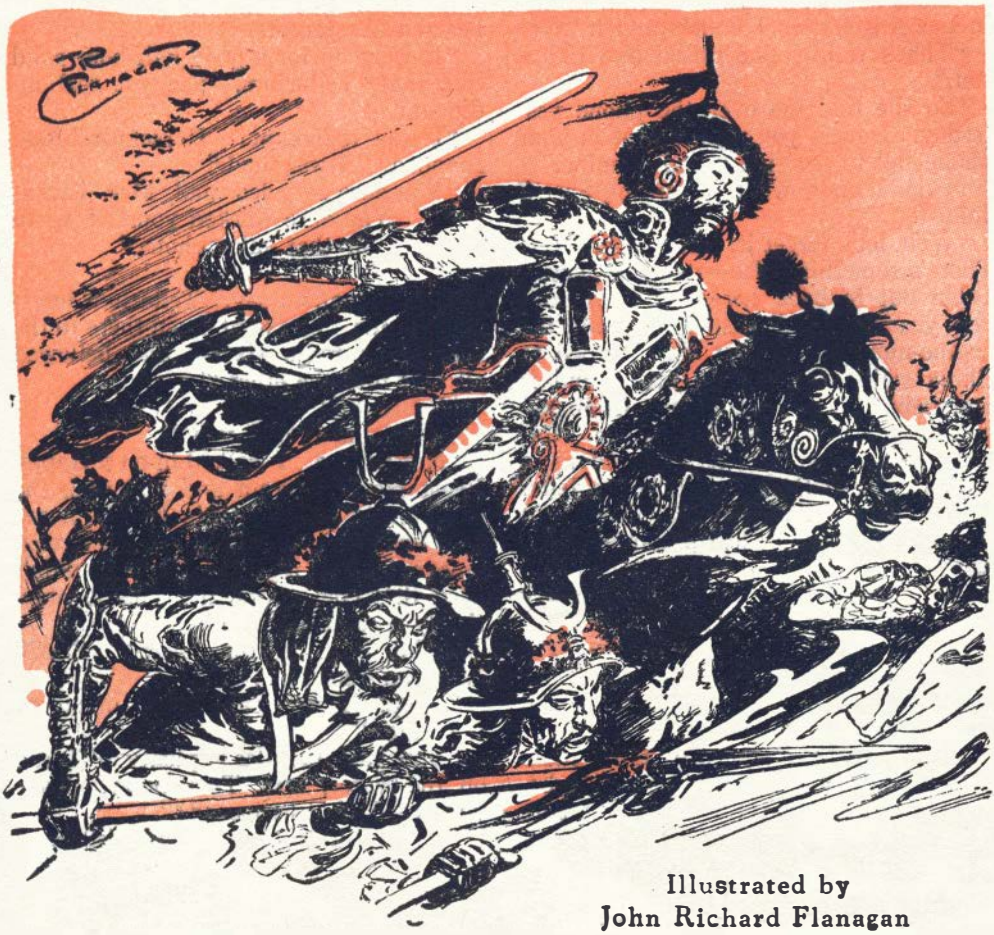
"You sure broadcast plenty o' bread on the water, Mrs. Tackaberry. Have you heard what happened?"

"Our radio is on the bum," Tellurium said. He looked at his wife with keen suspicion. "And I'll bet you put it on the fritz so's we couldn't hear this speech you was goin' to make. What happened, Sheriff?"

"Must have been everybody in the country listenin' to that broadcast, and it's only a five-thousand-watt station. All day yesterday, the State of Michigan was in a seethin' uproar. Merchant City went under martial law. There were citizens' parades all day long. You sure turned hell loose in that town, Mrs. Tackaberry! In just two hours the city council was kicked out, a city manager was put in, and all the rats was leavin' the ship. First thing they did, with the better citizens' committee, was to call off the man-hunt on this young feller Billings. If he went back there now, they'd give him a key to the city and a vote o' thanks. You did all that, Mrs. Tackaberry."

Horseface Maud nodded complacently. "It's a wonderful thing," she said, "what a wallop your last stick of powder has sometimes, Sheriff. Tony, show the Sheriff that piece of ore."

Another exploit of the inimitable Horseface Maud is being set down by George Worts, and we expect to publish it in an early issue.



Illustrated by
John Richard Flanagan

Pell Street Blues

By ACHMED ABDULLAH

FATE wrote the first chapter of this tale some centuries ago, when it planted the seeds of mutual hate in two kindred Mongol races: in Chinese and in Manchu, and by the same token, in patient, earth-bound peasant and in hawkish nomad, hard-galloping across the land, conquering it with the swish of the red sword, the scream and bray of the long-stemmed war-trumpets, the hollow nasal drone of the kettle-drums—and overhead, the carrion-fed vultures paralleling the marauders' progress on eager wings.

Fate wrote the second chapter sixty-odd years ago, when Foh Wong and Yang Shen-Li were boys in the cold Northern town of Ninguta, where they threw stones at each other and swapped salty abuse; although it was Yang Shen-Li, the Manchu, the mandarin's son, who did most of the stone-throwing, whereas Foh Wong, whose parents were Chinese coolies tilling the barren clay, did most of the cursing—from a safe distance. For he valued his skin—the which, together with his shrewd brain, was his sole possession.

Fate wrote the third chapter a little over fifty years ago, when parlous times had come to China—with Russia at the Western and Japan at the Eastern bor-

A FIRE-VIVID story of China and Chinatown, the first of a fine group by the famous author of "The Blue-eyed Manchu," "The Swinging Caravan" and others.

der, both waiting for an excuse to invade the tottering Empire and tear it to pieces—and when, one morning, Foh Wong stopped Yang Shen-Li on the street and said:

"A word with you!"

"What is it, mud-turtle?"

"Indeed," replied the other, "I am no more than a mud-turtle, while you are an aristocrat, an iron-capped prince. And yet,"—slowly,—"today I have the whip-hand."

"Eh?" exclaimed Yang Shen-Li.

He was startled. He wondered if Foh Wong knew, how he knew—heard him drop his voice to a purr:

"You were not alone last night. I watched from behind a tree. And should I proclaim what I saw, there would be your handsome head spiked on a tall

pole in front of the Palace of August Justice."

The Manchu shrugged his shoulders. He tried to speak casually:

"I do not fear death."

"Of course not—since you are a brave fool. But being also an honorable fool, you would not wish to bring black disgrace on your father, to cause him to lose face. And—forgive the wretched pun—your father would lose a great deal of face, if you should lose your head. A murderer's head—"

"I did not murder."

"You killed."

"In self-defence. He insulted me, struck me, drew his revolver and fired—the insolent foreigner!"

"But—be pleased to remember—a most important foreigner. A high Russian official whose corpse you—ah—buried in back of Han Ma's camel stables." He stabbed out an accusing finger. "I saw you."

"Have you witnesses?"

"Not a one. I was alone."

"Then?"

"There will be witnesses, when the time comes. Three of my cousins. A dozen, if you prefer."

"Lying witnesses!"

"Lying, only, in swearing they saw the deed. Not lying as to the deed itself. And though you are a mandarin's son, the Dowager Empress, with Russia's soldiers massed at the frontier, will give an order to her red-robed executioners, will have your handsome head removed, if I should—"

"IS there a price for your silence, coolie?" interrupted Yang Shen-Li.

"Is there not a price for everything?"

"How much?"

"No money. Not a single silver tael." Foh Wong paused. "The price of my silence is—a word."

"A word?"

"Yes. A mere word from you—to Na Liu. A word telling her I desire her greatly—wish her to be my wife."

"But"—the Manchu stammered with rage—"she—"

"Loves *you?* I know. And I know, too, that, loving you, she will not relish the thought of your bleeding head grinning down at her from a tall pole, and will therefore marry *me,* the mud-turtle. . . . *Hayah!*" with sudden violence. "Go to her! At once! For today I command, and you will obey!"

Yang Shen-Li stared at the other.

"Yes," he said heavily. "I shall obey." He took a step nearer. "But—listen to me, coolie!" His words clicked and broke like dropping icicles. "I hate you. Ah—by the Buddha!—I shall always hate you."

"You hate me no more than I hate you," was the answer. "But"—and Foh Wong's eyes gleamed triumphantly through meager almond lids—"you are helpless, O paper tiger with paper teeth. I am not. So—keep on hating me!"

NEVER, through the decades, though for years they did not see one another, did the hate of these two weaken.

It stretched, hard and stark and blighting, athwart the full span of both their lives. It followed the churned steamship lane to San Francisco and Seattle. It traveled thence across the continent to New York—there to abut and peak to a grim, rather fantastic climax in the maze and reek and riot of half a dozen tired old streets that, a few blocks away from the greasy drab of the river, cluster toward the Bowery, toward the pride of the Wall Street mart, as far even as busy, bartering, negligent Broadway.

Streets of Chinatown, squatting turgid and sardonic and tremendously alien! Not caring a tinker's dam for the White Man's world roaring its up-to-date, efficient steel-and-concrete symphony on all sides.

Rickety, this Chinatown; moldy and viscous, not overclean, smelling distressingly of sewer gas and rotting vegetables and sizzling, rancid fat. Yet a fact to be reckoned with in Gotham's kaleidoscopic pattern. A cultural and civil entity not without dignity. A thing aloof, apart, slightly supercilious—and intensely human. And being human, a fit background for a tragic tale. . . .

Not that this tale is entirely tragic. For tragedy, no less than comedy, is after all only a matter of viewpoint, perhaps of race and religion—two accidents whose sum-total spells prejudice.

Therefore, if your sense of humor be faintly oblique, faintly Oriental, in other words, you may derive a certain amusement from the thought of Foh Wong, no longer a coolie but a prosperous New York merchant, cooped up in the sweltering garret of his Pell Street house, with the door locked and the windows tightly shuttered, and an agony of fear forever stewing in his brain. You may also laugh at the idea of Yang Shen-Li

"For the sake of my love," she said with a queer triumph, "—I shall marry another!"

lording it gloriously over Foh Wong's Cantonese clerks, spending Foh Wong's money with a free and reckless hand—and in the evening, after a pleasant hour or two at the Azure Dragon Club over an archaic mandarin gambling game of "Patting Green Butterflies" or "Ladies on Horseback" or "Heigh-oh! Flies the Kite," mounting to the second floor of the Pell Street house, there to bow courteously before Na Liu, his wrinkled old wife, once the wife of Foh Wong! She would be sitting stiffly erect, in the proper Chinese manner, on a chair of ebony and lacquer encrusted with rose-quartz, her tiny feet barely touching the floor and her hands demurely folded; and Yang Shen-Li would say to her:

"Moonbeam, was there ever love as staunch as ours?"

She would give a quaint, giggling, girlish little laugh.

"Never, O Great One!" she would reply.

"Never!" he would echo. "The same love until death—may it not be for many years! The same love that came to you and me, so long ago, when the world was young back home in Ninguta—and we were young—"

"And you the iron-capped prince—and I the gardener's daughter!"

"But all the world to me—as you are today."

Always, as often as he spoke the words, he made a great gesture with his strong, hairy hand. A gesture that cleaved the trooping shadows in the room with a certain brutality, that brushed through the sudden, clogged

stillness like a conjurer's wand, sweeping away the dust and grime of Pell Street, the dust and grime of the dead years, and calling up the cool, scented spring sweetness of the small Manchu-Chinese border town where both had lived and loved. . . .

He remembered as clearly as if it were yesterday how, on that morning after his talk with Foh Wong, he met Na Liu where they always met, in back of the Temple of the Monkey and the Stork, in the shelter of the enameled pagoda roof that mirrored the sun a thousand-fold, like intersecting rainbows, endless zigzag flashings of rose and purple and blue and green. There he told her what had happened, told her the full bitter tale; and he said to her as he had to Foh Wong:

"I do not fear death. But there is the honor of my father to be considered—the honor of my ancestors for countless generations."

"Pah!" she cried. "And what do I care for the honor of your father, the honor of all your noble ancestors? It is you I care for. You alone. And the thought of you dead—why, I cannot bear it. Because, you see,"—her voice was thin and brittle,—"I love you."

He was silent.

"I love you so," she continued. "There is nothing, nothing, nothing I would not do for the sake of my love. Ah,"—in a tense whisper,—"for the sake of my love, I would lie, I would steal, I would kill! For the sake of my love,"—more loudly, with a queer triumph in her accents,—"I shall marry another!"

He sighed. He spoke dully:

"The book has been read. The grape has been pressed. There is no more. This is the end of our love."

"The end? No, no! There can be no end to our love, as there was no beginning. Why—don't you see?—our love is a fact. A fact!"

He weighed the thought in his mind. Then he inclined his head.

"That is so," he replied. "A fact, like the living Buddha, eternal and unchangeable. A fact, whatever may happen to you and to me!"

THEY stood there. For long minutes they looked at each other. They did not touch hands. For was she not now betrothed to Foh Wong?

They turned and went their different ways. And a few days later Na Liu became the coolie's bride, while Yang Shen-Li traveled south, to be a captain in a Manchu banner corps and rise high in the favor of the Dowager Empress.

NA LIU was a faithful wife to Foh Wong, since it was her duty; obeying the ancient maxim that a married woman must first widen her tolerance, then control the impulses of her heart and body, then entirely correct herself.

He was a good husband to her. Nor did the notion of her loving Yang Shen-Li—he knew it, though they never spoke of it—disturb his massive Mongol equanimity. Indeed, he was conscious of a keener tang and zest to his passion when he reflected that the other was an aristocrat and he himself a despised mud-turtle; yet his the woman who might have had her luxurious ease in a mandarin's palace.

Still, there were moments when he was prey to a certain jealousy. Not jealousy of the flesh—how could that be, with Yang Shen-Li in Pekin and Na Liu so rigidly observing the conventions? Jealousy, rather, of the brain, the imagining; of the gnawing, recurrent idea that, married to his rival, Na Liu would have lived in splendor of silks and jade, while as his own wife, her life was sordid and mean and frugal.

He would reason, thereby doing her an injustice, that she compared her existence, such as it was, with what it might have been. And it was less through love of her, and more because of this jealousy—this avid longing for material achievement, for precious things to put at her feet, telling her, "Behold! I can give you whatever the Manchu could have given you!"—that ambition came to him, that he dreamed of rising from his lowly estate to power and riches.

It was about this time that a Ninguta man returned to his native town, his pockets clanking with gold and amazing tales on his lips of the fair fortune awaiting the men of China in a land beyond the Pacific. America was its fantastic and barbarous name. And it seemed that the work there was plentiful, and the wages generous and princely.

Foh Wong listened to him eagerly. He asked many astute, practical questions. Presently, he made up his mind:

He sold his meager belongings. He took Na Liu to Canton, and crowded there aboard a Yankee clipper with a gang of his countrymen. And even before the ship warped out, he received his first taste of the New World's crass

realities at the hands of the Gloucester mate, who, short of help, picked decidedly involuntary and as decidedly unpaid stevedores from among his Chinese passengers—forcing them to labor all day, to shift cumbersome freight, to direct to the derricks the heavy slings of cargo, to toil for long hours with bleeding fingers and tired, aching bodies. Once Foh Wong, taking a breathing spell, said to Na Liu, who stood by the gunwale:

"Ah—hard, hard work! But it does not matter. For I shall succeed. No doubt of it." And in a whisper: "You want me to succeed?"

"Yes."

"You love me—a little bit?"

Her reply was hopeless in its honesty, hopeless in what it did not say:

"I shall be a faithful wife to you—always."

"But—"

He began to plead with her, when the Gloucester mate's bellow interrupted him:

"Cut out that Chinkie talk, yer yallerskinned heathen—and git back to them derricks!"

And though Foh Wong did not understand the words, he had no trouble in understanding the length of knotted rope that whistled through the air.

Such was the beginning of his Odyssey—which was destined to end, ironically, in a sweltering Pell Street garret, with the door locked and the windows tightly shuttered, and an agony of fear forever stewing in his soul. The beginning of his Odyssey—almost as bitter as this same end—with all about him, stretching east toward San Francisco, the world of the sea, enigmatic and alien. Slimy, brutish toil. Seasickness and wretched food and brackish water. The Gloucester mate cuffing and cursing him and his countrymen with a certain austere Puritan determination. Days with the waves house-high under a puffed and desolate sky. Nights of blackness flecked with white, and running back to a yet deeper blackness. Once a gale that shivered a mast into matchwood and swept the bridges clean as with a knife.

He was conscious of fear. But paradoxically, he was not afraid of his fear. For there was his ambition. There was his passion for Na Liu. There was, stronger than his passion, his hate of Yang Shen-Li. These sustained him too through the decades of heavy labor that followed.

First in California—California of the smashing, roaring, epic era. Gold was king then. Silver-lead was viceroy. Everywhere railroads were being pushed. There was timber. There was wheat. There were cattle ranches and orchards. There was the White Man's bragging:

"Give us the dollar! To hell with the cents! Let the Yellow Men earn 'em!"

The Yellow Men did. Among them, Foh Wong—striving desperately, year after year, living close to the danger line of starvation, in California, Arizona, Colorado, Chicago, at last reaching New York. Frugally hoarding his money,

Foh Wong kowtowed deeply before the Buddha who looks after the souls of those about to die—for he was sorry for the destiny in store for his faded old wife Na Liu.

climbing up the ladder of success, until his was a name for shrewdness and solid riches to conjure with in Chinatown, and stout merchants, sipping their tea or smoking their opium-pipes on an afternoon at the Azure Dragon Club, would comment admiringly:

"Gold comes to his hand unasked—like a dog or a courtesan."

ONCE in a while Foh Wong had news of Yang Shen-Li. His friends would read in Canton papers, or in the local Chinatown weekly the *Eminent Elevation,* owned and edited by Yung Tang, how the Manchu also was steadily making his way—how, a favorite of the Dowager Empress, he had been appointed captain-general of the Pekin troops, commander-in-chief of the Northern army, and finally—this happened at the turn of the century, at about the same time when Foh Wong paid off the twenty-thousand-dollar mortgage on his Pell Street house—military governor of his native province.

With every rise in the other's fortunes, Foh Wong's ambition grew. His hate, expressed by his jealousy of material achievement, was not weakened by his own success, although in this thoughts of Na Liu no longer played a direct part.

He was still a good husband to her, in that he treated her with scrupulous politeness and presented her occasionally with expensive gifts. But his passion was dying. For several reasons. One—logically, inevitably—was that he had never been able to make her love him. Besides, she was getting to be an old woman. And—the gravest reason—she had borne him no children.

She, on the other hand, had not ceased to be his faithful wife: looking after his bodily comfort, making his home a thing of tidiness and beauty, cutting down household costs. Nor did she dislike him. Not at all. Indeed, it would be a hunting after lying, sentimental effect to say that she blamed him for having forced her into marriage. For she also was of Mongol race. She believed, to quote a Chinese proverb, that it was just and proper to take by the tail what one could not take by the head; and she would have acted as Foh Wong had acted—in fact, did act so several years later—had the positions been reversed.

Therefore she gave him her respect. She even gave him a measure of friendship. But no love; she could not. She

had not forgotten the Manchu; could never forget him.

So Foh Wong's love died. It became indifference. And then one day his indifference changed to hate, as blighting as his hate for Yang Shen-Li. . . .

On that day, coming home for lunch, he found his wife in tears. He asked her what was the matter. She did not answer, only sobbed.

He saw a crumpled letter on the floor. He picked it up, forced her to read it aloud to him. It was from her brother.

The latter wrote—for that was the time, after the death of the Dowager Empress, when revolution all over China was no longer the pale, frightened dream of a few idealists, but a fact that seared the land like a sheet of smoldering flame, yellow, cruel, inexorable—he wrote how in Ninguta, too, several months earlier, the masses had turned against their rulers, the iron-capped Manchu princes. He wrote vividly—and Foh Wong smiled as he pictured the grim scene.

THE mob of enraged coolies—*hayah!* his own people—racing through the streets, splashing through the thick blue slime, yelling:

"Pao Ch'ing Mien Yong—death to the foreign oppressors!"

Running on and on, like a huge snake with innumerable bobbing heads, mouths cleft into toothy cruel grimaces, crying:

"Pao Ch'ing Mien Yong!"

Rushing on through Pewter Lane. Through the Bazaar of the Tartar Traders. Past the Temple of the Monkey and the Stork. On to the palace of the military governor. Wielding hatchets and daggers and clubs and scythes. Overpowering the Manchu banner-men who fought bravely.

"Pao Ch'ing Mien Yong!"

Heads then—heads rolling on the ground like over-ripe pumpkins. Heads of Manchus, of foreign oppressors; and among them—doubtless, wrote Na Liu's brother, though it had not been found in the crimson shambles—the head of Yang Shen-Li.

Yang Shen-Li's head, thought Foh Wong—his handsome, arrogant head!

He laughed. Then suddenly his laughter broke off—and staring at Na Liu, so wrinkled and faded and old, he said:

"I wish he had lost his head years ago, when I gave him the choice between losing it, and losing you. For had he chosen death, I would not have married you, O turtle-spawn!"

She did not reply. She kept on weeping. And then he beat her—partly because he hated her, and partly because her tears told him that she still loved the Manchu, loved his memory even after death. . . .

He left the room, the house.

He thought, with self-pity:

"Here I am, wealthy and powerful, and my loins still strong—and saddled with this ancient gnarled crone! *Hai! hai!*"—as he saw three young Chinese girls crossing Pell Street arm in arm, with swaying hips and tiny mincing steps. "When there are so many soft, pretty buds waiting to be picked!"

He turned and looked. He knew one of them: Si-Si, the daughter of Yung Tang, editor of the *Eminent Elevation.*

Foh Wong did not care for the latter. The man, New York born and bred, was a conservative, an adherent of the former imperial régime, and had recently returned from China, whence he had sent articles, to his own and American papers, praising the Manchus and denouncing the revolutionaries as tools of the Bolshevists.

Still, considered Foh Wong, his daughter was lovely. What an exquisite wife she would make! And he smacked his lips like a man sipping warm rice wine of rich bouquet. . . .

So time passed.

WHENEVER he thought of Si-Si, which was often, he beat his wife. And one day, at the Azure Dragon Club, stretched out on a mat, between them a table with opium-lamps, pipes and needles and ivory and horn boxes neatly arranged, he complained of his fate to Yung Tang, who inclined his head and spoke sententiously:

"Women are useless unless they be the mothers of our children."

"That is so."

"My own wife drinks—too much. She talks—too much. She spends—too much. But she has given birth to a daughter and three sons. Ah,"—while with agile fingers he kneaded the brown poppy cube which the flame gradually changed to amber and gold,—"better a drunken, nagging, extravagant wife who is fertile, than a virtuous one who is as barren as a mule."

"Yes," agreed Foh Wong. "Better a fat, dirty pig than a cracked jade cup."

"Better," the editor wound up the pleasant round of Mongol metaphor, "a fleet donkey than a hamstrung horse."

For a while they smoked in silence. The fragrant, opalescent fumes rolled in sluggish clouds over the mats. Then Foh Wong asked:

"Your daughter Si-Si is, I understand, of marriageable age?"

"Indeed."

"She is betrothed?"

"Not yet, O wise and older brother." Faint amusement lit up Yung Tang's purple-black eyes. "She is waiting for a proper man, a wealthy man."

"I am wealthy."

"I know." Yung Tang pushed the warm bamboo pipe aside and substituted for it one of carved tortoise-shell with a turquoise tip and three yellow tassels. "She is devoted to her parents. She has given solemn oath to the Buddha the Adored, that she will not marry unless her husband invests—ah—twenty thousand dollars in my enterprise."

Foh Wong stared at the other. He knew that—thanks to the weekly's freely expressed pro-Manchu attitude, contrary to that of Pell Street which, being coolie, was mostly revolutionary—its circulation and advertising had dropped; that therefore the editor was in awkward financial straits.

"Or, perhaps, fifteen thousand dollars?" he suggested.

"Or rather—nineteen?"

"Sixteen and a half thousand is a goodly sum, the more so as I—should I give it—would be going counter to my political principles. It would mean a loss of face to me."

"While, to me, it would mean a loss of face to accept money from a man who does not see eye to eye with me when it comes to China's future. Thus—eighteen thousand dollars. Personally I dislike bargaining."

THE editor smoked two pipes one after the other. He continued:

"It is wretched manners to praise your own, I know. But it has been remarked by certain people—truthful people, I believe—that Si-Si is a precious casket filled with the arts of coquetry, that when she washes her hands she scents the water, that her seventeen summers have only increased her charms seventeen times, and that"—calmly—"her hips are wide enough to bear many men children."

Foh Wong sighed.

"My own wife," he replied, "is a fallow field. There is none of my seed in the world to pray for me after death. Not that I blame her. Still—it is written in the Book of Meng Tzeu that she who cannot fulfill her charge must resign it."

"You mean divorce?"

"No."

"No?" echoed the editor, looking up sharply. "But a second wife is not permitted in this country."

Foh Wong turned on his mat. He glanced through the window, up at the sky where the sun was gaping in the west like a great red door.

"Divorce," was his answer, "is a custom of coarse-haired barbarians. Besides—a law of these same barbarians—alimony would have to be paid. Expensive—eh?"

"Very expensive."

"Not that I am stingy." Foh Wong spoke with sincerity. "For my wife, should her soul jump the dragon gate, would have a splendid funeral. She would be buried in a large and comfortable red-lacquer coffin, on the side of a hill facing running water, and with an elegant view over the rice-paddies."

"Her spirit," commented Yung Tang, "would doubtless enjoy itself."

"Doubtless."

BOTH men were silent. The editor was caressing his cheek with his right hand. The dying crimson sunlight danced and glittered on his highly polished finger-nails. He thought of a man whom he had talked to, and who had given his confidence, a few months back, during his visit to China; thought of the queer mission with which this man had entrusted him; thought how, fantastically, sardonically, fate can work its will—fate that ambles out of the dark like a blind camel, with no warning, no jingling of bells.

He smiled at the other, who, having emptied his pipe at one long-drawn inhalation, looked up and asked a casually worded question:

"I believe you have a cousin who is a hatchetman?"

"Yes. But—" The editor hesitated.

"His prices are exorbitant?"

"They would not be—to me. Only, I have discovered that it is one's relatives whom one must trust least."

"Just so."

"I have a friend in Seattle. I shall communicate with him. I shall act slowly, discreetly. I shall think right and think left. There is no especial hurry."

"Except,"—courteously,—"my desire for Si-Si."

"Another summer will increase her charms eighteen times." Yung Tang pointed at the table. "Will you smoke?"

"No more. I have a duty to attend to. You will write to Seattle?"

"Immediately."

But the editor did not write to Seattle. He wrote, instead, to Hongkong; and he began his letter with a quotation from Confucius which said:

"The man who is departing on a sad journey often leaves his heart under the door—to find it on his return."

He smiled as he dipped his brush into the ink-pot; and it is worth while remembering that the Chinese ideographs *sin* (heart) and *Menn* (door), when placed one above the other and read together, make a third word, *"Melancholy"*—which latter, by a peculiar Mongol twist, is considered an equivalent of *"eternal love."* And he wrote on while Foh Wong, having left the Azure Dragon Club, entered the joss temple around the corner.

There, without the slightest hypocrisy, he kowtowed deeply before the Buddha of the Paradise of the West—the Buddha who looks after the souls of those about to die—and burned three sweet-smelling *hun-shuh* incense sticks in honor of his wife. For once he had loved her. And he was sorry for the destiny in store for her. So, from this day on, he stopped beating her. On the contrary, he was kind to her—brought her presents of flowers and fruit, treated her—with no irony intended—as if she were an invalid not long for this world. And almost every evening he visited the joss temple; always he made kowtow before the Buddha and burned incense sticks—until Yu Ch'ang, the priest, declared that few men on Pell Street could compare to him in piety and rectitude.

NEAR the end of the year, Yung Tang reported to him that the matter was progressing satisfactorily. His friend in Seattle had secured the services of a hatchetman.

His name, said the editor, was Kang Kee. He had been a war-lord fallen upon evil days. Therefore, thanks to his former profession, there was no doubt of his being a skilled and efficient killer; and given the fact that he was a stranger with no local tong affiliations, there was no doubt of his discretion.

"When will he be here?" asked Foh Wong eagerly.

Yung Tang shrugged his shoulders.

Kang Kee, he explained, was still in Hongkong; and surely, Foh Wong knew that times had changed since he himself had come to America. For there was now the law called the Asiatic Exclusion Act, to circumvent which the Chinese aspirant after Yankee coin had to travel many thorny roundabout roads and spend exorbitant "squeezes" right and left. Would Foh Wong, therefore, pay fifteen hundred dollars on account, to be deducted, later on, from Kang Kee's price of five thousand?

The merchant grumbled, protested, finally went to the safe and counted out the money.

"I would like a receipt," he said curtly. After all, he went on, he was a business man. Here was a job for which he was paying. "Not that,"—with grim humor,—"I want you to particularize the—ah—nature of the job."

YUNG TANG smiled. His smile, had Foh Wong noticed it, was queerly triumphant.

"I understand," he said. "Just a few words acknowledging the money for—well, services to be rendered . . . How's that? I shall make it out in duplicate."

"In duplicate?"—rather astonished.

"Yes. One for you, and one for me, as agent for Kang Kee." With quick brush-strokes he wrote paper and copy, handed both to the other. "Will you look it over?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Foh Wong. "It is not necessary."

The editor's smile deepened. He knew that the merchant, in spite of his wealth, had never learned to read, that he carried the intricate details of his business transactions in his shrewd old brain, that he could just barely scrawl his name, but that for fear of losing face, he had never owned up to it. Besides,—and here too Yung Tang saw through him,—Foh Wong figured that the editor had no reason to cheat him. For though Si-Si was young and beautiful and desirable, there were few men in Chinatown willing and able to pay the eighteen thousand dollars which her father demanded and in fact—Foh Wong knew, having made inquiries here and there—needed desperately; and he had made assurance doubly sure by buying up, at a generous discount, a number of Yung Tang's overdue notes.

He lit a cigarette, while the other signed the original and said:

"Will you countersign the copy?"

"What for? You received the money, not I."

"I know. But—it would make the deal more binding."

Foh Wong was puzzled. Make the deal more binding? He did not understand. Still, doubtless Yung Tang knew what he was talking about. He was a literatus, a learned gentleman; and the merchant, for all his success, was at heart the coolie who had never lost his respect for educated people. And—again the thought—the man needed him, could have no reason to cheat him.

"Very well." He dipped brush in ink-pot, and clumsily painted his signature. "Here you are."

Even so, he felt relieved when, in the course of the afternoon, he dropped in on Ng Fat, the banker, and found out, by discreet questioning, that Yung Tang had bought a draft for fifteen hundred dollars made out to one Kang Kee, a former war-lord residing in Hongkong.

INDEED the latter—whose American Odyssey was destined to be quite as hard as that of Foh Wong, decades earlier—needed every cent of the fifteen hundred dollars. To enumerate all those whom he had to bribe would be to give an ethnographical survey of many of the Far East's more gaudy rogues.

But let us pick out a few.

There was, in Shanghai, a Kansuh ruffian on whose shaven poll had been a blood-price ever since the Boxer affair, and who met the former war-lord and thirty other prospective emigrants in a first-chop chandoo place west of the To Kao Tien Temple. There was, furthermore, a squint-eyed Lithuanian skipper, wanted for murder in Riga and for piracy in Pernambuco, who took them to Vladivostok and into the tranquil presence of a Nanking compradore with gold-encased finger-nails and a charming taste in early Ming porcelain. This gentleman passed the adventurers through yet two more middlemen to a Japanese captain who flaunted British naturalization papers and called himself O'Duffy Ichiban.

He was supposed to clear directly for Seattle. But he managed to cruise off the British Columbia coast—"contrary head winds, half a gale," he wrote in his log, and lied—until a narrow-flanked clipper shot out from the fogs of Queen Charlotte Sound and took away the living freight, drowning no more than seven. The remainder had an interview, next morning, with a government inspector who—hating himself for it—drowned his conscience in his greed.

Then a stormy night. A motorboat chugging recklessly across the Straits of San Juan de Fuca. A dumping overboard into the swirling, greasy sea half a mile from land. A screaming wave that swallowed all the merry band of Mongol rovers with the exception of the former war-lord. . . . His swim ashore. And at last, his strong hand reaching out from the water and gripping the slippery piles at the foot of Yeslerway, in the city of Seattle. . . .

Seattle in spring.

Spring, too, in New York.

Spring brushing into Pell Street on gauzy pinions. Hovering birdlike over sordid, tarred roof-tops. Dropping liquid silver over the toil of the streets, adding music to the strident calls of pavement and gutter.

Spring in the heart of Foh Wong—to whom, that morning, the editor had said that he had received a telegram from the hatchetman. The latter would be here on Saturday—would seek out the merchant immediately upon his arrival, at nine in the evening.

So, on Saturday afternoon, Foh Wong entered the joss temple. There he attended to his religious duties more thoroughly and unctuously than usual. Not only did he make kowtow to the Buddha of the Paradise of the West. He also kowtowed seven times to the Buddha of the Light Without Measure, and nine times to the purple-faced Goddess of Mercy. He heaped the bowls in front of the idols with dry rice. He burned twenty-seven incense sticks. He made the rounds of the temple, bowing right and left, beating gongs, ringing a small silver bell. He paid the priest a handsome sum to exorcise whatever evil spirits might be about.

FINALLY, his soul at rest, he went home. He presented his wife with gifts, thinking shrewdly that Si-Si would enjoy them after Na Liu's demise—an expensive radio set, a robe of purple satin embroidered with tiny butterflies, a pair of coral-and-jade ear-rings and a precious Suen-tih vase.

Na Liu smiled. She said:

"You have made me very happy these last few months."

"Have I?"

"Yes," she agreed; "by forgetting your anger against me, your just and righteous anger. For, you see, I have been a bad wife. I have never loved you. I have grown old and ugly. And I have borne you no children."

"Three things which only fate can help," he replied quite gently.

"Fate is bitter."

"Fate, at times,"—as he thought of Si-Si,—"is sweet. Let us not blame fate." He interrupted himself as there was a loud knocking at the street door below. "A friend whom I expect," he explained, and hurried out.

He reached the shop, crossed it, threw open the door. A man stood there—tall, broad, a black handkerchief concealing all his features but the hard, staring eyes.

"Upstairs," whispered Foh Wong. "The first room to the left."

The stranger inclined his head without speaking. Noiselessly he mounted. He disappeared.

There was a pall of heavy, oppressive silence—suddenly broken by a sob that quickly gurgled out. And Foh Wong trembled a little, felt a cold shiver along his spine—saw, a minute or two later, the man return.

He asked:

"Is it—finished, O hatchetman?"

"Yes. It is finished, O mud-turtle."

THEN the merchant gave a shriek of surprise and fear. Why—that nasal, metallic voice so well remembered! The voice of Yang Shen-Li! And as the other tore off the black handkerchief—*the face of Yang Shen-Li!* Older, much older. But still the bold, aquiline nose, the high cheek-bones that seemed to give beneath the pressure of the leathery, copper-red skin, the compressed, sardonic lips brushed by the drooping mandarin mustache, the combative chin. . . .

"But you," Foh Wong stammered ludicrously, "—you died—in Ninguta!"

"And I came to life again," was the drawling answer, "as Kang Kee, the war-lord. Kang Kee, who last year forged a chain of strong and exquisite friendship with one Yung Tang, who was visiting China. Kang Kee—no longer a war-lord, but a hatchetman come here for the sake of a small killing."

"A killing," cried Foh Wong, rapidly collecting his wits, "for which you will lose your head."

He had decided what he was going to do. Outside somewhere, on Pell Street

"Is it—finished, O hatchetman?" Foh Wong asked; and the stranger replied: "It is finished, O mud-turtle." Then the merchant gave a shriek of fear. That voice!

or Mott, his friend Bill, detective of Second Branch, would be walking his beat. He would call him, would tell him that his wife had been murdered. He was about to run out—stopped as he heard the other's drawling words:

"Not so fast, mud-turtle! You spoke of my losing my head. And what of your own head?"

"You killed, not I."

"You hired me."

"Prove it!"

LEISURELY, from his loose sleeve, the Manchu drew a paper—the paper which a few months earlier, Foh Wong had signed on the editor's request—and which Yang Shen-Li now read aloud:

"Herewith, for the sum of five thousand dollars, I employ Kang Kee to kill my wife—"

Foh Wong grew pale. He stared at the Manchu, who stared back. There was in their eyes the old hate that had never weakened. Alone they were with this searing, choking hate. The outer world and its noises seemed very far away. There was just a memory of street cries lifting their lean, starved arms; just a memory of river wind chasing the night clouds that clawed at the moon with cool, slim fingers of silver and white.

Then the Manchu spoke:

"If I lose my head, you lose yours. Only—I am not afraid of losing mine, being a brave man, an iron-capped prince; whereas you, O coolie, are—"

"A coward," the other said dully.

"Precisely. But brave man and coward shall be united in death. Together our souls shall jump the dragon gate." Yang Shen-Li turned toward the door. "I shall now go to the police of the coarse-haired barbarians, and—"

"Wait!"

"Yes?"

Unconsciously, Foh Wong used the words which, decades ago, in Ninguta, the Manchu had used:

"Is there a price for your silence?"

"There is."

"How much?"

"Everything," announced the Manchu, sitting down, slipping a little fan from his sleeve and opening it slowly. . . .

He had not arrived tonight, he related, but twenty-four hours earlier. He had spent the time with Yung Tang, talking over the whole matter with him, and making certain arrangements. For instance, bribing a Chinese doctor who would certify that Foh Wong had died—of heart failure.

"You," the merchant whispered, "you mean to—"

"Kill you? Not at all. Did I not tell you there is a price for my silence? And would your life be the price? No, no! Your life is sacred to me."

"Then?"

"Listen!" Yang Shen-Li went on to explain that, with the help of the physician's certificate, Na Liu would be buried as Foh Wong, while it would be given out that she had gone to China on a lengthy visit. "Clever—don't you think?" he smiled.

"But what will happen to me? How, if I'm supposed to be dead and buried, can I show my face?"

"You can't," said the Manchu grimly. "You will live in the garret of your house until death—may it not be for many years! You will see nobody—except me. You will speak to nobody—except to me. Nobody will know that you are among the living—nobody except me and Yung Tang. This shall be a bond between you and me. The moment you break it, I shall go to the police and—"

"But my business—my money—"

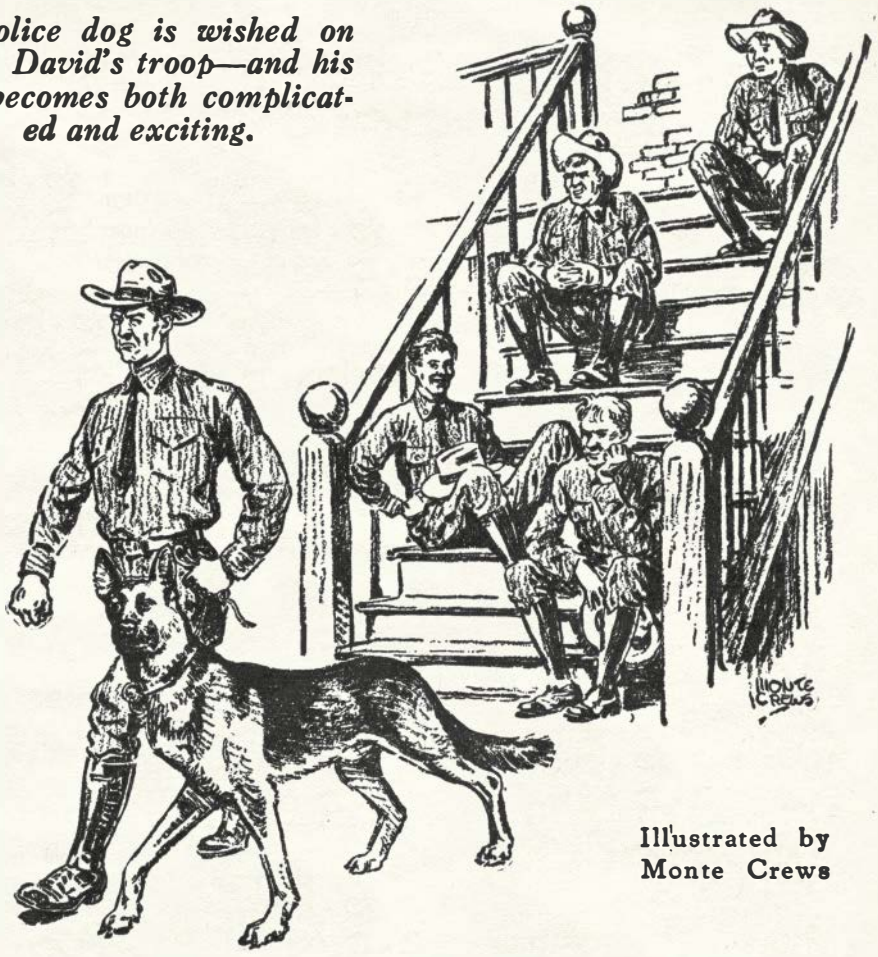
"I shall look after it. For before—shall I say?—your death, you shall have made a will—you are going to sign it presently—making me trustee of your estate for your absent wife. You will leave her your whole fortune—all, that is, save eighteen thousand dollars—make it thirty-eight thousand—which you will leave to Yung Tang. . . . *Hayah!"*—as the other began to plead and argue, "Be quiet, coolie! For today I command—and you will obey!"

AND thus it is Foh Wong is cooped up in the sweltering garret of his Pell Street house, with the door locked and the windows tightly shuttered, and an agony of fear forever stewing in his brain. It is thus that Yang Shen-Li is lording it gloriously over Foh Wong's clerks, spending Foh Wong's money recklessly; and in the evening, after a pleasant hour or two at the Azure Dragon Club, mounting to the second floor, bowing courteously to his wrinkled old wife and asking her:

"Moonbeam, was there ever love as staunch as ours?"

Always she gives a quaint, giggling, girlish little laugh. And at times, hearing the echo of it, Foh Wong wonders—then forgets his wonder in his fear.

A police dog is wished on Tiny David's troop—and his job becomes both complicated and exciting.



Illustrated by Monte Crews

Man's Best Friend

By ROBERT R. MILL

"I HAVE a nice job for you boys." Captain Charles Field, commanding officer of the Black Horse Troop of the New York State Police, had the manner of a man dispensing a favor. He sat at his desk in the barracks. His manner was serious, but there was a ghost of a twinkle in his eyes.

His two listeners reacted differently to the offer.

"Yes sir," said Sergeant James Crosby. There was no enthusiasm in his voice. Long experience had taught him that gifts from this quarter usually had strings tied to them.

Lieutenant Edward David, better known as Tiny, presumed upon his rank to voice an open protest. Although lacking definite information regarding the job in question, he was quite sure it would not be to his liking. Both his manner and his words reflected that knowledge.

"Hadn't counted on any jobs right now, Captain." He shifted his huge form in the chair. "Had a lot of chasing around last week. Sort of figured on resting up."

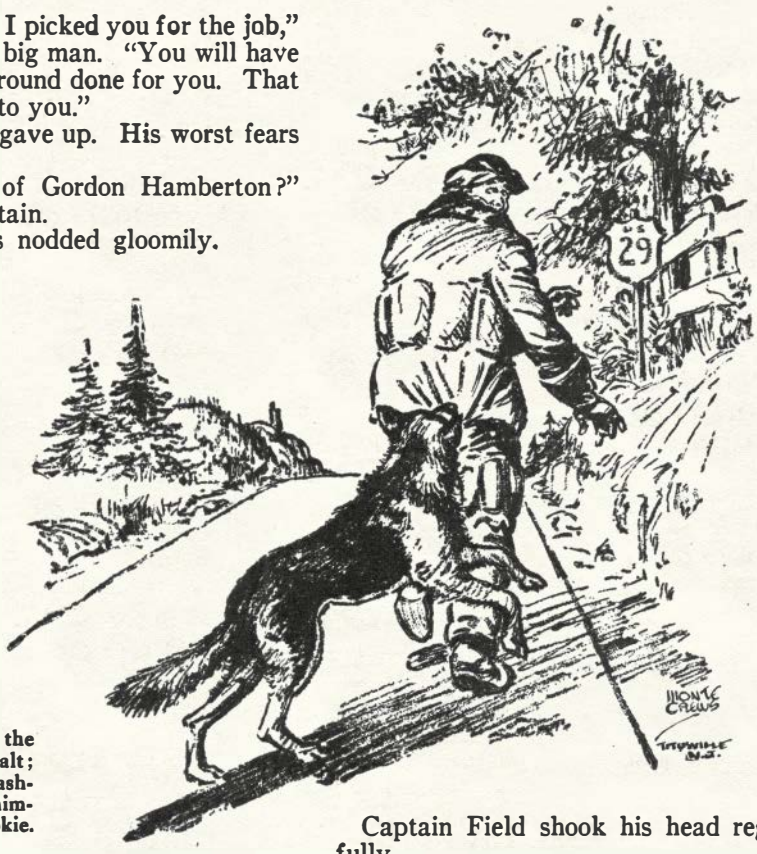
Captain Field beamed upon him with great good humor.

"That's why I picked you for the job," he assured the big man. "You will have your chasing around done for you. That should appeal to you."

Tiny David gave up. His worst fears were realized.

"Ever hear of Gordon Hamberton?" asked the Captain.

His listeners nodded gloomily.



The dog pulled the fugitive to a halt; then with teeth flashing, he hurled himself upon the rookie.

"Gordon Hamberton," continued Captain Field, "is one of the leading citizens of New York City. He visited Europe recently. He was much impressed by their police methods, particularly the use they make of dogs."

The twinkle in Captain Field's eyes was more pronounced, and the spirits of his listeners went down accordingly.

"Being a public-spirited citizen, Mr. Hamberton purchased one of these dogs and brought it back with him. He presented it to the Governor. The Governor, in turn, gave the dog to Major Harner. Major Harner, in turn, sent the dog on to me with instructions to try him out and forward a report, which will be studied with interest by Major Harner, the Governor and Mr. Hamberton."

A slight smile appeared upon the face of Captain Field.

"Following the example of my superiors, I am passing the dog on to you."

FAINT hope stirred in the breast of Tiny David.

"Following the example of the Captain," he asserted, "I am willing to step out of the picture and let Sergeant Crosby handle the matter."

Captain Field shook his head regretfully.

"That is generous," he admitted, "but it can't be done. Both you and Crosby are elected. You are my alibi. When the worst happens—and your faces convince me the worst will happen—I merely point out that I turned the matter over to a lieutenant and a sergeant. Much better for the department to lose a lieutenant and a sergeant than a captain."

And the commanding officer pressed a button.

"Bring in the dog, Max," he instructed the sergeant, who answered the ring.

Soon Sergeant Payton returned, holding a leash to which a not too impressive dog was attached.

"That's all, Max," said the Captain to the sergeant, who showed signs of hoping to remain in the office, and that worthy reluctantly withdrew.

"Police dog, isn't he?" asked Tiny David.

Captain Field frowned on him.

"That remark shows your ignorance," he declared. "He is a German shepherd dog. Remember that, Lieutenant."

Sergeant Crosby hoped to create a diversion.

"I saw that mutt's picture in the Sunday papers," he asserted. "But I never

thought I would be acting as valet to him."

"*Mutt?*" Captain Field emphasized the word. "That dog cost one thousand dollars. You would know that if you ever got beyond the pictures. And from this time on you will see his picture often. Mr. Hamberton does not object to publicity. Your picture may appear with the dog—if you are lucky."

He produced a book and handed it to Tiny David.

"This will tell you all about taking care of him and how to work him. Study it up. You both can take the next week to learn how to handle him, and to give him a chance to get used to you. Then you can take him out on the road, and we will see what he can do. Mr. Hamberton, the Governor, Major Harner and I are convinced he will prove very valuable. I know you boys agree with us. . . . You like your jobs, don't you?"

They admitted they did.

"That's all, then," Captain Field declared. "Oh, by the way, men—the dog's name is Tiger."

IN the outer office the two paused to take stock, exchanging glances that spoke volumes.

It was Sergeant Crosby, who held the leash, who made the first overtures.

"Hello, Tiger, old fellow."

An ominous growl resulted.

"Friendly, isn't he?" asked Crosby, drawing back his hand. "About as sociable as a lieutenant."

Their progress through the main office was attended by audible snickers from clerks.

"Isn't that nice?" Sergeant Payton asked nobody in particular. "The Captain has given Crosby a dog to lead him around. Now all he needs is a tin cup and some pencils."

In the hall leading to the living-room, Tiny David deserted.

"Take him to the stables and bed him down in a box-stall," he directed Crosby. "I'm going to slide in here and study this book." That sounded rather lame, even to himself. "Captain's orders," he added.

"Yeah!" Sergeant Crosby evidently was not impressed. "Soon as I get this pooch parked, I'll be in to help you with the book. It may have some big words you wouldn't understand."

Upon the rear steps of the barracks was a little group through which Sergeant Crosby and the dog were obliged to make their way.

"Not a bad-looking pair of dogs," was the comment of Sergeant Henry Linton.

"The police dog is all right," was the verdict of Sergeant John King, "but I don't think so much of the Airedale."

This remark apparently grieved Corporal Thomas Dean.

"There is no excuse for you not being able to pick out Jim Crosby," he protested. "Jim is the one with the hat."

Sergeant Crosby attempted a reply, decided discretion was the better part of valor, and sought the comparative refuge offered by the stables.

THE week following was more or less of a nightmare for Tiny David and Jim Crosby. They were the targets for countless jokes on the part of their companions. Their appearance in the barracks, the stables or on the grounds was greeted with short barks, which ceased abruptly when they came near enough to administer punishment.

Outwardly they adopted a superior manner.

"Smart dog," Crosby declared. His voice was loud. It carried over the entire living-room.

"Yes," Tiny David agreed. "It's a relief after trying to teach dumb troopers."

"Sure is," Crosby admitted.

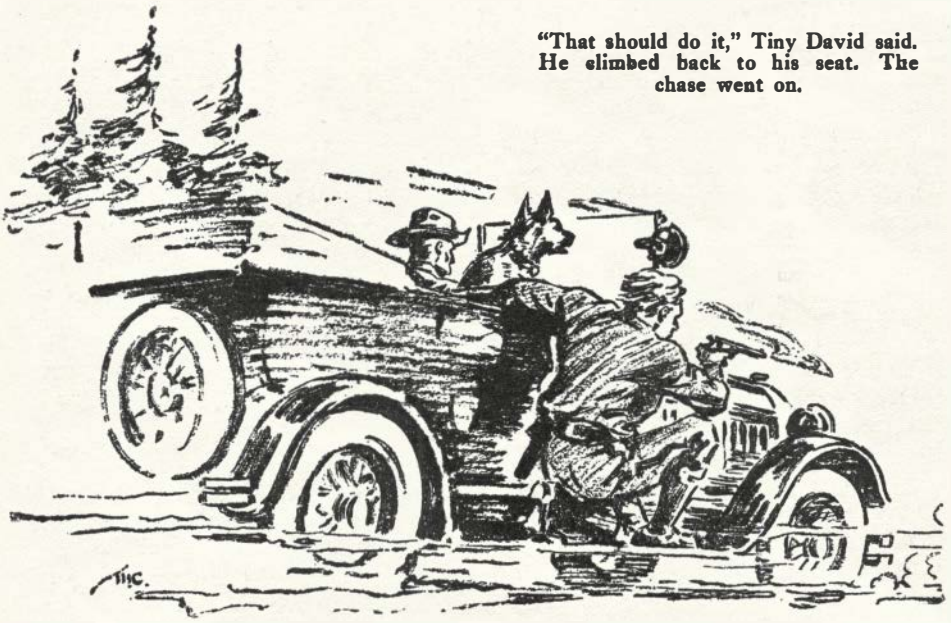
But this was a feeble defense against the barrage that assailed them, and in reality they were weakening under the constant fire of ridicule.

"It isn't that I don't like dogs," Crosby explained one night, when their morale reached a record low. "Had a Boston bull when I was a kid. He was swell. But what gets my goat is to be saddled with this pup and to be made to give him a workout like a blooming circus parade. It makes a monkey of the whole outfit."

Tiny David nodded.

"We can take it," he declared. "We have to take it. Mr. Hamberton is interested in that dog. He is a guy big enough to make other people interested in what he is. The Governor has to go through the motions of humoring him. Major Harner has to humor the Governor. The Skipper has to humor Major Harner. You and I have to humor the Skipper. And you and I, laddie, are the goats. God help us if the dog doesn't come through!"

"Yes," Sergeant Crosby admitted, "and we can't win. If the dog does come



"That should do it," Tiny David said. He climbed back to his seat. The chase went on.

through, we will have him on our necks from then on. They probably will get them for all the troops."

"That," declared Lieutenant David, "is the least of our worries."

THEIR work with the dog continued, often under the watchful eyes of Captain Field.

But Tiger, they were forced to admit, was clever. The dog soon learned to recognize the gray uniform of the troop, realizing that any man who wore it was a friend and master. He obeyed commands promptly, but with little enthusiasm. He merely tolerated Crosby. His attitude toward Tiny David was more kindly, but stopped a considerable distance the other side of friendship.

"He sure acts like a lieutenant," was Crosby's verdict.

"Yes," Tiny David admitted, "he does have a certain sort of dignity."

They pressed into service a reluctant rookie who donned heavily padded civilian clothes and sprinted along the main road in front of the barracks.

"Bring him back, Tiger!" ordered Tiny David.

The dog darted after the fugitive, overtook him and pulled him to a halt. Then, with teeth flashing, the animal hurled himself upon the rookie, forcing him back to the waiting troopers.

Little groups of men in civilian attire, supposedly prisoners, were given into the custody of Tiger. He watched them alertly, waiting eagerly for the first sign of a break, and when that break came, changing into a gray fury that drove the men back to the group.

Sergeant Crosby, despite his foreboding, showed signs of enthusiasm.

"The dog is good," he declared.

"Good, for a dog," Tiny David admitted. "And good for a show. But he doesn't do a thing the greenest rookie couldn't do with much less fuss and commotion. And this outfit didn't go in for staging shows—not until recently."

Toward the end of the week, however, the outfit was going in for staging shows in a big way. Captain Field had been guilty of under-statement when he said Hamberton liked publicity. The agents of the financier and philanthropist had done yeoman work among the New York newspapers. Editors wired their local correspondents. Special writers came on from New York. Photographers appeared, apparently out of thin air. A news-reel company joined the ranks, and Tiger's somewhat mournful howls were recorded in sound for posterity.

Crosby surveyed the scene with misgivings on Saturday afternoon when a sort of dress rehearsal was to be staged.

"We haven't done the thing right," he lamented. "We should have a band. And the printer didn't deliver the handbills in time."

"Don't need 'em," Tiny David observed. "Mr. Hamberton sure knows his publicity. But all this is just build-up. Performance has to equal or better it." He shook his head. "If it doesn't, it will

be just too bad. And we are the people it will be too bad for."

The "dress rehearsal" went off without a flaw. At its conclusion the reporters gathered about Captain Field.

"When does the dog go out on the road? . . . Can we go along? . . . What practical use can you make of all this?"

Captain Field raised a hand.

"Lieutenant David and Sergeant Crosby will take Tiger on a patrol Monday. If they run into anything, the dog will have a chance to do his stuff. If they don't, they will keep patrolling until they do."

He turned to answer a persistent questioner.

"No reporters or photographers on the first trip. If we make a circus parade out of it, the patrol won't run across anything. Besides, the dog will work better without a crowd. Later, you all will have a chance to see Tiger actually at work. And if you are here Monday evening when the patrol returns, you can get all the dope."

Somewhat reluctantly they agreed.

Sunday was a day of rest for dog and men, but it brought no relief from the publicity. Tiger's picture stared at them from printed pages. Articles described his accomplishments. He was the author of imaginary interviews. The caption writers had done their bit:

"Foe of Crime. . . . Thug's Downfall. . . . More Feared than Bullets."

Those were only a few samples of their art.

The more serious writers had been busy. Articles described the advances in police work in Europe. One writer, whose column was read by millions, boldly predicted that the use of dogs by police might prove the turning-point in the war upon crime.

In all of this the name of Hamberton appeared prominently. All the papers, apparently, had been able to obtain recent studio photographs of him. He had been interviewed at length. One paragraph of the interview was printed in italics:

The dogs have proven their value in Europe. They can be used to even greater advantage here. There is only one thing to be overcome. That is the aversion of the average policeman to anything out of the routine. The Governor, however, has assured me that the New York State Police will give the dog a fair trial. That guarantees the success of what is an experiment in this country, but a routine procedure in Europe.

Sergeant Crosby groaned hollowly when he read the statement.

"The dog isn't getting a tryout," he declared. "It's us."

"Cheer up," Tiny David advised him. "We both may develop pneumonia before tomorrow."

Sunday dinner passed without incident until the final course. The mess-boy appeared with a tray laden with plates of ice-cream. Each serving was molded in the shape of a dog.

A chorus of canine barks went up from the crowded room. Tiny David and Crosby lost their appetites suddenly and made for the stables. . . .

Monday dawned clear and fair. Their hopes had not been realized, for their health was excellent. Tiger also was in the best of spirits.

"Get started right after dinner," Captain Field ordered.

There was a large and appreciative gallery as they backed the troop car out of the garage. Sergeant Crosby sat at the wheel of the touring-car, the top of which was down. Lieutenant David was at his side. Between the two men sat Tiger.

The dog was aloof and haughty. He arched his neck as the cameras clicked. He showed no response to the words of greeting called at him.

"Get moving," ordered Tiny David. "This clown-act is making me sick."

The car pulled out to the main road, turned left, and rolled through the main street of the town. Then Crosby turned left again, and headed toward the Canadian border.

"Answer me one question," he begged his companion. "Just what is this hound going to do?"

Tiny David shrugged his broad shoulders.

"You can search me," he admitted. "But he's going to do something. He has to."

But there was nothing for either men or dog to do as the car raced toward the

invisible line that divides the two countries. They were only a mile from the border when a big black sedan, headed south, pulled out from a dirt road and roared by them.

They had a fleeting glimpse of a man bending low over the wheel. The rear compartment of the sedan was crowded, and as it came abreast of the troop car they saw yellow faces pressed against the glass.

"Chinks!" cried Tiny David. "Get after them!"

The troop car pulled to a groaning halt. It lurched backward, then swung madly to the left and took after the car ahead.

"Step on it!" ordered Tiny David.

Out of the corners of his eyes, Crosby glanced at his companion with open reproach.

"What do you think I am doing?" Crosby demanded. "Right now this bus is five miles above what the catalogue calls top speed."

The chase went on, with the distance between the two cars remaining the same.

Tiny David gave an exclamation of impatience.

"I am doing the best I can," Crosby answered. "You want the dog to drive? Skipper said we were to let him do the work."

"Can the comedy," came the terse command.

The gap between the two cars narrowed.

Then the alien-runner's car pulled ahead again.

Tiger sat erect. The muscles of his front legs were tense. His long nose was pointed ahead. The hairs on his throat were standing up.

Tiny David slipped forward in the seat.

"We aren't getting anywhere," he declared. "Pull me up as close as you can, and I'll try for that gas-tank."

CROSBY urged the car forward. The distance lessened slightly.

"Stay there, Tiger," Tiny David ordered.

He swung to the running-board of the speeding car, and knelt there, steadying himself with his left hand, which grasped the door. He drew his revolver, took careful aim, and fired. He fired again. A third shot went winging after the rear of the car ahead.

"That should do it," Tiny said.

He climbed back to his seat.

The chase went on. Suddenly Crosby released the wheel with one hand and pointed to the road ahead.

"You got it!" he cried.

Tell-tale dark spots appeared on the road. They grew steadily larger.

"It won't be long now!" Sergeant Crosby gloated.

A STEEP hill loomed ahead. The first car rushed at it, and seemed to be negotiating it with ease. But about a hundred feet from the summit the driver evidently was in difficulty.

His car slowed up. The sound of back-firing carried to the troopers.

Tiger gave an ominous growl.

"Steady, boy," said Tiny David.

The car of the alien-runner came to a quick stop at the top of the hill. The driver jumped out, shot a quick look at his pursuers, and darted across a small field, which was bordered, at a few rods' distance, by deep woods.

The troop car halted. Tiny David leaped to the ground.

"Come on, Tiger!"

Crosby deserted the wheel and raced toward the car of the alien-runner. His revolver covered the four startled Chinamen, who turned to face him with stoical demeanor.

Tiny David's finger pointed toward the fleeing man.

"Bring him back, Tiger!"

The dog was after the alien-runner like a flash. He overtook him fifteen feet from the border of the woods. The man stopped running, and braced himself to meet the onslaught of the infuriated animal.

"Get him, Tiger!" roared Tiny David.

Then the alien-runner spoke to the dog. His voice was deep, guttural.

Tiger halted his charge. His head was cocked inquiringly.

The alien-runner spoke again. The dog's body relaxed. His tail began to wag.

Still talking, the man raced toward the woods, the dog at his side, apparently his firm friend. Just as the deep foliage swallowed them up, the man reached down and stroked the head of the dog.

Tiny David charged forward, then halted abruptly. No use. The lead was too great. He was licked. The time wasted on the dog had given the fugitive an advantage it would be impossible to overcome.

Lieutenant David walked toward Crosby, who advanced to meet him.

"Aint we got fun?" demanded Crosby.

Then the humor of the situation overcame them, and they dropped to the running-board of the alien-runner's car, rocking with laughter, while four grave Chinamen regarded them with uncomprehending eyes.

Crosby was the first to recover.

"Got the book with you?" he demanded. "Maybe there is something in it that covers this."

Tiny David was quoting from the newspapers:

"*'Foe of Crime.'*"

"Well," Crosby decided, "maybe he was fed up on troopers, and wanted a little civilian society for a change."

"And they called him Tiger!" Tiny David gasped.

"That was a mistake," Crosby admitted. "His name should be Kim, the little friend of all the world."

They rocked with laughter again.

"A dog is a man's best friend," Tiny David contributed. "He proved it."

THEN, almost at the same moment, their mirth ceased. Their faces became grave. Tiny David was the first to speak.

"Funny, isn't it? Well, big brains, what are we going to do when we get back to the barracks?"

Sergeant Crosby pondered. "Tell the truth, I guess."

"And then what?" Tiny David demanded. "This circus has had about a million dollars' worth of advance publicity. That cur has made it about the best joke of the century. Who is the butt of that joke, unconscious?"

Sergeant Crosby was silent, so Tiny David proceeded to answer his own question:

"It won't be our dear friend Mr. Hamberton; watch him step out from under. It won't be the Governor. It won't be the dear head of our department. It won't be the Skipper. And it won't be the dog. Here, take this pencil and paper: maybe you can figure out who it will be."

Crosby sighed. "We're elected," he admitted.

"By acclamation," Tiny David agreed. "And all parties concerned will help pile it on us in order to keep their own skirts clean."

Crosby shrugged his shoulders. "Let's go in and take the rap. At least we have four Chinks."

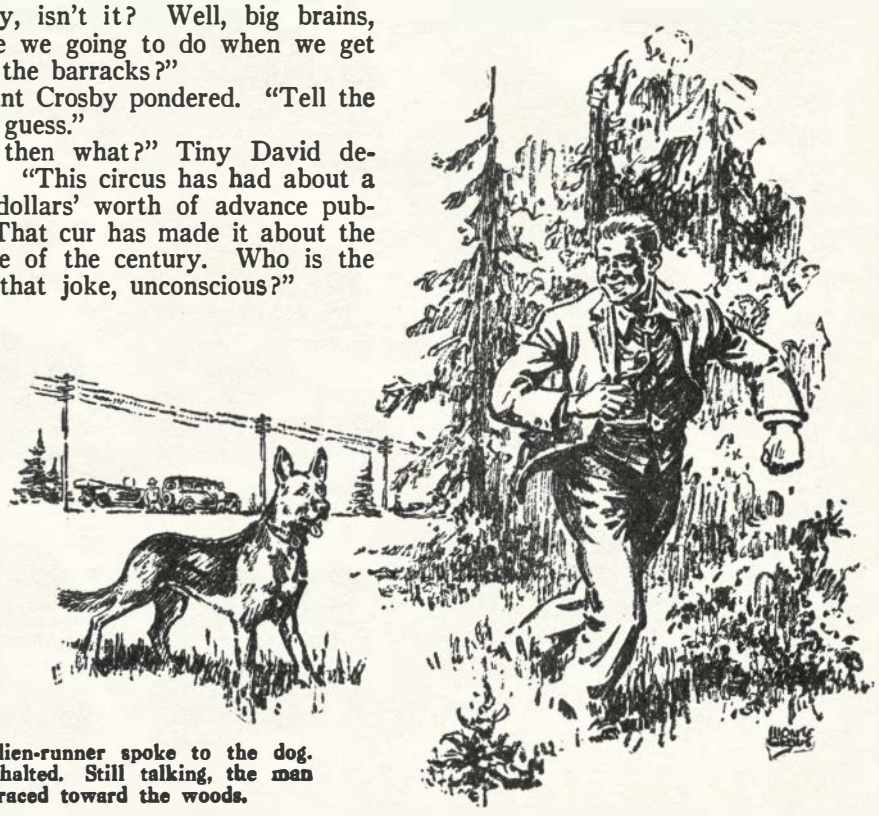
"I'd trade them for one dog," said Tiny David.

They pushed the damaged car to one side of the road and crippled its ignition. They loaded the four Chinese in the rear of the troop car.

"Drive to Chateaugay," Tiny David ordered.

"What is the big idea?" demanded Crosby.

"I just had a thought."



The alien-runner spoke to the dog. Tiger halted. Still talking, the man raced toward the woods.

Crosby groaned. "Now," he declared, "we are headed for real trouble."

They lodged their prisoners in the lock-up at Chateaugay. They instructed a garage man to tow in the alien-runner's car. Then Tiny David led the way to the hotel.

"Going to call the barracks?" asked Crosby.

"Nope."

Crosby whistled softly. "Well, you are big enough, and ugly enough, to take it. Me, I'm just a poor sergeant, being led astray by a lieutenant."

They had supper. Crosby had no appetite. Tiny David ate with his usual relish.

"Now," he declared, after his third helping of dessert, "we'll get a room and turn in."

Crosby regarded him sadly. "Where there is no sense, there is no feeling," was his comment.

There was no conversation as they undressed. But after the light was turned off, Crosby spoke:

"Listen, Tiny, you said you had a thought. Don't hold out on me. This is too serious."

"The only thought I had, Jim, was that tomorrow is another day. It seemed like a good idea to put it off as long as possible. The idea looks pretty bum right now."

The bed shook as the huge man moved slightly.

"But I think I can put you in the clear, Jim. This was my party."

Crosby snorted indignantly. "We go out together, Tiny. Nobody starves. I heard the President say so over the radio."

Tiny David sighed. "I was afraid you would act that way about it," he admitted. "'The condemned men slept well.' Good night."

Crosby heard the town clock strike midnight. Then he slept.

NEXT morning they breakfasted leisurely. Over his second cup of coffee Sergeant Crosby made a half-hearted suggestion:

"Hadn't we better get started?"

"Nope. Waiting for a telephone-call."

"Did you call the barracks?"

"Nope."

"Then how does anybody know you are here?" There was exasperation in Crosby's voice. "Do you use mental telepathy?"

Tiny David grinned, a crooked grin.

"All is not lost, James. Your Uncle Tiny has been thinking."

"I remember one of his thoughts that increased thirty days in the stables to sixty. What's the big idea?"

The grin on the face of the huge man persisted.

"Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies."

Sergeant Crosby gave it up.

"Act mysterious while you are able to," he advised. "But there's no mystery about what is going to happen to us."

JUST twenty-five minutes later the telephone-call came. Tiny David was plainly elated when he stepped from the booth.

"Get the car," he directed. "Go down to the lock-up and pick up the Chinks. Come back here. I have another call to make."

Crosby was at the wheel of the car when Tiny David emerged from the hotel.

"Now, menial," the lieutenant ordered, "drive to Mooers, and don't spare the horses."

Crosby drove in silence. The huge man at his side chuckled quietly. Crosby was consumed with curiosity, but he refused to ask any questions. Tiny David was bursting to tell his story, but he was unwilling to make the first advances. The silent conflict went on for some miles; then Tiny David could contain himself no longer.

"Want to know what's happening, feeble-minded?"

Crosby affected humility.

"I'm just a sergeant. Who am I to butt in when the really big minds are functioning?"

Tiny David laughed.

"You wouldn't have been a sergeant long if the big mind hadn't functioned. Listen!

"Last night in bed I did some serious thinking. That dog came from Germany. The alien-runner spoke to him in German. It was like meeting a pal from home. That was why Tiger ran off with him.

"That explained what happened, but it didn't help us any. So I did some more serious thinking. I knew the dog would stick to his new pal like a leech. That put the alien-runner in a tough spot.

"He didn't have a gun, because if he had, he'd have used it when Tiger first charged at him. I wouldn't want to try

to get rid of that dog, if he wanted to stay with me. So it was a pretty safe bet that when our man came out of the woods, Tiger would be right with him.

"Well, after you were sound asleep, I sneaked down and called up all our patrols. Told them to be on the lookout for a man with a dog following him, and asked them to call me here, but not to call the barracks.

"Hank Linton, over at Mooers, called me just a little while ago. He had the man and the dog. Had a lot of trouble because Tiger wouldn't let him put his hands on his pal, and he didn't want to kill the dog. But he trained his gun on the man and held him there, and Tiger stayed with his pal. We are on our way there now.

"Soon as I heard from Hank, I called the barracks and told the Skipper we had cleaned up. He and the reporters are on their way there now. You better step on it, because we want a few words with Hank before they get there."

Sergeant Crosby whistled as he increased the speed of the car.

"And when they get there," he added, "you still have quite a bit of explaining to do."

Tiny David laughed. "Leave that to your Uncle Tiny."

THEY had just time for a brief word with Sergeant Linton. Then a host of cars descended upon them. Reporters and photographers piled out and plied them with questions. Tiny David faced them calmly.

"One at a time," he begged, "and I'll try and tell you the whole story. We sighted the car at the border. This man was trying to run in four Chinamen. We gave chase, and he outdistanced us. I got his gas-tank with a lucky shot. He left the car and the Chinks, and took to the woods.

"Sergeant Crosby took care of the Chinks. I sent Tiger after the man. He caught up with him deep in the woods. But it was getting dark, and the dog was so far ahead of us that he evidently realized we couldn't find him. He just watched his prisoner all night and waited until morning. So did we. Then the dog brought the man out to us."

There was an interruption from the prisoner.

"Shut up," ordered Sergeant Linton. "We have had enough from you."

Cameras were clicking furiously. Questions were being fired.

Over the shoulders of the press-men, Lieutenant David saw Captain Field. He stood with his thumbs hooked in his gun-belt. There was a quizzical smile upon his face.

WHEN, sometime later, the reporters and photographers departed, Lieutenant David and Sergeant Crosby found themselves facing their commanding officer.

"Any questions, Captain?"

Tiny David's smile was innocent and disarming.

Captain Field shook his head.

"No," said the commanding officer. "I won't ask you why the dog went into the woods with the man at one place, and came out miles away. I have brains enough to know you had arranged that with him."

"Yes sir," said Tiny David.

"The Governor's office called me this morning," Captain Field continued. "They had been talking with Mr. Hamberton. It seems that he has lost some of his enthusiasm for dogs in police work. If I were unkind, I might say that he realizes the publicity possibilities are about exhausted. But I am always kind. The fact that you have lasted as long in this outfit as you have proves that."

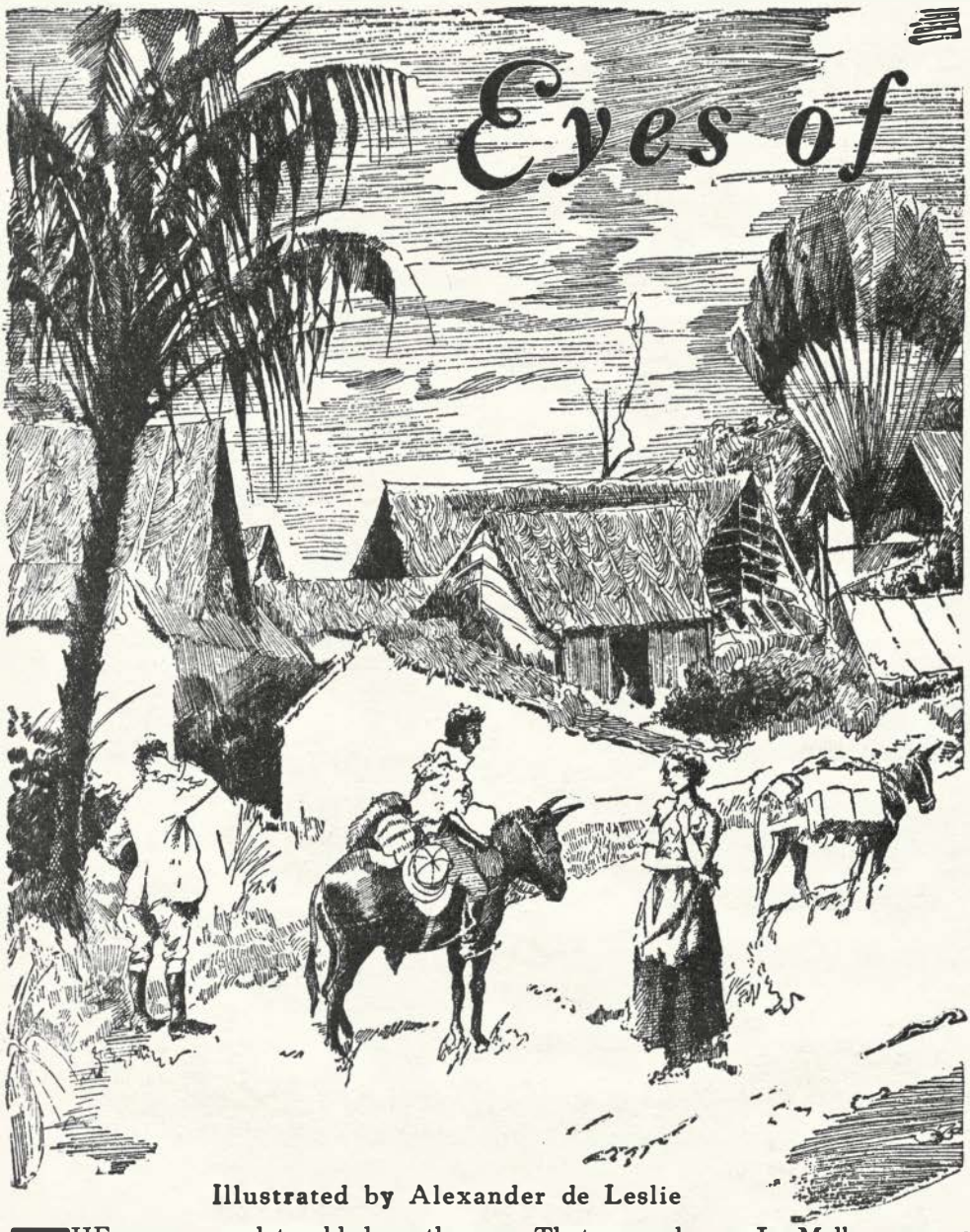
"Yes sir," said Tiny David.

"At any rate," Captain Field went on, "Hamberton now is all steamed up about slum clearance. He is willing to drop the dog proposition, and the Governor agrees. Major Harner is willing, more than willing. I haven't an objection in the world. How do you and Crosby feel about it?"

Tiny David pondered. There was a note of regret in his voice when he answered:

"Just as the Captain says. A dog is a man's best friend." The crooked little grin played over his broad face. "But sometimes even your best friend can be right wearing."

Eyes of

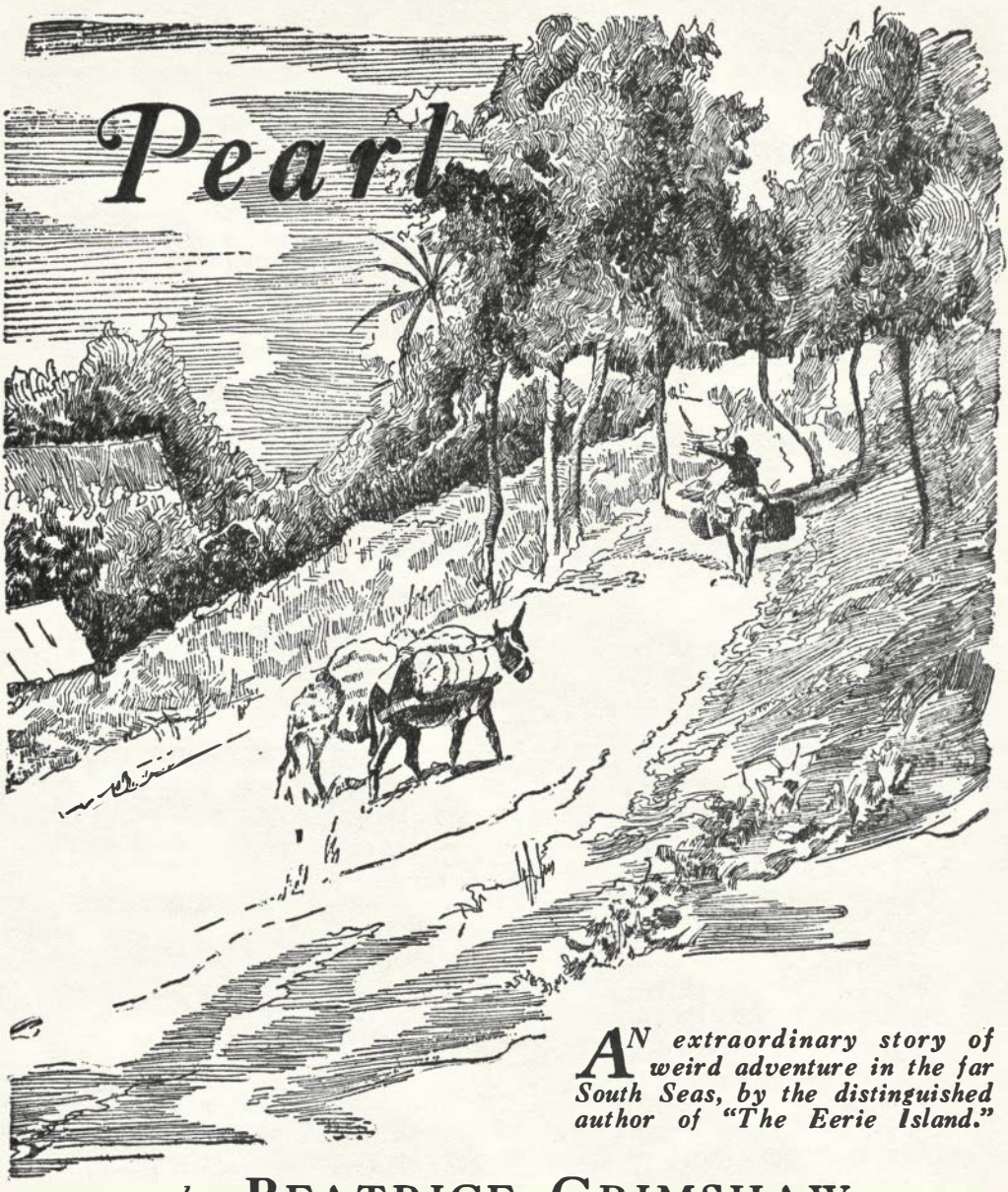


Illustrated by Alexander de Leslie

THE men seemed troubled, as they sat there on the counter of the deserted Chinese store, smoking their pipes and staring out into the emerald green wet-season twilight. But Thora could not find it in her heart to care. What did anything matter, compared with the fact that she was two thousand miles away from her typist's job, here in the midst of a wonderful tropic island, with Franky, her father, that irresponsible and eternal adventurer; with Barry, whom she knew little, but liked a great deal; with the queer little, civil little fellow Tate?

And no other women!

That was glory. In Melbourne you lived smothered in your own sex, old, young, young-old, authoritative, sneaking, sugary, lemony; girls, girls, women, women. In the cheap boarding-house to which she had sunk after her happy schooldays (for dear old Frank couldn't manage money, especially after Mother died, and Thora had had to "train," which she hated, and "go into business," which she hated more) there had been thirteen women to three old men. In the office, a largish copying firm, the staff and all the heads were female. They "spited" you sometimes; sometimes they made offer of treacly friendships, worse



AN extraordinary story of weird adventure in the far South Seas, by the distinguished author of "The Eerie Island."

by BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

than the spite. Thora had thought that going into business would mean meeting of admirers; else where was the use of hair naturally curled like tips of hyacinths, and eyes of hyacinth blue, and legs as beautiful as the legs of the famous actress Mistralette?

All that, as good as wasted! For Thora, unlucky creature, couldn't come down. She was down; they had been people of position, and now were nobody; but the flashy youths who picked up girls at the tram stops, or cooey-ed to them boldly from the night shadow of boulevard trees, were not attractive to her. In the class to which poor dear Franky, her father, had condemned her, you lived with women; and desperately you grabbed at men as they went flying by, and that was how you did it. . . .

Not Thora!

When Franky, with his hat on one side of his gray head and a cigar in the corner of his mouth, his blue eyes, hyacinth blue as Thora's own, half-shut, twinkling merrily—Franky, with his long stooping stride, and his intriguing air of being just about to depart, on the spur of the moment, for the world's far ends—came into the copying office, a breeze from the South Pacific seemed to blow in with him, dispersing the stuffy female

atmosphere of the place just as the real wind that came flying through the left-open door scattered the carbons and the copied sheets. Everyone sat up; the girl next Thora hastily smoothed down her bob, and ran the tip of a finger over her lipstick. Nobody scolded about the scattered papers: the manageress coming forward with the clipped walk that she reserved for customers, smiled upon Franky as she seldom smiled on anyone, and said, "You would like to give an order?" in syrupy tones.

Franky said: "Yes—order for one girl, to be delivered today." And he seized Thora by her arms, and swung her out of her seat, to the horror and delight of all the girls, who thought they were seeing a white-slaver in full action.

But the manageress was no fool. She had never seen Franky—Thora herself had not seen him for six months; nevertheless she caught the extraordinary likeness between the two, and guessed at once that she was going to lose one of the best of her typists. There was a brief conversation, in the course of which Franky was induced to part with a month's salary in lieu of notice, explaining the while, as he tossed notes and silver out of his pockets, that he had been offered a splendid job in the South Sea Islands (all Franky's jobs were splendid, while they lasted) and was leaving on Saturday afternoon, day after tomorrow; and Thora, of course, was to go with him.

Out they went into the wind and the sun, to an orgy of shopping at the impossible hour of eleven in the morning; to seas and ships waiting down at the end of the next street, to adventure and to the Islands and to bliss.

And the other girls stayed behind, typing in the dim office light, in the smell of carbons and oil and dust and talcum powder, typing, typing, for ever and ever.

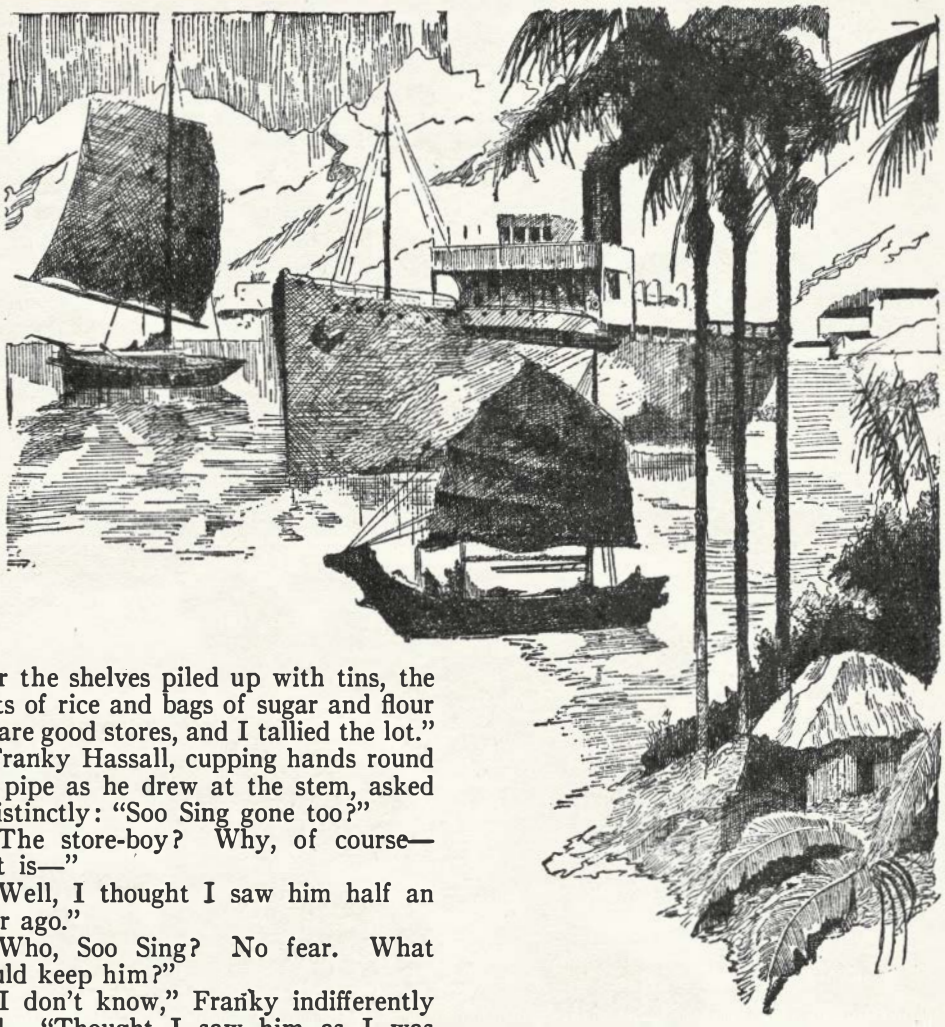
Or at least, so far as Thora was concerned. For she never saw them again.

EVEN when Franky's luck, the wretched luck that always seemed to follow his best *coups*, pounced again, and delivered himself, Thora and their boys and baggage on the doorstep of a dead and disintegrating mine, instead of the live enterprise for which he had been engaged—even then Thora's spirits did not go down. It was certainly annoying to have almost no money, and only a limited amount of stores; it would have

been depressing, had one been inclined that way, to see the last trains of loaded mules, the last file of carriers, leave Iareva, jingling bells, and shouting loud Motu greetings, on their way to the coast, while Thora and Franky and the two other engineers in similar plight stayed there marooned in the wilderness long out of work and penniless. They ought to have had their fares back to Sydney, and salary instead of notice, to boot; but the company had exploded with the suddenness that so often marks the end of mining ventures in the Islands, and all four knew that it would be a matter of months, of letters to and from Australia, maybe of legal action, before they got anything at all.

Barry said, swinging his legs where he sat on the high counter: "Best thing we can do is to keep on camping here; there's lots of stuff in the houses, and stores for some months, and by that time we'll have shaken them up in Sydney."

Tate, the little quick fellow with eyes that made you think of shining beetles running about in the twilight, said: "We made a fair bargain with the Chink, for a Chink. These"—he threw a glance



over the shelves piled up with tins, the mats of rice and bags of sugar and flour —"are good stores, and I tallied the lot."

Franky Hassall, cupping hands round his pipe as he drew at the stem, asked indistinctly: "Soo Sing gone too?"

"The store-boy? Why, of course—that is—"

"Well, I thought I saw him half an hour ago."

"Who, Soo Sing? No fear. What would keep him?"

"I don't know," Franky indifferently said. "Thought I saw him as I was passing the Chinese graveyard."

Barry, who had not spoken, now said, "I don't like Soo Sing," and immediately relapsed into silence.

"Mixed breeds?" questioned Tate. Barry took no notice. Tate went on, undiscouraged: "Half Chinese and half Papuan's a queer combination, but Soo Sing's a decent kid enough. What was he doing in the cemetery?"

"Don't know that he was there," indifferently answered Franky Hassall. "Thought I saw a blue coat whisking about some of those queer monuments of theirs, those concrete pillars and things stuck over with china saucers and what-you-like. May have been a bluejay or a kingfisher."

"May have been," Tate agreed, and the subject was dropped. The whereabouts, the doings, of a Sino-Papuan servant concerned none of these white people.

Thora, taking up the reins of her position as only woman and housekeeper, collected the men with a snap of her pretty fingers—all the prettier, now that they were no longer flattened and worn by the battering of typewriter keys.

"Come on, boys," she said. "You've been long enough tallying off the stuff, and your dinner's drying in the oven up at the manager's house, unless the fire's gone out on us. Come!"

They followed her like sheep, up the long stairway of adzed logs that mounted the cleared hill, to the bungalow that had been left furnished, never to be used again, by the mine manager, three weeks ago. It was like a seaside home at Bondi or Manly—tiled, cemented, pergola-ed, veranda-ed; it was filled with pretty furniture that wasn't worth carrying away; all in all, set in the midst of that deserted wilderness of derricks, shafts,

sheds, engine-houses and dumps, it fairly screamed of the wild extravagance that had brought the place—like so many others—to black ruin. A solitary Papuan native, last relic of thousands more, was stoking up the kitchen fire. About the brightly tiled and curtained lounge, bedrooms opened off, all handsomely furnished. From the windows of these bedrooms, under Venetian blinds, you looked straight down, across the mining field, to unbroken jungle, where in the burning nights the crocodiles belled, and cassowaries beat their giant drums; beyond that, to the swampy estuary of the Iari River, and the pale blue shining breast of the Pacific.

ALL the luxuries of the field had been brought in the roaring days of the rich, or said to be rich, silver lead, when money ran like a millrace, and cost was of no account. Now it paid nobody to take the goods scores of miles to the roadstead, thousands of miles to Australia; and they might rot, or make meals for borers and white ants, for all that anybody cared.

Only the marooned engineers, who had at different times come up to the field dead broke from "depressed" Australia, were benefiting by the disaster; and they, and Thora, were by no means sure how much the benefit might be worth in the end. But Thora didn't care. Not so long as Wilfred Barry shared the house with her, ate the meals she prepared, and now and then talked to her in the long, bookless evenings.

Barry had not made open love to her, but she thought she knew. . . .

As for Tate, the little live wire with the beetle-bright eyes, he made no secret at all of his delight in this God's gift of a charming girl to the womanless wilderness. He was her servant, her flatterer, her dog always ready to fawn, wag tail and lick hands. And Franky, delightful Franky, with his tales of mining adventures in Malaya, Africa, Patagonia and where not, with his reminiscences of Thora's childhood (all creditable, all as if by accident designed to raise her in the eyes of these two men) Franky was surely the dearest, least stuffy father in the world.

Instinct was teaching Thora very fast these days. It had caused her to put away, with a sigh, her delightfully comfortable and becoming shorts and shirt, keeping them for jungle wear only, and to go about the mine field and the bungalow in fluffy frocks. All the men loved these; they loved, too, Thora's untrimmed mass of curls, and her make-up, which was so clever that it deceived them into thinking she wore none at all. She had an adoring father, who would have given her anything he had; she had two lovers, ready (she hoped, in the case of one; knew, as to the other) to marry her at the first possible chance; and the place was wonderful, romantic beyond all telling, and the scenery was like the brightly colored pictures in travel literature, that always seem—and usually are—too good to be true.

But—

There is always a *but;* Thora had not reached two-and-twenty years without finding that out. In this case, it was a big one: the fact that the entire party was broke.

Now as to Tate, he was the kind of fellow (Thora guessed) who would lightheartedly engage himself to a girl, without a ring to put on her hand, or a feather to fly with. But Barry—

Barry was a deep river. Thora did not know him as she knew the other. He was as bad as any crossword puzzle, this thin, tall, silent fellow, still under thirty, with the hard cheeks, the firm mouth, the clipped smooth head of an Englishman in a *Punch* illustration.

TIME, perhaps, would show where the three of them stood. Meanwhile it was like living in a dream, in a fairy story, to be alone with father and lovers in this few acres of space cut out of the enchanted forest of Iareva; prosaic daily life going on in the details of housekeeping and cooking and having meals, everything just as it might be in Sydney or Melbourne—and all around you, waiting for the moment when you chose to plunge into it, the marvel of up-country New Guinea. In the forest there were palms like maidenhair ferns forty feet high, palms like feathers as tall as a ship's mast; there were flowers like gobbets of red flesh, flowers like yellow flaming candles, like blue butterflies and like spotted toads. Standing still in a sunlit clearing, you might see great Gaura pigeons, garnet-eyed, silver crested, dancing to their mates; catch sight, for one moment, of the rocketing flame that was a bird-of-paradise; feel your heart stir and your knees weaken when the blue-helmeted head of a cassowary higher than your own, looked out of the thick jungle, and silently vanished

again. There were no native villages near, but sometimes you saw the brown naked figure of a forester slip by, armed with seven-foot bow and bunch of barbed arrows painted with blood; and then, though perhaps you were not really frightened (for the little head-hunters of the forest hunted few heads besides those of native tribes), you drew closer to Barry or to Tate, whichever one was there, and were glad to feel the hot clasp of a man's reassuring hand.

The forest made you alive. It was full of beauty and of wickedness, and the steamy heat of it melted your very bones; at times you felt as if you were flowing into it, as if the splendor and the heavy drunken perfumes, the fierceness, the delight, were part of your very self.

Then, being wise beyond her years, the girl Thora would run away—from Thora. Also from Tate (commonly it was Tate), who was sure to have slipped his arm about her waist, protectively, and taken possession of a small warm hand, sure to be reaching for the other hand as well—just for the sake of protecting pretty Thora.

On one such day Thora, walking briskly along the forest track ahead of Tate and his apologies and laments, thinking hardly at all of Tate, or even where she was going, but a great deal of Wilfred Barry, who seldom crossed the borders of the enchanted forest with her—Thora suddenly came unawares out into the sun and the long wind from the sea, to the open space given up to Chinese graves. There had been hundreds of them working on the mine at one time, and scores of them keeping store, running cheap boarding-houses, doing more or less open money-lending and more or less sly smuggling of grog and opium. Fortunes had been made on the field by many Chinese; but death, in the form of jungle fevers, had mown down scores before they could sail away with their loot.

Usually, Thora did not like the place—avoided it in her walks, and if she came on it by chance, fled as soon as possible from the enormous loneliness, the mocking sunshine of this city of strange dead. There was, to her mind, none of the dignity of death in the Chinese tombs, with their silly painted plates and saucers stuck into blocks of cement, their ugly and sometimes indecent Oriental pagodas; there was only the horror of it, the thought of hundreds of alien yellow men lying rotting there beneath the creeping passiflora and the lalang grass.

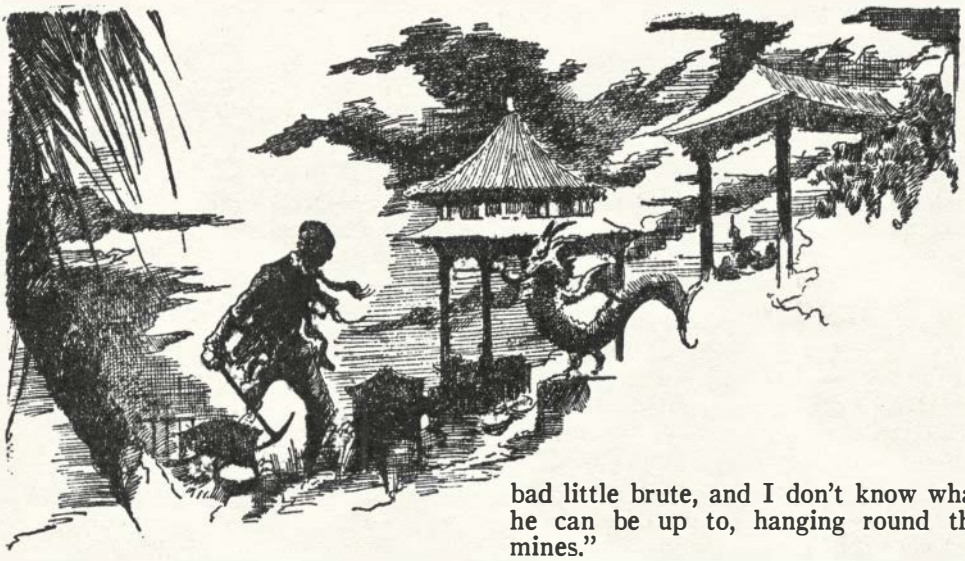
But today she was overglad to escape the love-making of little Tate, who was more than usually ardent, and therefore unacceptable. What hurt was the image of Barry always present; the thought that he might have been walking there with her in the magic forest, where everything was different, and all delightful things seemed possible and easy, just as they did after one had drunk a cocktail and before the effect began to fade away. . . . If Barry had been there, if it had been his arm that was round her, his hard cheek bending sideways toward hers—then the spell would have lacked no letter, the magic had been complete.

She broke into Tate's protestations ruthlessly.

"Don't you hate all this horrid sunshine, shining on dead Chinese, and the feeling that there might be ghosts or anything about? Don't you think daylight ghosts are ever so much worse than the common kind that squeak and rattle chains in the dark?"

Said Tate, staring at her with his black beetle eyes: "Just you look round, and maybe you'll see a ghost."

Thora was too modern to scream, but she jumped. She had looked around and had seen—



Not a ghost, after all; not the spirit of some dead Chinaman, revisiting the light of day. Only Soo Sing, wandering among the tombs.

"What do you suppose he's doing?" she asked.

Tate said: "I don't know—darling," he added irrelevantly.

"It would be better," Thora told him, angrily pulling a pink passionflower to shreds, "if you'd realize that I'm not your darling."

"But I do!"

"And not going to be."

"Ah," he said, "I don't realize that. I'm stupid—sometimes."

"Do you mean to say you'd marry a girl who didn't want you?"

"Like a bird," he told her, with an agreeable smile that somehow had something not quite so agreeable at the back of it. It came then to Thora, aged twenty-two, and not very wise in the ways of men, though she was learning fast, that the mere size of a man didn't, perhaps, matter as much as she had thought. That small, even contemptibly small men, might be as capable of determining action, of perseverance in pursuit, as might any six-footer who—who wouldn't ask you to go walking in the forest.

Again she changed the conversation.

"What is Soo Sing living on?" She did not care, but one had to say something.

Tate said: "Oh, he's all right. More Papuan than Chink; he can feed himself from the bush, and a bit of fishing. By the way," he added, "don't go wandering alone where he's about; he's a bad little brute, and I don't know what he can be up to, hanging round the mines."

"Looking for treasure, maybe," Thora said carelessly. "Franky says the Chinese in Malaya used to have things buried with them."

Tate said nothing at all to that for quite a minute, and then remarked: "If you will stand out grilling in the sun, we might as well be getting back again."

IT was pleasant that night to sit on the veranda of the bungalow, lit only by Barry's shaded reading-lamp; enormous skies in front of them, broidered over with stars; below, the distant murmur and the shadow of the sea. Pleasant, obscurely, to know that there was no one else for many hundred miles, save a few unconsidered natives, and Soo Sing, and themselves. It was a bath of freedom; in the busy lives of the men, a long, deep draft of rest, all the pleasanter to them because they knew that it must, in the nature of things, soon come to an end.

No man alive but loves to taste the enormous leisure, live for once in the limitless and timeless day, of the savage who was so lately his ancestor. No man, now, may know that delight, unless he can build between himself and the speeding, unresting world, a wall made up of thousands of slow miles.

On the deserted field of Iareva, with the virgin forests and the sea surrounding, the three engineers, the one girl, were content—or would have been, had not trouble, in the shape of unsatisfied love, spread dusky bat-wings over three out of the four.

Franky may have had and regretted his loves, left behind, in Melbourne. If

so, regret lay lightly on him; he was the most talkative of the party, leaning back in a long chair, with his boots up among the slanted jewels of the Southern Cross, and telling (so it happened; by what chance or leading, no one could have said) strange stories of days in outer islands of the Sundas, the ends of the Moluccas and the top corners of Dutch New Guinea.

"The Chinese are collaring all the trade," he said, to Tate; to Barry, big and silent, inattentively reading in a cane armchair; to Thora, who knew all his stories, and maybe to himself. "And they don't spend anything to speak of, unless on deaths and burials. There was a man—" And he told the story. "There was another—I remember him in Lombok, in 'ninety-eight; he was pearl-dealing there, and he said to me: 'There's one thing I'd give a good bit to know.' And I said, 'What's that?' And he said, 'Just why all the old Chinamen want to buy two pearls from me—two, no more, but they must be good; and they take 'em away with them, and I never hear any more about it.' For there weren't any resident Chinks there at the time; only some of them came trading; and my friend, being an honest pearl-dealer—which is about as common as a pea-green cow with purple spots—was a good bit liked by them. 'Well,' I said, 'I can tell you that,' for I've a memory of my own—pick up things like a pigeon picking up peas, and keep 'em in my crop till they're wanted. And did you ever notice that anything you learn or pick up, anything whatever—"

"I did," said Tate rather brusquely.

Franky, striking a match, went on: "So I said to him, 'It's this,' I said. 'There's a big clan, tribe, I don't know what, of Chinks, but you're liable to meet some of them pretty well anywhere; well, they like to be buried with a pearl in one eye, and a pearl in the mouth; something to do with their religion, maybe, or maybe pure swank; but that's what it is, and you can take my word for it.' I said: 'That's where your pearls are going.' He didn't believe me, and maybe you won't either, but it's a fact. Have any of you got a match? These are rotten."

THORA was not listening; she had heard the tale before. Under cover of the lampshade dusk, she was looking at Wilfred Barry, trying to make out whether, beneath the same shield, he was or was not looking at her. Almost, she hoped he was. She could feel his eyes, if she could not see them, and they felt like points of fire.

Barry did love her; she was sure of that. The very restraint he was putting upon himself, proved it; the way he passed her, on the log staircase, without a touch or a word, leaving behind him only the memory of looks that ran through her blood like wine. . . . Why hold himself in like that, if there was nothing that needed holding?

Well, they were together, and they would go away together, when the time came; and then, when Wilfred got a job, he would speak—or, said Thora to herself, setting her white teeth, "I'll know the reason why."

IT was at this moment that Barry broke the silence.

"Hassall," he said, "I'm thinking of making a bolt of it."

"What? How? What d'ye mean?" demanded Franky, letting the match burn down to his fingers, and dropping it with an impatient, "Damn! . . . There's no boat likely to come along for weeks."

"I know. But I believe I could make it, along the coast, as far as the next settlement, and that would hurry up matters for the rest of you. I could send a radio, and wait for the answer."

"Risky, going through alone," Hassall said. He had relighted his pipe, and was puffing carelessly away.

Barry passed that.

"When d'you think of leaving?" Tate asked cheerfully.

"In a couple of days. Get some tucker together, write a letter or so, in case. . . . Wait till nearer full moon; the nights are—"

Thora never heard what the nights were. She had slipped off away, and run down the veranda to her room. Face buried in pillows, she was trying to choke her sobs. Going!

If Franky hadn't run through all their money, if she'd even had anything of her own, something might have been done. They could have married and waited, maybe. Or she'd have—she'd have bribed somebody to do something for Wilfred. She'd have done anything. Committed any crime. She'd almost have killed some one, if money were the result—now that she knew, as in defiance of all probability she bitterly did know, that Barry was going away in order to avoid speaking.

"He couldn't have kept from it," she told her pillow. "I'd have made him. I'd have—oh, what's the use?"

Outside, on the veranda, she could hear them talking. It seemed that Franky—good dear Franky!—was trying to keep Barry from starting at once. That Tate, on the other hand, was encouraging his departure.

"He would!" she thought angrily.

Silence came after a while; the men strolled off to their rooms; beds creaked; the house was still. In the stillness Thora lay, driving her mind to such an intensity of thought as most women know but once in their lives. Passion frustrated, the force before which kingdoms have fallen, held Thora in its grip that night; she, like others, would have sent thrones crashing, seen heads drop like apples in the wind, to gain her will.

Later she moved from the stiff position that unconsciously she had held for hours—sat up, passed a handkerchief over her wet cheeks, and looked out upon the night.

"Perhaps," she whispered to herself. "Perhaps." . . . And then, quiet at last, she lay back on the pillow and slept.

TWO days had passed, three days, and Wilfred had not gone. It was still uncertain when he might leave, but the moon rose early now, nearing the full, and the weather was set fair. Not long—it could not be long now. And Wilfred had not spoken.

It was not enough for Thora. "They look like that," she thought, drawing from wells of experience not her own, dug deep by the sorrows of the women of a thousand years. "They look at you as if they could take you up and carry you off like *Lochinvar*—or the *Sheik*," her modern mind added. "And then they go, and the next thing you see is their marriage in the paper."

She set her teeth as she thought of it.

But she was not suffering now, as she had suffered a few days ago. She had an idea.

Through her mind, that night of concentrated thought, had passed, in wild dance, incidents, sights, seemingly unrelated, that at the last she had succeeded in gathering into one connected chain. The links drew firm. She knew.

Twice, since then, disregarding the warnings of little Tate, and daring her own fears, she had gone down alone to the Chinese cemetery after dark, hidden herself among surrounding trees, and watched the proceedings of Soo Sing. Soo Sing, who was only half Chinese by birth, and less than half by character. Who was covetous, dangerous, and didn't believe in Chinese gods—although it was certain that he must know all about them.

Thora was by no means timid, but she carried a small revolver in the belt of her dress, when she went down to spy upon Soo Sing. There was no knowing—

By the light of an electric torch, with pick, drill and spade, he worked. Twice she had seen him now, caught glimpses of a face, young-old, cruel, clever; woolly hair above yellowish thin features, thick savage mouth and slanting Oriental eyes. When she saw that face, her heart stirred uncomfortably; but she laid her fingers on the cool handle of her revolver, and felt safe.

Oddly, it was the cassowaries she feared, more than Soo Sing. They were numerous about the field, now that all sound and disturbance there had ceased. She knew them to be shy in daytime, but fierce at night, if disturbed; and one blow of their steam-hammer beaks, one kick from a leg as strong as a horse's, was enough to kill the strongest man. They were ill-tempered, furious and capricious as bulls. She hoped that none of them might stray her way, when she was watching the Sino-Papuan.

On the second night, catching her breath for fear she might scream, she saw Soo Sing do things—terrible things. She saw, by the torch's glimmer, what it was that he had worked for, and found. She knew he must have been doing this for weeks, ever since the field closed up. Hidden away somewhere he had a king's ransom in pearls.

SPOILED? No. Thora remembered Franky's stories of pearl fisheries: gems left rotting for weeks in the mass of putrid fish. They wouldn't be spoiled. And when the time came, she would make the savage go halves, or know the reason why—she and her little revolver. What did he want with a fortune? Whereas she—

Yes, but if Wilfred ever knew—Wilfred, who was so disconcertingly honorable and high-minded—would he ever speak to her again? Probably not. Robbing the dead—terrifying a savage into parting with his ghastly spoil: it wasn't just the sort of thing a man would like, in his wife.

"What you don't know, does you no harm," was her final verdict. "And I'll make him the best wife a man could have this side of heaven." That seemed to settle it, to condone things, comfortably. Franky, she feared, had seen her coming in late, once or twice; but he, with his amazing liberality of ideas, would only suppose she had been flirting, and let her alone.

The night fell round her like a hot black cloak; from the forest came the curious scent of orchids, mingled with the odors of musk and carrion that mean the near presence of crocodiles. Not too far away, a cassowary beat his drum —*oomp-oomp!* Thora, starting at the sound, barely repressed a scream when she felt herself touched on the shoulder.

It was neither cassowary nor crocodile. It was Tate. She knew that, as soon as she felt his fingers clipping her soft flesh beneath the muslin frock. They were drawing back. Very cautiously she followed. She knew he wanted to speak to her. And immediately she guessed why he was here—he too!

Away from the burying-ground, sheltered by huge sago palms, he flashed his torch, and looked at her, with an unpleasant smile. "Two souls with but a single thought," he quoted. "Clearly, Thora, you and I are mates."

She felt herself immersed in dirty crime. She felt unclean, standing there

in the forest with the other graveyard mole, the ghoul like herself. If they weren't doing the actual and horrible corpse-robbing, they were waiting to steal the fruits of it; they were no better than Soo Sing, the Sino-Papuan brute.

Not at first, however, did she catch the full significance of what she had done. Tate, still holding her, said laughingly: "That's torn it, Thora; you can't afford to quarrel with me now. Killingly funny, if one thinks of it—you and I both on the same job, wanting a fortune to get married with! Well, we'll both get married with it after all. Not quite according to program, but just as good, eh?"

She turned sick. She knew, in a moment, that he had her. He would certainly tell Wilfred, if she refused.

Temporize? Pretend? That seemed to be the only thing left. A tiny hope, but better than nothing at all.

She said: "We'll talk it over in daylight. I—I—maybe I might. Let me go, now."

His fingers loosed their hold; but not altogether, she thought, out of consideration for her. In the cemetery the faint light of Soo Sing's torch was flashing and moving about.

"I mean to see where he keeps them—this time," Tate said; and in a moment he was gone, walking noiselessly on rubber shoes. Thora, waiting alone, heard sounds that she could not account for—a sharp crack, stamping, thumping, something like a cry. Terrified, she took the pathway leading to the hill, and never stopped till she was safe in her own room.

HER eyelids were purple with sleeplessness next day, and she felt foolishly inclined to start, or break into tears, at the slightest sound. But she made herself up discreetly, and appeared at the breakfast-table. Franky was there, tackling scrub-fowl eggs and tinned bacon; Wilfred was there; he didn't say much to her, but his smile was worth another man's long speeches. Another man!

At the thought of marrying Tate, while Wilfred was still in the world, she turned as cold as she had turned last night in the burying-ground, when she had seen horrors. . . .

But Tate? Where was he?

Other people were asking that too. It seemed, on inquiry, that he had not returned on the previous night. His bed was undisturbed; no one had seen him.

When this became clear, Barry and Hassall bolted the rest of their breakfast, told Thora, as one man, to stay where she was, away from possible danger, and went off down the hill. . . .

Thora waited, uneasily, half the morning, and then followed. Whatever had happened, she wanted to know the worst. And—she knew more than anyone. She might help. . . .

But Tate, when they found him, had long been past helping. His body lay beyond the Chinese burying-ground, near the bark-and-wattle camp that Soo Sing had made for himself. There were marks on his head suggestive of an attack by a cassowary—traces of huge claws, a blue space over the temple. "Kicked to death by one of those brutes," Barry said. "What on earth was the poor chap doing, down there at night?"

His revolver lay on the ground, with one chamber discharged. Hassall looked at it, and said nothing. He had caught sight of something long and blue in the grass, not far away. Thora, coming up behind, had seen it too. Also she had seen, and kicked away, something that the men had missed. A dried cassowary claw, lying beside one of the lumps of broken concrete of which the place was full.

Hassall went forward, and pointed to the body of Soo Sing. "Two of 'em," he curtly said.

"Lord, a cassowary couldn't—" Barry began.

"A cassowary didn't," Franky said. "Soo Sing's been shot through the neck, went a little way and bled to death."

Barry, one hand on his chin, seemed to ponder. "I suppose the poor chap was attacked by the brute, shot at it, missed it, and somehow got Soo Sing instead," he suggested. "And the cassowary got him, and bolted."

Hassall said: "Let's bury them; the sun's hot. . . . Thora, my dear, I thought I told you—"

He had not looked behind, but somehow he knew she was there.

"All right; I'm going," the girl said.

ALONE in the high bungalow, with the trade-wind singing below, she pulled herself together. . . . The thing had happened, and was over. Wilfred suspected nothing. Whether Franky guessed or not, it was impossible to say. He had amazing intuitions sometimes, but he always knew when to hold his tongue.

"So do I," she thought. "I'm Franky's daughter."

She was quite clear in her mind as to what had really happened. Tate, her partner, her associate in a dirty crime, had tried to bully Soo Sing out of the hideously acquired treasure. Soo Sing, probably, had agreed to go and get the stuff, had stolen upon Tate from one side, and struck him with a lump of concrete—to which, for the sake of saving himself, he had fastened a cassowary claw. It was well thought out; but Tate, before finally collapsing with a fractured skull, had managed to send one shot after the Sino-Papuan, and that had done the business for Soo Sing.

Now both were dead, and Thora was freed from one great fear, at least. She would not have to marry Tate.

Nevertheless, from self-disgust and self-hatred, she did not look to be free. It seemed as if she had awaked from an evil dream. She could not believe that she had done, intended, all that she had done and meant to do. "I wouldn't have, truly," she told herself. "I—I'm sorry for the poor little brute of a Chink. I wouldn't have made him give me—everything. I—I wouldn't have made him give me anything at all," she cried, in the extremity of her repentance.

"How could I?" she thought, as a million others have thought, waking from the fury of passion balked. It seemed to her now that she did not even care about Wilfred. He might go now, and she would not shed a tear.

THE next day he did go; and Thora found herself very miserable—especially since he went in the highest spirits, almost as if he had heard good news. But what news could reach the field of Iareva, dead and buried in the New Guinea bush?

It was three weeks before he returned. He came back in a big motor launch, with a dozen other white men, plenty of new stores, and the best of news from Sydney. The field was to be reopened after all, worked by a new process, under a new directorate. They would all get back their jobs again; and Wilfred was to be head engineer.

The greatest surprise of Thora's life was to find, as she did, that Wilfred, after all, required no "making." He discovered her within an hour of his arrival, caught her and kissed her on the big log staircase, and proposed to her before she could draw breath. "I've something to offer a girl now," he told her. "We'll be married as soon as I can get a parson sent up from port."

IN the evening, on the high veranda, with the electric lights lit and going, he brought to her, somewhat shyly, a little box. "Open it," he said. "There's something for you in it. I kept it till I could speak."

Thora, expecting a ring, opened it smilingly—and screamed, as if she had seen the cold eyes of a snake looking at her out of the silk-lined box. Instantly she dropped it, and over the veranda floor, rattling like hail, fell pearls and pearls and pearls.

"Careless!" Barry said, laughingly, as he bent down to retrieve the jewels. While he was picking them up, Franky gave his daughter a look. "Don't be a fool," it plainly said. "Pull yourself together."

She was quite cool, quite herself, when Barry stood up again; she did not even wince when he poured the pearls into her hands—those gems that had lain underground in the eyes, the mouths, of dead Chinamen, until Soo Sing retrieved them. She had no doubt at all whence they came. But she wondered—

Barry explained. He had been turning out the humpy of Soo Sing, and by sheer accident had come upon this cache of valuable pearls. Soo Sing, he supposed, must have been collecting them for years; probably somewhere in the Trobriand Islands, which were not so very far away. Of course, one would make inquiry for heirs; but it was not at all probable that a Sino-Papuan coolie would have any traceable relations; they might regard the pearls as almost certainly theirs.

He would have them properly strung just as soon as they reached Sydney on the honeymoon tour they were going to take by and by; and Thora, if she wished to please him, would wear them every day. Good pearls should be worn.

Thora had been well educated; at this point she ought to have recalled, and penitently thought on, the story of the bridal robe of Deianira, that burned the skin and flesh of its luckless wearer. Instead, being modern, she told herself: "You had that coming to you; serves you damn' well right!"

"The Maid of Niu Niu," another unusual story of the South Seas by Beatrice Grimshaw, will appear in an early issue.

A stirring novelette of adventure with a novel scene —aboard a cable-laying ship—by a writer who knows his cable-ships.

By KINGSLEY MOSES

Illustrated by George Avison

Deep

IT was a dirty night in November. The wind from off the harbor, slashing across South Street, drove the icy rain into oblique slants of sleet. Chief Cable Engineer Fred Emery, in his conventional shore-going clothes, wished himself in oilskins.

It was not late; many windows of the giant buildings which march so splendidly up Broadway still shone warm and cozy. And here and there a brighter light, thirty stories aloft, gleamed fixed like a low-hung planet against the gloom of the sky. But Battery Place was empty; even its habitual vagrants had been shooed this night to shelter by the fury of the storm.

Drenched and buffeted as he was, Fred Emery wasn't bothered. A little physical discomfort is nothing to a cable engineer: he lives his life in rough seas and the savage outposts of civilization. Whole gale or hurricane: take 'em as they come.

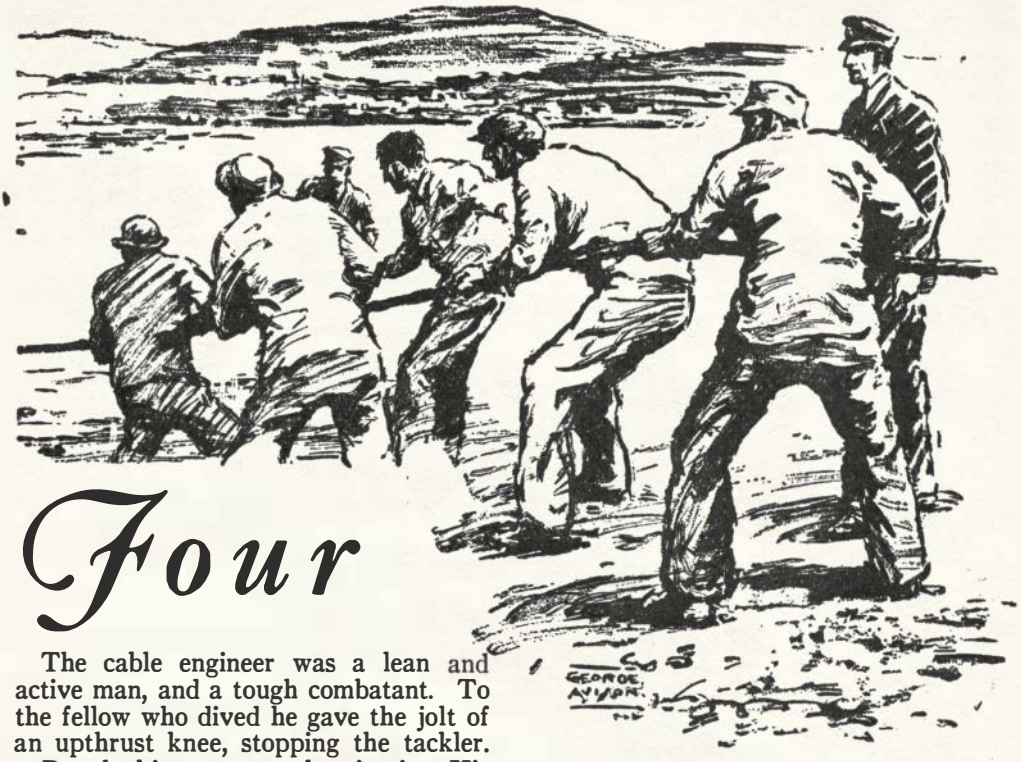
Moreover Emery was determined to find his missing men, two seasoned cable-hands; and with them, perhaps, Mr. Kerr, second officer of the cable ship *Magellan*. These three, Mr. Kerr, Jefferson and Dowd, had come ashore that afternoon, satisfied that in such weather the ship would not quit her berth down there off Staten Island. Ready for sea, tanks and bunkers laden, the *Magellan* was lying now just out of the path of the liners which almost hourly boom in along the stream of Ambrose Channel. Coiled in her four deep cable-tanks was the huge, more than three-thousand-mile line which would tie the New York station to Fayal in the far Azores.

To lay the submarine telegraph is the cable engineer's job. He possesses the authority to give a direct order even to the ship's master. So when at nine o'clock on this November night word had been given by the president of the Triton Cable Company that the *Magellan* must put out with the tide at daybreak, it had been Fred Emery's option as to who should round up the missing men. Promptly, and characteristically, Emery elected to go himself.

Pelted and harassed, Emery made his swift way along the docks, headed for a haunt not far from the Municipal Ferry. Not that he expected actually to find his men there; they were no common bums to hang out all night in a dive. But he did know that at this certain place his boys were able to purchase liquor a little less vile than commonly for sale elsewhere. More important, the crimp who kept the parlor held Emery in wholesome awe. He, most probably, could tell where Jefferson and Dowd had gone—likely up Broadway, in a taxi, to some burlesque show. Mr. Kerr, a steady, elderly chap, would presumably show up of his own accord.

At the little park to the left, empty as the adjacent Wall Street, the cable engineer turned north. As he turned, something dark dropped at him.

It was lucky that the sand-bag just grazed his ear and shoulder, for the thug who had swung was of enormous stature. And another man was coming out of the pit of the area steps. This second assailant dived low.



Four

The cable engineer was a lean and active man, and a tough combatant. To the fellow who dived he gave the jolt of an upthrust knee, stopping the tackler.

But the big man came lunging in. His right hand was up to slug with the sandbag again, when Emery's whipping left smashed into the side of his jaw. The giant staggered.

As the man wavered an instant Fred Emery got his own overcoat open; then his .38 was in his hand.

The glint of the wet street-lamps on the blued barrel of the gun was enough. The small man, crouching and scrambling, skittered round the corner into South Street. The big one went lumbering across the park, running in eccentric zigzags as if dizzied by the blow he had received.

The blued nose of the weapon followed the thug easily. Emery could have dropped the man as he pleased. But prudence now repressed the normal desire for retribution. A shot would bring the police; there would be endless explanations and delay. That wouldn't help the ship sail. The cable engineer was the sort of man who, when he has a job to do, does it to the utter exclusion of all other considerations.

Accordingly he just stood there and watched his man run, absently rubbing his numb left fist against the rough fabric of his overcoat. The shabby little park, drenched in the gale, was again empty and silent.

"Now what—" Emery spoke aloud. Foolish. In this slum section, at this hour, any well-dressed man was likely to get slugged. He restored his gun to his pocket, still sucking his knuckles.

A block and a half up the angling street, and just short of the spider-work of the Elevated, Emery came to the scarred wooden door of a tenement. But the door gave at a touch, and he felt his way in unhesitatingly. If he recalled correctly, the stairs would be straight ahead. True: he came to the bottom tread. His way led up two flights; as he approached the door at the hall's end, he listened for the mumble of voices.

Quiet. . . . He rapped sharply, three double knocks, as one strikes six bells. He knew what he would see when the door opened—just another dump: a few sheepish sailor-men, and the owner, a furtive cockney known as Chippsy. No roistering den this; no more than a sly burrow, open day and night. . . . There wasn't any answer. Dump closed up? Awkward, dammit! It'd be harder to find his wanderers! He knocked again.

This time a voice said: "Come in." The door gave to his hand.

The only guests in Chippsy's were a policeman and a woman. The woman not a willing guest, either.

In his surprise, Fred Emery gave the girl no more than a passing glance. She sat as far from the cop as could be, by the dirty window. Ordinarily a fine big handsome girl, likely a beauty. But now woeful enough: the neck of her georgette blouse rent, her big blue eyes sullen, her straw-colored hair half down and dragging in damp wisps; with the stained red turban in her hand she tapped the knee of a white, sleazy stocking.

The cop said: "Bar's closed, brother."

Emery nodded. He was two paces inside the door, standing with feet well apart, square-balanced, the pose of a man used to a swaying deck. He was not a tall man, nor broad, but very deep-chested. Handsome though, with very bright brown eyes, and a healthy skin of the luster and the hue, nearly, of expensive saddle leather. His character was stamped upon him. Not even a cop would mistake his type. "Law?" was all he said now.

"Aw, no," grinned the policeman—all in the day's work. "Just a scrap. A little rough stuff."

Emery sensed misgiving. "Anybody hurt bad?"

"Three. In Broad Street Hospital."

"This girl?" It usually was about a girl. And this Junoesque thing was bait enough.

"Naw. She just blew in. Lookin' fer her John—maybe."

"The men who got hurt—you identified them?"

The officer, gravely deliberate, examined the personal card which Emery extended. Then, with lips moving, he surveyed the cable engineer's passport, visa-ed for Portugal, Italy, France and the United Kingdom.

"Kerr an' Jefferson an' Dowd," was his bad news.

THE rest of the story came quickly then: A stool-pigeon, Bugs Klein, had been planted here to watch for drug-smugglers. "He gets not a thing," allowed the officer. "But there is, accordin' to this punk, a lot o' strangers in here this evenin'. One, a whoppin' big Bohunk, seems to be the boss. He has a deal on with Chippsy, a few decks of the stuff to sell—"

The big girl spoke for the first time. "A dom lie, flad-fud!" she said in a heavy Scandinavian accent.

"Flat-foot" never gave her a tumble. "Meantime," his story ran on, "Jefferson an' Dowd drifts in. They're nice an' ory-eyed. They down a couple o' slugs, an' then both cork off on the sofa there. Then this guy Kerr comes rampin' in. He wants to snake Jefferson an' Dowd out o' here. An' someway that starts the ruckus. One lad gets heaved clean downstairs. Then I set in the game. Nobody home—scrammed, fire-escape. Then in blows this broad."

"My man got avay?" The girl's face was abruptly beautiful. The cop grunted but ignored her.

IT is no distance to the hospital. Emery made his way there almost cheerfully. He'd found his men; perhaps—

But the interne quickly disillusioned him. All three men were in bad shape. Bandaged and still unconscious, they lay side by side in the three cots in the ward. One look was enough; and Emery tiptoed out behind the doctor.

Kerr, it appeared, was indeed dangerously hurt. He had taken a terrible beating. And the two cable-hands had evidently been drugged. "Wood alcohol, maybe," offered the interne casually, for in that quarter of the city it was all in a night's work. "Again maybe it's knock-out drops—chloral." It would be three or four days before any of the men could be moved. And the ship must go out with the dawn tide.

Fred Emery stood there in the cold, aseptic-smelling lobby, puzzling over his problem. The young doctor was sympathetic, but busy. Nurses passed silently; an orderly rattled a sterilizer, and swore as he spilled scalding water on his thumb.

Over in a far corner, under a tubbed palm, a big man got up briskly and came across the tiled floor.

"Perhaps I can help, Mister," said the big man. "My name's Patrick. I'm a shipping-master down along here."

With no native sentiment of cordiality toward shipping-masters, Fred Emery could not but feel that the fellow's presence at this instant was providential. Well acquainted with the wiles of Mr. Patrick's profession, Emery was aware that this trafficker in human cargo had suspected there might be need of his services when the ambulance rolled up to the hospital. Still, in such an emergency—well, you couldn't pick and choose.

"All right, Mr. Patrick," he answered quickly. "Can you find me two men who know anything about cable work?" He produced his card.

"I have two men, Mr. Emery," nodded the shipping-master. "You see,"—he smiled,—"I asked who the lads were, when they came in. So I rather thought there'd be need of me."

Emery nodded. This was all natural enough in Patrick's trade. "Good. How soon can I get hold of them?"

"Five minutes, sir. My office. Up Battery Place way."

"Right. Can't be worse than pier-head jumps anyway."

"They're right good men; cable-hands, as a matter of fact," assured Patrick. "Worked on the *Atlantica* last year, all the way from Guantánamo to Montevideo." He had named the most famous of the British cable-ships. "They're both American citizens, though," he added. "Hardistock and Swemm, their names."

"You don't happen—" Officers weren't shipping-master's business.

"To have a good second officer?" Patrick took the words out of his mouth. On second thought this wasn't so extraordinary, either. The fellow knew that the *Magellan* would be short a second mate as well as two hands. "Yes, Mr. Emery, I can get him too."

"Let's go." This, thought Fred Emery, was certainly a lucky break.

NO river flows without a ripple, however. There were the three men in Patrick's office, all right; but not all of them were in tractable mood.

"Yuss, I vill nod go, I tell you!" A huge blond viking of a man was roaring at his companions. "Furst vill I bust your dom head—"

"What's this?" the shipping-master broke in. "Shut your trap, Hardistock. I've got you your berth."

The blond man wheeled like a belligerent bull. No slop-shop on South Street had been able to supply hand-me-downs big enough for his huge bulk; and his bony wrists protruded six inches from his sleeves. His shirt, as well as his face, was clean, and he wore a rubber collar with no necktie. But his round blue eyes were berserk with anger. "I vill nod go, Mister," he reiterated. "Dey haf my gurl in chail. Mr. Chones, here, knows. In chail!"

"Is that all!" The shipping-master turned to the well-dressed, quiet-looking man to whom Hardistock had been talking. "This is Mr. Jones, Mr. Emery," he said over his shoulder; "the second officer I spoke of. He knows this big square-head. Tell him, Jones, that we'll

spring his damn' doll for him. But he's got to be on board the *Magellan* at midnight himself."

"Yes, but—" Jones demurred. He moved away from the two seamen. "I've been up to the Mercer Street station myself, Patrick—was there when they brought the woman in. I did my best to get her loose. Nothing doing. She's been in trouble before—tough broad."

"Hell! *Tell* him we'll bail her out. What do we care—"

"Yeah? But he won't budge until he sees her out himself. He's in love with her, poor sap! Moreover, Swemm, here, won't sign on without his mate."

Patrick stormed: "Don't be dumb, Swemm. You been on the beach long enough—"

"No," said the man called Swemm shortly. He was a lean, wiry fellow with a long nose, the point of which drooped and seemed to wriggle a bit as he spoke. "Both of us or none."

Getting a man out of prison in time to catch a boat was no new experience for the cable engineer. Releasing young women, though, was scarcely in his line. It seemed that he would now have to take a hand in it. That the woman was in Mercer Street might help—his own home precinct.

"Let me see what I can do," Emery suggested therefore. "A phone in your inner office, Patrick, I suppose?"

"Yes sir." He opened the door.

"I'll talk alone."

Within less than five minutes he was out again.

"Well?" Shipping-master and presumptive second mate spoke together.

"Maybe." The chief cable engineer scanned the three applicants again. On

the whole, they appeared likely enough. Most important was the fact that all three had had experience on cable-ships. Nearly anything, in these days of steam, can be knocked into what passes for a sailor; but a cable-hand must know his work: one bungler may imperil a multi-million-dollar job, as well as a dozen lives.

If these men were as good as they seemed, Emery just had to have them. He might search New York for a week for men accustomed to cable work—there are few such in the United States, practically every mile of submarine cable being manufactured in England, and laid by English ships with English crews.

And the cable engineer had not a week in which to push such a search, not a day—two or three hours, to be exact. The *Magellan* had secured this particular job in keenest competition. Time, moreover, was the very essence of the contract. Already there had been unaccountable, annoying delays. The cable to Fayal must be laid and working inside twenty days now.

That was fair time enough. It allowed even a week's margin—if nothing happened.

Well, it was Fred Emery's job to see that nothing happened. That was what he was paid for. He ran over the papers of the three men hastily now. They were as represented: nearly a dozen first-class discharges proved that.

"Come on," he said to Hardistock. Then to the shipping-master: "Perhaps I can do something; perhaps— Happen to know an alderman."

"Might help."

"You stay here, Mr. Jones," Emery nodded to the officer, as good as engaged. "Keep Swemm with you. No need of more than the two of us. Hardistock, come on."

"I vill nod go unless—" But the huge seaman shuffled along behind nevertheless. Emery's resolute face and steady brown eyes always inspired faith.

UP an empty Broadway the taxi made good time, swinging left into Eighth Street and again left down Mercer to the twin green lights of the station house.

There another taxi stood at the curb; and from its door, as the cable engineer got out of his own car, a very pretty girl in a dark green slicker jumped and ran to meet him.

"Oh, Fred, how lucky, isn't it!" She kissed him delightedly. Alice Emery, six months married, had lost not a bit of enthusiasm for her seafaring husband. "I couldn't believe it when you phoned. You can't stay over tonight—"

"No such luck! Matter o' fact, I've this job for you. May be disagreeable." He explained the situation. "Of course, if she's absolutely a gutter-bum—well, that's out. But you see how it is."

"Reckon I can manage her for a day or two," his wife laughed. Arm in arm they entered the station, Hardistock shuffling behind.

SOLIDLY behind his high desk, the knobby-jowled police lieutenant listened. "We don't have to tell you the charge this Swanstrom is held on," he pondered. "Still, seein' you're a friend of the alderman's—just plain disorderly conduct."

"Takes in a lot of territory, doesn't it?" Emery grinned.

"Sure. We just picked her up in a dump near Sout' Street where there'd been a rough-house. Three fellows got beat up bad—"

"Was it Number ——?" He named Chippsy's. The same girl?

It was. The lieutenant reached for the phone. A brief chat with the alderman. "Says you're okay, friend." He hung up. "So if your wife'll be responsible for her— This Swanstrom's done thirty days, before—transportin', caught with a bottle—"

"It was sometimes done," Emery smiled. "Before Repeal."

"Once or twice. And we'll want her as a witness when the case comes up. Awright, rush her outta here," he conceded. He motioned a patrolman. To the rear, a lock clanked.

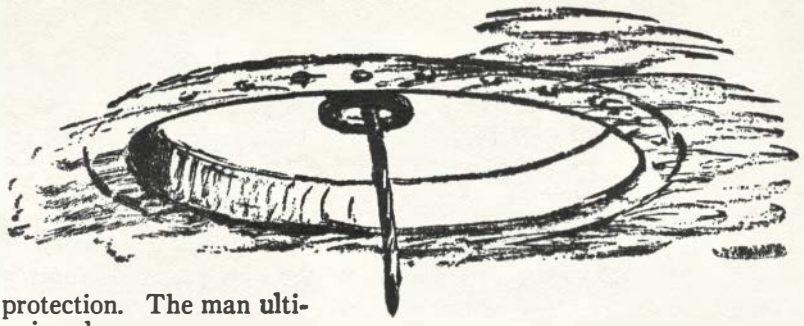
Inga Swanstrom, the woman of Chippsy's, all right, came out of the cell rank. Standing, she was even bigger than Emery had guessed. Beautiful undeniably, even in the torn georgette. In her hand she still clutched the red hat; her straw-colored hair was even wilder.

"Inga!" Hardistock breathed. And the big girl leaped into his arms.

"Well, she's nuts fer him, anyways," observed the lieutenant sentimentally.

Alice Emery, romantic herself, smiled too. "She can't be so awfully bad, Fred. I'll look out for her, dear."

All four, these strangely assorted lovers, went up to the Emerys' apartment. The cable engineer, speaking in words of one syllable, finally explained to the big seaman that his sweetheart would be absolutely safe, and unjailed, under



Mrs. Emery's protection. The man ultimately was convinced.

"Only three weeks, darling!" Emery hugged his wife farewell for the second time that evening. She was booked on one of the fast Mediterranean boats, and would meet him in Fayal when the cable job was finished. Then London for a couple of weeks before the next tour at sea.

"Long enough, my dearest." She released her arms unwillingly. Both women watched out of the window as their men went off in the rain.

AT dawn, and ready to sail, the chief cable engineer was content enough, for all the weariness in his bones. His haphazard replacements of the night before had proved satisfactory. The new second officer, Jones, had accepted the middle watch amiably, and had not even growled at the unusual practice which prevails on a working cable-ship of making officers stand four hours on and off. His credentials showed Mr. Jones a thoroughly competent man, both in sail and steam. The two men, Hardistock and Swemm, gave evidence of knowing their work.

The *Magellan* had her anchors up and was off before the sun had climbed the tinsel minarets of Coney Island. Captain Weatherby and Emery drank coffee in the captain's cabin beneath the bridge, as the ship steamed out of the Narrows.

"Dumb luck, picking up those lads so quickly," smiled the cable engineer, rubbing his square chin.

"If some folks ashore—in the Triton Cable Company office, for instance—knew what it means to get to sea at six hours' notice," swore the captain mildly, "we'd not have to take such a cuss-condemned chance on being lucky!" He was a spare, sandy-haired man, the captain; extremely neat and generally taciturn, sharing with all seafaring men an intermittent resentment against landsmen who always expect compliance instantly with the most difficult orders.

"Well, there'd be a whopping big forfeit if we didn't finish the job in time," Emery reflected aloud. "And, more than that, our friends the Five Continents crowd would probably get the next contract. That'd be bad news for the Triton, and their stockholders—and for us."

In the darkness of No. 1 Tank the hard-faced little electrical expert, Swemm, was busy with his own particular devilment.

The Five Continents Deep-Sea Company was the only other American firm capable of handling a major cable job.

"Eight bells, sir," announced First Officer Rolls, poking his scarlet face and walrus mustache into view.

"Strike the bell," Weatherby ordered.

Emery excused himself to go below and shave, and snatch an hour's sleep before the vessel should come up with the buoy out there off the Long Island beach.

For the job which must be done today was one of the most difficult and delicate of all cable-laying operations. Already the shore-end of the great submarine telegraph line, which should stretch from New York two thousand one hundred and eighty-three miles to Fayal, had been laid.

The shore-end, then, as the *Magellan* steamed steadily to its anchorage, lay securely fastened to the beach station; its other end was chained fast to the big red-topped iron buoy in the sea. Now the job was to put over a boat which should unhook that shore-end from the buoy, heave it on deck, and there splice the shore-end to the deep-sea coils all ready there in the vessel's tanks.

Only a sluggish swell ran, fortunately. For the work of dismantling the buoy is ever a treacherous proceeding. A gigantic iron trigger is fastened with its point upward to the side of the buoy. Over this trigger is looped the chain which holds the submerged shore-end. To pull this heavy shore-end onto the deck of a vessel it is necessary to knock loose a huge nut which holds the trigger upright. When this nut is knocked off the trigger falls, and the chain, already secured to another chain from the ship, can be hauled up to the deck. But usually, in order to knock off this nut and release the trigger, it is necessary for one cable-man to leap out of the boat upon the tossing buoy itself. And more than once a man on that bobbing buoy has not been able to get back into the rowboat for hours. The buoy tosses and pitches madly in high-running waves, and the unfortunate human derelict must manage to cling as best he can until at last the boat may be brought close enough to him for a desperate leap.

IT was all old stuff to Emery. For ten years, as junior cable engineer, he had worked in the open boat, pitched hither and yon by the waves, often almost crushed between boat and buoy. Three times in heavy seas he had spent most of a night clinging onto a buoy while a boat's crew tried to rescue him.

They were shy a junior engineer this trip. But Welsh, the veteran first cable-hand, could handle the job well. Emery had to direct from the bridge. And Mr. Rolls, first officer, was working the boat to the buoy, edging up under its lee.

EIGHT men, besides the first officer, manned the boat. The pierhead-jump hand Hardistock was pulling like a sailor; bare-headed and bare-footed, this blond brute Hardistock had the viking stamp. *"Skoal!"* Fred chuckled.

Yet for all the comparatively smooth sea the boat's crew didn't seem to get on with the job. Welsh, with his maul, was slapping at the trigger from the boat's bow. "Oh, get onto the buoy, Welsh!" Emery roared through his megaphone.

Still Welsh faltered. There was obviously something the matter. The fellow couldn't be afraid, after twenty years of that sort of work.

"Welsh, you—" Emery began.

And caught himself. He had completely forgotten old Welsh's rheumatism. The old chap had been complaining lately. But when he had received a direct order, he was too game to yip!

"My fault," his superior growled to the captain there beside him. Now he would have to order the boat back; get a younger hand—or do the job himself.

No. The mustached Mr. Rolls had risen from his stern thwart and was balancing easily. Was he going to try it: a sailor, in rubber boots and oilskins? That wasn't a sailor's job. But Mr. Rolls did try it.

And went heavily into the water.

A swell, fifteen feet high, lifted the boat at the instant and, carrying it on its crest, swept it twenty yards from the buoy. Mr. Rolls' head, shiningly bald, bobbed a moment to the surface as his white uniform cap drifted away. Then there was only the white cap showing.

There wasn't a second to lose. Good swimmer though Mr. Rolls was, the weight of his clothing would have sunk any man. Something had to be done—and done mighty quick.

Yet still the ship's boat spun as port and starboard oars pulled against each other. Mr. Rolls had been in command: no one was left to direct the rowers.

Fred Emery, high on the bridge, was already free of his oilskins. Desperately he wrenched at his tight boots. A

hundred-yard swim was nothing. But the sea, though smooth, was high; and boots full of water can be leaden. The mate had not come up.

If he had gone to the bottom diving could not save him. The *Magellan* was in ten fathoms. And the sea at this time of year is nearly as turbid below the surface as it is in the harbor of a great port where the diver is in complete darkness at two or three fathoms down. Fred Emery's right leg got free; but his left was still held in its rubber casing.

The rolling buoy in the water showed now a band of red, then a curved black segment. Nothing else on the surface.

Captain Weatherby gestured. "Good lad!" he shouted.

For there was the new hand Hardistock, wallowing through the swell. He swam with crude, driving power. Ten yards from the buoy he dived. Almost instantly he was up again, dragging a dark body. Its weight pulled him down once. But he battled to the top once more. This time, unmistakably, there was a bald head tucked into his elbow like a football. Shortly the boat got to them. The whole crew of the *Magellan* cheered as the two were dragged over the boat's gunwale.

Hardistock, naked to the waist, grinned and tossed his mane of hair. But even in his triumph was not yet satisfied. The maul which Rolls had dropped lay on the thwart at his feet. The run of the rescuing boat had carried it right up to the buoy. Seizing up the sledge, Hardistock leaped to the buoy as the boat bumped it and slid off.

Hardistock did not slide off. With his left hand he gripped the pole on which the buoy carried its lantern and flag. With his right hand the blond giant reached down and with one mighty crack knocked loose the obstinate nut. Clanking, the trigger flopped over; the chains slid off; the buoy was free.

"That's a man!" chuckled Weatherby.

WITHIN two hours the details of the rest of the work had been cleaned up. Working adeptly, the cable-hands had finished the splice of the shore-end and the main deep-sea cable aboard ship. There was a continuous electrical conductor from ship to shore now; the electrical experts in the testing-room were talking to their mates in the white house on the beach. The *Magellan* was ready to begin laying, due east across the Atlantic.

Dry, the indomitable Mr. Rolls was again on the bridge. Oscar Hardistock, warm with a grog issue, slung his hammock forward and prepared to snatch some sleep. He had had his brief moment as a hero. Now he was sleepy.

THE *Magellan* was three days out and seven hundred miles of cable had slipped smoothly over the stern sheave into the sea. So far only No. 2 tank had been drawn upon—the tanks of a cable ship are numbered from bow to stern—No. 1 farthest for'ard.

There were four tanks in the *Magellan;* No. 2 the deepest of all, a huge well holding more than two thousand tons of closely coiled cable. It was Hardistock's simple but important job to watch the cable come off the coils and up through the iron hoop, called the "eye," without catching or kinking.

From the eye the cable runs aft over rollers to the brakes; to the dynamometer—which registers the degree of strain—and thence to the big sheave over which it drops to the deep sea.

Mr. Jones, off watch, strolled by. He said quietly: "Don't forget what you're here for."

Hardistock scowled like a mastiff. "I haf no stomach for it, Mr. Chone. Dot falla Emery vass gud to me, an' my gurl."

"Yeah, you big, dumb bum—because he needed a cable-hand. You know what's in this for you, if we click, squarehead."

"Sure. T'ousand dollar. But I don' like de chob, Mister."

Jones poked tobacco into his pipe, gazing idly over the clutter of the foredeck as if he were not concerned with Hardistock at all. But his words were: "The Five Continents office knows how that tugboat captain got killed last year. Maybe it wasn't murder. But you'd take a sweet rap for manslaughter. Get that through your thick head, Hardistock."

The man's big blue eyes stared. "I didn' know—" he began.

"Well, you know now. We foul up this job. Though probably Swemm will be enough, stupid." He strolled on. . . .

It was midnight when Fred Emery turned in. He would fall asleep in a minute. But once more he glanced aft at the running cable and the dynamometer. The arrow marked 40 on the scale. Normal, the cable ran smoothly, dropping into fifteen hundred fathoms. The lads on watch were chanting the immortal "Sally Brown":

But as they fetched a walk one day
They met a press-gang crew;
And Sally she did faint away
While Ben he was brought to.

The boatswain swore with wicked words
Enough to shock a saint,
That though she did seem in a fit
'Twas nothing but a feint.

Had Fred Emery known that in the darkness of No. 1 Tank the man Swemm also hummed these words, he would not have dozed so tranquilly.

For Swemm, the little hard-faced electrical expert, was busy with his own particular devilment.

Unseen by the bridge, Swemm had straddled over the edge of No. 1 Tank, and dropped down six feet to the top flake of the coiled cable, which ought to come into use sometime about daybreak. Not daring to make a light, he had groped along the smooth, slimy length of the top layer—or flake—until his searching hand had discovered what it sought: a wrapping of canvas where two lengths of cable had been joined. Immediately, with the sharp sheath knife which all cable-hands carry in their belts, he had cut the outer wrapping.

To shear through the tough armoring wires which cover the insulation of the cable was a more difficult job. But with a small pair of scissor wire-cutters he managed, after twenty minutes' hard work, to slice and wrench the wires far enough apart to give him access to the thin layer of jute which covered the gutta-percha inner lining. In this malleable stuff he presently effected an opening. He was at the conductor itself now; a slender core of copper.

This he might have cut at once. His task, though, was more complicated than just that. That copper core of the cable carried a direct current all the way from Rockaway Beach to the testing-room of the vessel. So, the instant that core was cut the telltale light up there in the testing-room would flicker off the mirror—vanish completely.

The expert electricians up there in that testing-room would not delay long in looking for the trouble. Nor would they waste time investigating No. 2 Tank, from which the cable was now paying out. That tank was brilliantly lighted, and there were always at least two men on watch in it. In a very few minutes—if the current were interrupted—they would come searching in Tank No. 1.

But Swemm, expert in his trade, was prepared to prevent this. From his pocket he pulled a yard of copper wire. This he spliced into the copper conductor. Beyond this first splice he then sawed through the armoring wires so that they would snap under the slightest strain.

Now he was ready to cut the core itself. With the slender copper wire he would then bridge the cut so that the current would continue to flow, however.

He was well versed enough in cableship routine to know that there was one minute when the interruption of the current would not be noticed. At every half-hour exactly, according to pre-arranged plan, the Rockaway operator switched off his current for about twenty seconds.

Swemm grinned now. He kept his eye on the luminous dial of his wrist-watch which he had synchronized with the testing-room timepiece. He had only to wait for the half-hour.

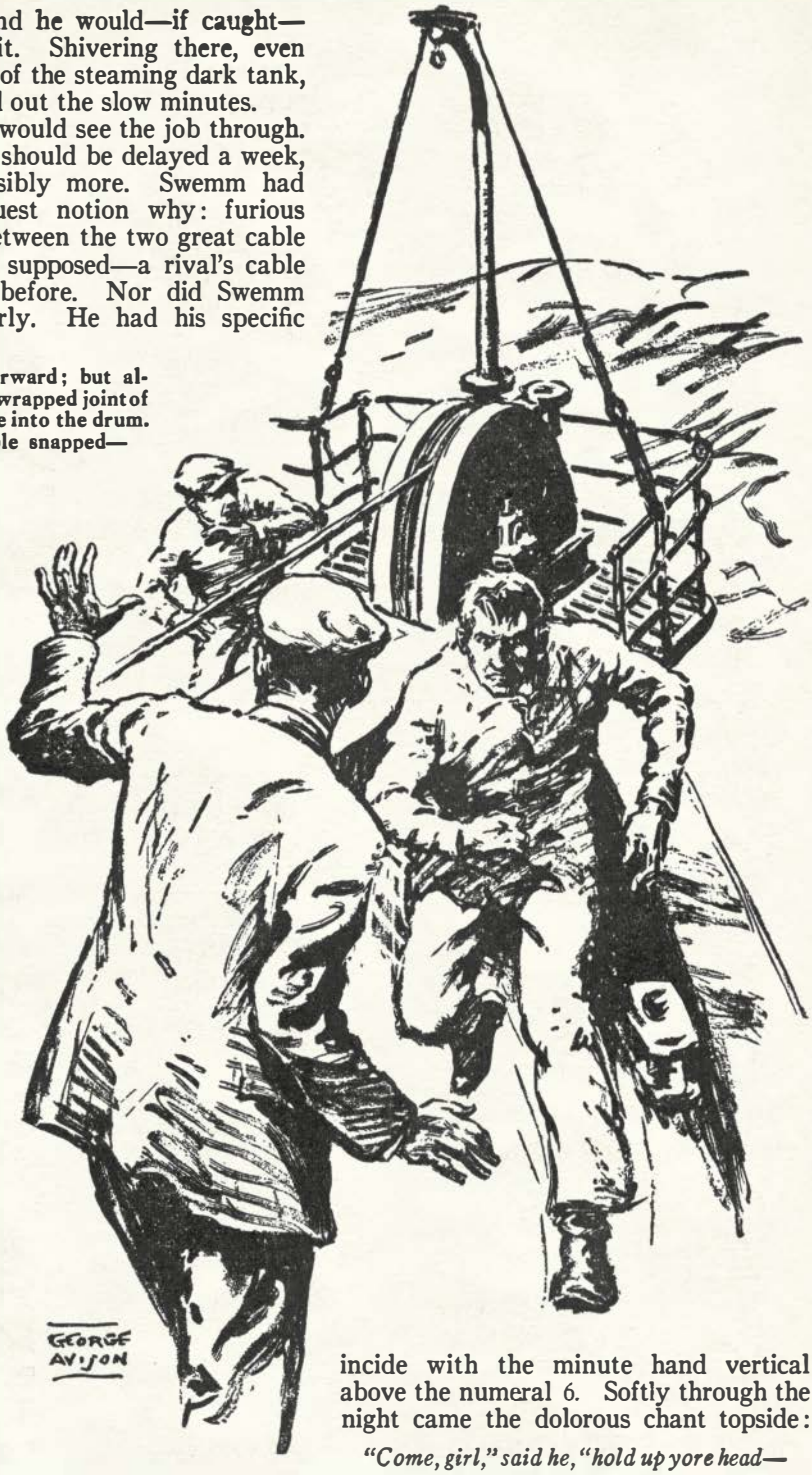
There were still, he saw, six minutes before his moment of swift action should arrive. He was sure of success. Skillful as he was, it would take him but a few seconds to splice on his wire. After that, with the current flowing again over that makeshift bridge, there would be no particular hurry about covering up the deadly damage to the cable itself. He could wind the tape wrappings so that no casual eye would descry the injury.

JUST the same, relaxed and waiting now, he realized he was sweating violently. It had been hard physical work, accomplished in the ghostly gloom of what little of the starlit night filtered through the half-open top of the tank.

The mental strain had been immeasurably greater than the physical effort too. He had had to be constantly on the alert against discovery. Every step on the deck outside had caused him to quiver and cower back into the deepest shadow. Discovery here meant no mere penitentiary sentence. Swemm was enough acquainted with the ways of seafaring folk to know that a far more painful punishment was likely to be meted him if he were caught in this treacherous activity. The men of the *Magellan* were loyal to the last degree. He could anticipate no mercy if he were detected. The officers might intervene to save him from the fists and boots of the outraged sailors and cable-hands. Or they might not. He would certainly deserve the roughest

treatment. And he would—if caught—certainly get it. Shivering there, even in the warmth of the steaming dark tank, Swemm waited out the slow minutes.

But now he would see the job through. The *Magellan* should be delayed a week, ten days, possibly more. Swemm had only the vaguest notion why: furious competition between the two great cable companies, he supposed—a rival's cable has been cut before. Nor did Swemm care particularly. He had his specific



Emery leaped forward; but already the faultily wrapped joint of the cable had gone into the drum. When that cable snapped—

orders. It was for this he was being paid, being promised a safe and satisfying haven in Paris after the dirty job was finished. Fair enough.

He glanced at the lighted disk of his watch. It needed but two minutes before the circling second hand should coincide with the minute hand vertical above the numeral 6. Softly through the night came the dolorous chant topside:

"Come, girl," said he, "hold up yore head—
He'll be as good as me;
For when yore swain is in our boat
A boatswain he will be."

The watch hands were on the half-hour.

Instantly Swemm sliced through the copper core. He jerked the ends well

apart, then spliced his filament of wire across the gap. In no more than thirty seconds the job was done.

It wouldn't be long now before he would know if everything was well: if the current from Rockaway ran smoothly again over his makeshift bridge of frail wire.

That next five minutes was probably the longest of Swemm's unlovely life. Trembling, he watched his lighted minute hand crawl on. And still no one came.

So—he had succeeded. The eccentricities of the light in the testing-room had been interpreted—as he had hoped—as nothing more out of the ordinary than the regular half-hour signal from Rockaway Beach.

There remained now only the trick of masking the damage. Chewing at the tough gutta-percha, he managed to work it back fairly smoothly over the covered conductor. The almost-severed armoring wires he wrenched back into place. He wound on the tape smoothly and smeared it with the grease with which the cable flakes are coated. Only most careful examination would disclose the flaw. There was no reason that any examination should be made.

Peeping cautiously aft, watching the bridge until the pacing officer of the watch had retired for a moment to the chart-room, casting a wary eye upward to be sure that the man in the crow's nest was not leaning out to observe the deck, Swemm swung himself out of the tank and sauntered forward even as the last verse of the lugubrious ditty drifted heavenward:

His death which happened in his berth
At forty-odd befell;
They went and told the sexton, and
The sexton tolled the bell.

IT was six o'clock of a beautiful November morning—though the air in those waters was so warm as to belie the month—when the splice between tanks No. 2 and No. 1 went splashing into the sea. The cable-ship, slowed to a point where she had barely steerage-way, rolled comfortably in the turquoise blue of the Gulf Stream. Masses of sea-weed, yellow and sponge-like, drifted by, floating lazily northward in the balmy current. The thermometer showed the temperature of the water at 76° Fahrenheit.

Slowly and more slowly as the ship lessened its pace and the pressure of the great drum increased, the cable had come trundling down its trough. Slowly, ever so slowly, it ran three times around the giant wheel of the drum, then under the wheel of the dynamometer; and so, sagging, dropped almost vertically over the stern into the sea. No longer was there that tense strain which dragged the bight out to a taut, singing line till it met the water a good two hundred yards abaft the stern sheave.

GATHERED about the dynamometer, the hands and crew of the *Magellan* were enjoying this subtropic dawn. Even the cook, greasy and bald, had appeared from his subterranean galley, with his mangy cockatoo Mike perched on his shining pate. Mike's adolescent years had been passed in an undertaker's establishment. So, contrary to his kind, the bird's conversation was not in the least profane: Mike favored indeed a nicely muted voice, politely accented.

"It's a fine ship, this *Magellan,* for all she's a steamer," contentedly nodded an ancient Yankee from Boothbay Harbor; the warm air welcome to his elderly marrow. "For an iron ship she's built near as good as the oak keels we oncet laid down in Boothbay—"

"Walnut, with silver handles!" Mike the cockatoo helped out the conversation.

"Stow that bird, Doctor; he'd give you the collie-wobbles, he would," suggested Welsh, chief cable-hand. "If I had my way I'd heave the thing overboard—"

"With a shot o' lead at his head and feet," supplemented Mike.

Quartermaster Penzance, an old British man-o'-warsman, in flowing trousers and spotlessly clean half-sleeved undershirt, added his note of disapprobation. "'E's a proper Jonah, yon fowl!" he snapped. "You'd do jolly well, cookie, to wring 'is narsty neck, and 'eave 'im overside fer the bleedin' sharks to scoff. Though, dessay, even sharks'd gag on 'im."

The cockatoo ruffled his pink crest, and rolled his wicked eye at Quartermaster Penzance—late of Cardiff.

"Paddy was a Welshman, Paddy was a thief!" he croaked spitefully.

"Blast the bird. But we'll soon be 'ome," grunted another cable-hand. Almost all expert cable-men are British, since the industrially proud United States has never been successful in the manufacture of submarine cables, and the tight little isle has still a monopoly of the trade.

"'Ome!" jeered the ancient Yankee from Maine. "'Ome to dear old Lime-

house. An' you'll be walkin' arm in arm with Liz—"

"Wot 'arm in arm in arm!" retorted the ready-witted cockney.

"An' the widow inherits the whole estate!" said Mike.

"Lor lumme, the bird's 'arf 'uman," groaned Penzance.

"Amen!" Mike closed the subject.

"Here comes the splice now!" shouted the chief cable-hand, Welsh. He had gone forward to No. 1 tank and was watching the artfully wrapped joint rising up from the round, wide pit. Pretty soon the new length would be pulled through and over the "eye." After that when the greatest strain would come—well, no one could precisely predict.

Swemm, to be sure, was safely ensconced by the starboard rail of the upper deck—the cable ran down the port alley, over its successive rollers. When the cable should snap—well, Swemm didn't intend to be anywhere within the radius of its terrific backlash. Many and many a man has been smashed down to instant death by the fierce slash of that whipping recoil. The crooked electrician, of course, had no personal spite against any single individual aboard. He was only looking out for himself. But when, as the cable parted, the yell of horror and astonishment should come—

ALL the while, ignorant of the plot so carefully laid against them, the cable engineers rather patted themselves on the back, delighted at the ease and success with which their task was being accomplished.

"Eleven days' run to the Azores, if things keep on like this," said Fred Emery, leaning comfortably against the bulwark and watching the cable begin to gather speed as the ship picked up her momentum again.

"That'll be a record," agreed Welsh.

Though never familiar with his hands, Fred Emery was in the habit often of talking with them. He'd known most of them ten years or more, and they worshiped him. Now, gathering about, they watched the sleek gray-black cable run; and were presently joined by the old sea-dog Rolls, always full of yarns.

"Remember the whale, Mr. Emery, we picked up off Juneau that time three winters past?" put in Rolls. Several of the cable-hands nodded their heads. That had, indeed, been one of the most interesting experiences of the *Magellan*, when, searching along the Alaska coast for the flaw in a broken cable, they had finally dredged up not only the cable itself, but with it the decomposed carcass of a whale which had neatly and adroitly netted itself, winding the cable round and round its body until finally it had strangled to death.

"And mind the shark's teeth we found in the All-Eastern off Seychelles, sir," reminded Penzance. "Who'd 'a' thought a bleedin' shark would 'a' bit into a cable like that! Incredulous! Not 'arf, what!"

"And the minnies you caught at two thousand fathoms, sir, in the sounding dredge," suggested Yank.

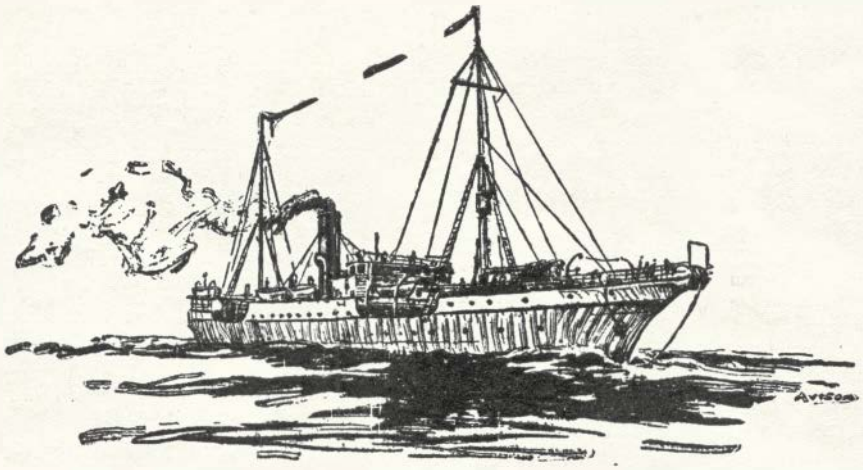
EMERY nodded, recalling those unfortunate little fish only two inches long which the deep-sea dredge had caught at two sea miles of depth. They had been still alive, those strange little creatures, with their phosphorescent spots running regularly along their sides and the bright spots of the same glowing stuff just above their eyes, evidently to light their course through the utterly dark depths of the submarine ooze. Relieved from the vast pressure of the great depths, their bladders had burst when they had been brought to the upper air. And though they had lived in the chief cable engineer's bathtub for two days, they were never able to swim upright; one navigated crazily at an angle, the other writhing upside-down.

"Yes," said Fred Emery thoughtfully. "Davy Jones's locker must be a weird place: no light, no motion, no sound; nothing but the terrible cold and dark—our thermometers, you know, often record a temperature of twenty-five degrees down there. Doesn't freeze at that depth on account of the pressure, of course. Utter dark, utter silence; though perhaps the deep-sea caves may be illuminated by phosphorescence; and the sight of a wreck, with the fishes swimming in and out of the portholes—"

"An' dead men floatin' here and there; with seaweed growin' out o' their faces an' their beards all full o' barnacles!" suggested Penzance gruesomely.

But just then there was a sudden exclamation of dismay from Fred Emery. He leaped forward to look at the cable, slithering along its rollers through the guiding wooden trough. His practiced eye had spotted the faultily wrapped joint.

But already the joint had gone into the drum, the brakes of which regulate the speed of laying.



There the catastrophe occurred. With a whining wail and a crash, the cable parted and the inboard length snapped back like an enormous whip.

Fortunately, though, it lashed straight up into the air, recoiling upon itself so that only the spars of the masts overhead were sheared away like matchsticks. No cable-hand, happily, was bending directly over the trough at the moment, or he would have been smashed.

But the outboard length, released, flopped dully into the sea.

Emery was too old a hand to waste all-important time in useless execration. There was nothing for it but to grapple.

The great five-pronged grapnels were brought up and made fast to their endless chains over the bow. The vessel ran back twenty miles upon her precisely plotted course, and then patiently began to zigzag, first north, then south, from that base.

To pick up a cable, which is little over an inch thick, from the sticky black ooze of the bottom of the ocean seems—to a landsman at least—a pretty hopeless task. Skilled cable engineers, with luck, may make no very great job of it.

On the forward deck there is another dynamometer; and under this the grapnel rope, which drags the five-pronged hook across the bottom, runs. So long as the huge hook meets no obstruction on the bed of the sea, the dynamometer registers an even amount of strain. But once the grapnel bites into the lost cable, the strain visibly increases—just as the strain on your fishline brings it taut when your hook catches a snag. Instantly, then, the ship is stopped; the gigantic fish-line is fastened to the winches; and the grapnel is slowly and carefully heaved in over the bow.

This operation, simple enough in theory, is not always so easy in practice. On a rocky bottom the grapnel fouls again and again in submarine caverns—often has to be cut and abandoned. In the old days the second transatlantic cable—that of 1865—lay lost for a year; and only recently, off Newfoundland, an earthquake fault opened beneath the sea to swallow a long span of cable forever.

But fortune—to the disgust of Mr. Jones and his fellow-conspirators—this time favored the *Magellan*. At noon of the second day the grapnel caught. The pointer of the dynamometer rose steadily to indicate the strain. Inch by inch, the grapnel chains were drawn up by laboring winches. The bight of the broken cable, greasy and dripping, appeared at the surface—was quickly, then, hauled to the deck's level.

Fred Emery said nothing at all. There was no direct evidence of tampering.

Within two hours, though, the splice was made. Once more the cable rolled smoothly out from No. 1 Tank. Once more in the testing-room the steady bright dab of light showed that communication was reëstablished with the station at Rockaway. Swemm's malevolence had cost less than two days' delay.

Emery was now naturally on guard. Sabotage, outright crime, were no novelties in cable operation. Cable-ships have been tampered with before. Telegraphers all recall the international squabble off the Florida coast, not so long ago, when American warships had been called out to prevent a cable landing. There is the record of the indictment and conviction of one foreign company for cutting the cable of a competitor. What has happened once may happen again. And, Emery reflected, the Five Continents

Company had an eye to future business —five million dollars per job, this sort of thing paid.

The individuality of the enemy aboard? Obviously one of the new men. But here the cable engineer made the mistake of centering his suspicions upon Swemm: Jones seemed too respectable; Hardistock too dumb. So only Swemm was under close surveillance.

It was, as a matter of fact, several days before Jones even tried to move again. Peacefully, monotonously, the *Magellan* continued her steadfast way across the ocean. The wind, brisk but favoring, stirred the water into white wavelets of foam. The deep-sea swell cradled the vessel in a gentle rhythmic pitch as regular as the beat of the engines. Behind the ship trailed the cable, eternally unreeling, sluggishly dragging itself down to the ooze of the deeps.

IN the pleasant laziness of this atmosphere Mr. Jones, the hired mischief-maker, found Hardistock a very blunt tool. Since Mr. Emery had befriended his girl—

"No, I tell yah I vill nod," he swore when Jones cornered him. "Yust cut it vid an ax—no, I vill nod!"

"'Fraid somebody'd get hurt?"

"Dey vould be killed. It vas not for such business I sign on, Mr. Chones!"

"Aint you the sweet sap to bother about one more killing!" the second officer tried to goad. "If I squawk about the tugboat captain—"

"Huh, and get irons yerself if you squawg." Hardistock wasn't so thick, after all. "Get along vid you now. I vould spend my off vatch vid der dogtor." Contemptuously turning his back, he slid down the ladder to the cook's galley.

Baffled, Jones let time run by. Ciphers by radio hectored him; but yet he could not see his opening. No later than sometime tomorrow they were due to sight the Azores. Despite the delay, the run would be made in fourteen days. Allowing two days more for landing the cable at Horta, and Emery would still have completed his job four days within the time-limit.

From the cabin deck aft, the second officer sullenly surveyed the smooth laying. Sleekly, at its proper speed of eight knots an hour, the long gray snake of the cable went slithering into the sea.

Again the wireless man padded to Jones' elbow. Just another squawk from the rogues at headquarters, he knew. "*'Fear wife's condition desperate,'*" Jones read. As if he didn't know that! He might have wired his confederates at the Five Continents' office the same message himself. But, for Sparks' benefit, he merely shook his head dolefully. "It's a cruel life is the seafarin' man's!"

"Right you are, sir. Sorry." Sparks returned to his instrument.

Jones idled, pondering. "Maybe," he murmured. "By Godfrey—maybe!"

On the bright morning of the next day, sure enough, they came in sight of the tip of the peak of the great Pico, the giant slumbering volcano which juts a full seven thousand feet straight up from the level of the ocean. Eighty miles away they saw it first, like a small dark cloud set on the sharp horizon.

But throughout the whole day its image towered higher and higher as the *Magellan,* thumping off her eight knots, gradually drew nearer. It was full night at last when the telegraphs jangled the order, *"Stop her!"* and the anchors boomed through the hawse-pipes.

A good twelve miles offshore, as the vessel still was, the glow of the little town of Horta was palely visible on the sky-line. But the flash of the lighthouse to the south, and a red on the starboard bow, assured them all that the transatlantic voyage was over.

There was still plenty to do, however. Anchoring did not mean rest. From the point where they now rode the connection to land must be completed by the big bight of the shore end, which must first be laid on the land itself and then carried out to the ship.

ON the forward deck the huge anchor-buoy, big as a locomotive, lay ready. All hands, working hard, unshipped this gigantic bobbin, first having shackled the deep-sea cable to it. Securely anchored to the bottom of the sea by three big hooks, the buoy rolled lazily on the gentle swell, the light of its heavy lantern gleaming like a lightship's beacon.

Then once more the *Magellan* was under way and steaming off directly to the north for exactly three miles, while all her officers watched the lantern on the buoy and the carbide flare which floated sputtering in the water beside it.

At a carefully logged distance of precisely three miles, a mark buoy was dropped—this to insure the easy finding of the cable should any extraordinary accident happen to the anchor-buoy.

The cable engineer leaves as little to chance as is humanly possible. . . .

By midnight the *Magellan* was silent. Separated by exactly three miles, the lanterns on the two buoys burned steadily. At the wing of the bridge, Second Officer Jones stood his watch, thinking deeply. Unless he soon got the break he hoped for, there'd be no traitor's gold for the intelligent Mr. Jones.

AT the first light of the morning the little tug with the huge lighter in which the shore-end length of cable was to be loaded was beneath the beam of the *Magellan*. Twenty of the cable-hands and crew wrestled the heavy bight of the shore-end as the winch slowly yanked it from the after tank. When the twelve miles of giant cable should be safely coiled on the lighter, the tug would tow the barge in to the mouth of Pim Bay. From there, through tortuous waters, the cable would be worried in to dry land as current and tide permitted.

In the meantime it was imperative that Fred Emery go ashore—to see the local manager of the Triton Company, inspect the new cable hut, and determine that all provision had been properly made for the reception of a new trans-atlantic cable-line. And find out when the liner *Constantine*, with his wife aboard, was due.

The Azores manager, a pleasant, pink-cheeked young electrician called Merriweather, was on the steps of the landing quay to receive the *Magellan's* launch.

"Awful glad to see you, Chief," Merriweather greeted, refreshingly clean in his white linen against that background of dusty little Portuguese soldiers, customs officials and barefoot natives in soiled rags. "You're only two days late. But I was a bit worried. What with another one of these revolutions of ours—"

"Revolution? Oh, only one of the usual things, I suppose?" The cable engineer well knew the turbulent character of the Portuguese Republic, and was not much worried. Still— He turned to Penzance, in charge of the launch: "Be back in an hour, Penzance. Meanwhile, no one is to go ashore."

"Aye, aye, sir," the old quartermaster saluted.

Across the wide plaza of hard-packed earth, fringed with palm trees under a truly tropical sun, the two representatives of the Triton Company strode briskly, followed by an admiring throng of ragged children, piratical-looking natives in enormous straw hats—dogs, donkeys, goats and a single independent sheep. They turned up the cobbled streets, and presently they reached the Triton headquarters, a neat, white two-story building.

There for an hour they were engaged in formal interviews with all sorts of local officials, the signing of multifarious documents, the affixing of seals. The Latin is as strong for red tape as our own efficiency experts.

Rising to start back to his gig, Emery paused idly in front of the large Portuguese admiralty chart by the office doorway. Mentally he compared it with the *Magellan's* chart, and pricked the point of his pencil upon the approximate spot where the cable-ship now lay anchored.

"Eight fathoms," he observed. "Yes, that's what we made it." But then, as his pencil circled round the spot of the *Magellan's* anchorage, he was prompted to comment: "That is extraordinary!"

"Yes?" Merriweather inquired.

"That the water should shoal so rapidly just to the south of where we lie. Only four or five fathoms out in the open sea. You wouldn't think it possible!"

"Probably correct, though," pointed out the manager. "There's mountain peaks and plateaus all over the bottom of the sea here."

BY noon, his preparations ashore completed, the cable engineer was back upon the lighter, now deeply loaded with the shore-end coil of the cable. Behind the puffing little tug the lighter came wallowing in to the mouth of Pim Bay.

No better weather could have been selected. The sea was flat as a dance-floor; the water a dull hot brass under the sun's brilliance. Through huge boulders of black volcanic rock, twisting between the gaunt, green ribs of several ancient wrecks, the lighter was shoved and bunted as close inshore as possible in the sheltered shallows of the bay.

There, as at Rockaway, the hand line was run ashore. After it went the big armored bight, dragged this time by eight yoke of long-horned oxen. Through the deep pit already prepared, the cable was laid to the white cable hut, slipped into the manhole of the floor and permanently fastened.

So now one short end of the cable stretched out from Fayal to the sea. There remained now only the job of splicing this short shore end to the main

length of cable anchored to the big buoy. Once that twelve-mile length from Fayal was spliced to the twenty-three-hundred-mile length from Rockaway, the trans-atlantic submarine telegraph would be in operation. . . . Twenty-four hours more should see the job finished.

THE sun, low behind the sharp volcanic peaks, was almost gone. Twilight, with sudden dampness and a steadily rising breeze, swept in swiftly.

The *Magellan,* brilliantly lighted, had edged in from her former anchorage to a point not far from the mouth of Pim Bay. To her again the length of shore end had been transferred from the lighter. In the morning, paying out this shore end, the other end of which was now securely attached to the cable hut on the beach, the *Magellan* would steam back to the anchor buoy. There she would pick up the deep-sea cable and splice on the shore end.

"Champagne this evening, Skipper!" Fred Emery happily grinned as he came up the Jacob's ladder from the lighter.

"Aye," smiled Captain Weatherby, leading on to his cabin. There was cause for festival; a smart job smoothly done.

"But by the way!" Emery settled himself. "You don't mind, I know, if I stand the middle watch myself tonight. It's blowing up a fog, and a hatful of wind too. Give Jones a relief. Man's not quite himself, it seems to me. His sick wife, likely."

"As you say," the master agreed. "But Jones, by the way, has gone back ashore just now."

"Ashore?"

"Yes, just a quick trip. About his wife, y'know."

"Oh, sure. He has been getting radios. So I'll let him rest—take his watch. Tell him, Skipper, will you?"

This arrangement was just made to order for Mr. Jones. On his first visit ashore he had had an inspiration. So he had come back to the ship with "an ace in the hole"—in his pocket. Under an alley lantern he had found the sleepy-headed Hardistock.

"I've leave to go back to the beach awhile," he explained to the Norseman. "But first I want you to look at a little thing I picked up on the floor of the cable-office. I'd say Emery tossed it away. It's kind of interesting."

He pulled out a dirty, crumpled cable form. It was addressed to Fred Emery at Horta. It ran:

ARRIVING FRIDAY ON THE CONSTANTINE STOP I HAD TO DISMISS THE WOMAN INGA STOP SHE WAS NO GOOD

ALICE EMERY

"That," Mr. Jones pointed out, "is how *kind* the Emerys are to your sweetheart—you dumb square-head!"

Morning—but one would hardly have known it had the hour not been clanged by the strokes of the ship's sharp bell. All night the storm had been making; and the fog and rain were so soupy that the stern sheaves of the *Magellan* were not to be discerned from the bridge. For the work to be done this was as bad a condition as could be; for to make a splice in foul weather is deadly dangerous work. Just to find the anchor-buoy to which the deep-sea length was made fast would be something of a trick in the fog—even for the *Magellan's* navigators.

Poking along through the dense gloom dead slow, the massive shore-end cable rolling out heavily behind her, the *Magellan* warily nosed her way.

"There or thereabouts, Fred." The Captain pointed into the murk after nearly three hours' slow steaming. "The buoy should lie under our keel."

"What does the lead give you, sir?"

"By the deep—eight."

"Check. Have the launch put over, and I'll go out scouting. I don't want to be dragging this shore-end round and round in curlicues. When that thing kinks, it's the devil!"

The *Magellan's* anchor-chains roared free. The ship swung lazily to the wind.

"We can't be more than a few hundred yards out of the way," Fred Emery reflected aloud. Even wind and drift could not set them very far at fault in such a short run as this.

The launch, davits already swung out, slid down its falls smoothly. At the bow falls, fending off, was the man Hardistock, a capable seaman.

"But suppose I have an officer too, Skipper," Emery said. "Mr. Rolls—oh no, this is his watch—"

"I'll be glad to go, sir." Jones came forward. "I've no duty till noon."

EMERY, with Jones following, slid down the falls into the cockpit of he launch. Another man followed.

"Who's taking the engine?" Emery, watching Hardistock cast off the blocks, was himself fending with a boat-hook.

"I'll take care of the engine," said Swemm's voice aft.

"Why didn't the chief—" Emery began. Rum thing, to send an electrician to attend to a gasoline motor! Chief must be very shorthanded down there in the engine-room. But already the launch was nearly out of sight of the mother ship, the wind was carrying it fast.

The cable engineer's design, of course, was to cruise in concentric circles about the cable-ship, going wider and wider each time until they must eventually come upon the missing anchor-buoy.

BUT being eminently practical-minded, Fred Emery realized that this enveloping fog, so deceptive of sound as well as baffling to vision, might make it seriously difficult for him to make sure that his circles were really wider. He could not guess with any accuracy even how far he could see through the gray opacity of the bewildering mist.

No great trick for the mathematically minded man, though, to remedy that difficulty, and to make sure that no patch of sea escaped through observation. There was a lead-line in the launch's locker, knotted with colored rags at 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 fathoms, and so forth. Whirling the lead of the line as one whirls a bluefish drail, Emery cast it into the fog, his eye marking the last knot of colored rag which he was able to discern. Twelve fathoms away, it was, from where he held the line. He could see clearly not much more than twenty yards, therefore.

By compass he could steer the launch more accurately in squares than in circles. Figuring rapidly, he estimated that since the launch's speed was about ten knots, he could get a range of vision of forty yards—twenty yards on either side—by holding to every compass point about ten seconds longer on every trip around the cable-ship. He would consequently leave no space of fog-shrouded water uninspected.

Nevertheless, though with every trip the sound of the *Magellan's* fog-horn came fainter, there was yet no sign of the huge buoy.

Grumbling to himself at the cable-ship's extraordinarily sloppy navigation, which indicated an error of twenty or thirty degrees in a little more than ten miles, Emery became increasingly puzzled.

Could the buoy have been sunk?

Unlikely: though sunken buoys had been a common enough experience in wartime. Any vessel then had been in the habit of taking a pot-shot at a cable buoy—startlingly like periscopes, as inflamed imagination viewed them. The *Magellan* herself carried one veteran buoy with seven shot-holes punched in it. But who would sink buoys in peace-time? Nonsense! Anyway, at the worst, they would come upon the mark buoy pretty quickly. It was for just such an emergency as this that the mark buoy had been placed.

The melancholy hoot of the fog-horn was becoming very, very dim. It would be dangerous to lose that guiding sound entirely. The fog seemed to thicken.

"Must have drifted, sir," said Jones.

"Obviously."

But with the words came the shout from Hardistock: "Anchor-buoy dead ahead, sir!"

There it was, the huge cone of it black against the mist. The light had burned out, of course; but the red pennon at the peak of the basketwork mast whipped smartly in the breeze. Emery, listening for the fog-horn, could just hear it.

Engine cut, the launch went drifting down on the buoy, and bumped handily alongside it.

Fred Emery listened for the fog-horn's wail once more, pocket compass in hand. "Nor'east," he guessed. "All right. We'll know where to head for the buoy now. But first I want to look at those chains."

THE buoy was rolling heavily to the heave of the sea. To ride it, would require strength and agility. That is all in a cable-man's life. Easily Emery leaped, and cleverly clutched and held onto the base of the staff of the flag.

Everything appeared shipshape: The trigger which held the chains was upright, fastened by a single big nut. One blow of a heavy hammer, and the nut could be made to jump up; the trigger would flop over, and the chains would be free.

The anchors which had held the buoy in its original position must be gone, of course. Otherwise the thing could not have strayed so far. But, as the tension of the chains which remained showed, the buoy was still tethered to the cable down there on the sea's floor. That was all that really mattered.

"Okay," Fred laughed in relief. Once more he dimly sensed the moan of the distant fog-horn. "Pull up the launch here, Hardistock, so I can get in aft."

The launch—not without some damage to its neat paint—came bumping along the rough metal bulge of the buoy. Fred Emery poised, ready to spring.

The buoy rode free, adrift in the fog-enshrouded sea. And Fred Emery was adrift upon it.

Then abruptly he caught himself. His whole attention was centered suddenly on something—something of apparently no more import, though, than the coiled lead-line there in the launch's stern. The lead sinker had been bumped overboard and had dropped on down into the water. But it had not carried very much of the line after it. And that was the peculiar thing.

The coil of the line now was just below Fred's hand. Stretching, he could just reach it from his crouching position on the buoy. He seized the coil and yanked upward.

Jones, alert, intent, watched the move narrowly. Swemm and Hardistock gaped.

"What the hell's this?" Fred rasped. There were but three of the rag knots between his hand and the slug of the lead. Mark five had not been wet. "Deep four! Not as shoal as that, surely!"

"Deep four iss right!" Hardistock was equally taken aback. The subtly scheming Jones had confided most of the details of his design to his confederate Swemm. But he required only loyalty from Hardistock—not necessary to demand understanding from that thick-headed one! The big seaman, therefore, could comprehend no better than the cable engineer why a buoy which had been streamed in eight fathoms should now show but twenty-four feet of water.

Jones understood perfectly, though. He had arranged it like that. He had not, however, been able to foresee this chance discovery by the cable engineer.

Something had to be done—done immediately. And Jones was a quick-

witted rogue. It took him a very few seconds to perceive what he might do.

Promptly he did it.

A light maul lay on the thwart to his hand. Jones swung this hammer adeptly.

NOT on Fred Emery's head, though. Murder was no part of Jones' program—at least, not outright murder.

Instead, the maul hit the big nut which held the cable chains, knocked the nut clear. Down flopped the trigger, and the released chains went splashing off into the water.

The buoy, anchors long since gone, rode free now even of the cable. It rolled loosely adrift in the fog-enshrouded sea. And Fred Emery was adrift upon it.

The launch leaped quickly away, Hardistock staring dumbly. Neither Jones nor Swemm, in the cockpit, even glanced backward.

The launch was lost from sight of the buoy and was already sweeping out in a wide circle to the westward before the slow-witted Hardistock realized exactly what had happened. But now he surveyed his two mates with a dull and rising feeling compounded of fear, loathing and horror.

Swemm, wizened and silent as ever, crouched over the launch's engine, a clout of oily rag in his teeth, dirty fingers fumbling here and there over cocks and piston-heads. Jones, weathered face impassive beneath the visor of his clean white uniform cap, watched the compass in his left hand, while with his right he steered the craft.

Hardistock, faced aft, sat with elbows on knees, staring at them. He—the only actual killer of them all—could not even comprehend such actions as this brutal maneuver of his confederates. To slay in scarlet anger, through accidental violence—any man might do that! But to maroon a human being on a buoy, a buoy which would drift through fog and rain helpless to the open sea—no, Hardistock couldn't understand that.

"Look you," he growled, finally summoning words. "I vill nod stand for this. Hear me!"

"For what?" Jones raised his eyebrows.

"For leafing a man to die—die slow—hang on vhile he can—starve—be thirsty—fall off den into der sea! Ach, no. I vill nod stand id!" He rose, waveringly menacing, as if threatening to stumble aft.

Jones yet could not risk a revolver-shot's report. Moreover, he might still need this dumb ox. So he was heartily glad that he had the foresight to fake that cable message concerning the woman Inga. That, true, had been the inspiration of the moment. Loafing about the cable office the previous afternoon he had just chanced to glimpse a genuine message for Emery from his wife Alice. That had spawned the idea. To pick up an extra blank and concoct his own guileful message had been simple.

It saved some trouble now. "You seem to forget what this fellow's wife did to your girl, m' son," he reminded Hardistock.

The big seaman growled in his throat. He had almost forgotten that, for a fact.

Jones pressed his advantage. "Like as not, that Emery woman turned your girl back to the police. She'll be sittin' in some stinkin' jail now—see. You should worry about Emery!"

LIKE a boxer who has been stunned, and attempts desperately to clear his bemused brain, poor Hardistock hesitated, shaking his head in bewilderment. Emery's wife—it came to him tortuously—had betrayed her solemn promise to shelter and protect his sweetheart. Yet the big simple fellow could not, for all of that, manage venomously to hate the cable engineer. Dumbly, instinctively, like a horse or a dog, he knew a good boss when he met him. In anger he might indeed have tried to kill the cable engineer; normal, he could not endure to be a party even to his destruction.

"I vill nod let him drown," he persisted, with all the extraordinary obstinacy of his kind. "I vill nod, I tell you, I vill—"

But Jones was smart enough to be ready to counter that. "Who said anything about drowning, m' son? Emery will be picked up tomorrow all right, all right; but not till after we have got away from here. Matter of fact,"—he decided that he could go ahead with the truth from this point—"I had to get Mr. Emery out of the way for a while. When I went ashore last night, it wasn't to send any wireless message. It was to work up some way to keep the cable from being laid on time. That's the job we're hired for—never forget that—to spoil the Triton folks' contract."

Big Hardistock, sensing this fragment of the truth, sat down on a thwart. Swemm had cut the engine now and they were drifting idly. It was not their plan to appear on Fayal during daylight.

Jones continued: "I found a lad I wanted, name of Manuel Maria. Used to know him at home—doesn't matter where."

"In stir," Swemm grumbled under his breath. It had been in New Bedford jail, as a matter of fact.

"Stow that," Jones hissed, then smoothly continued: "This Maria is a whaler. Well, we get a gang and go out in this Manuel's whaleboat. That's last evenin', see. And we need a gang. It's no soft job to tow one of those anchor-buoys about three miles, even with wind and sea favoring; besides being careful not to cast loose of the cable on the bottom all the way.

"Didn't know I'd have the fog to help me, of course—though I could've guessed it from how thick it was last night. Not that I had to have the fog, either; that place we planted the buoy isn't charted accurately on the map the *Magellan* is using. One of these earthquakes they're all the time having here must've heaved up the ocean's floor, likely. As you saw, there was only four fathom of water there instead of the eight fathom the ship's chart said there should be."

Even Hardistock was astute enough to understand the cunning of the plot now. "Ho, so if der *Magellan* goes oudt to dot buoy, she goes hard und fast aground!"

"Exactly—unless she'd used her hand lead all the way—which there wouldn't have been any reason for doing. We shifted the mark buoy to correspond, too."

"Well, I'll be dommed! Und Mr. Emery sees she's deep four chust by luck?"

Jones knew that he had put over his argument. Even such a wooden-head as Hardistock would be able to understand that when Emery discovered the real depth of the water where the buoy lay, all chance of putting the *Magellan* aground and delaying her indefinitely vanished. Emery was out of the way!

THE problem now for Jones, Swemm and Hardistock was how to get away clean themselves. And already Jones had figured out how that—so far as he himself was concerned, at least—could be handily accomplished.

Friday morning a liner from Naples, bound for Providence, Rhode Island, touched at the port of Angra on a neighboring island, Terceira. After dark tomorrow evening, Thursday, Manuel Maria's whaleboat would take Jones over there quite comfortably. Whether he would take Swemm and Hardistock with him—well, there was plenty of time to make that decision. They had to play along with him now, or risk the hangman's rope as accessories to murder.

Evening found the brave trio partaking of the hospitality of Manuel Maria's roast kid, stewed chickens and smoky native red wine. Jones saw to it that Hardistock got drink aplenty.

FOR Emery, marooned on a crazily pitching buoy in the vast fog-bound ocean, there had been no time at first for a logical marshaling of causes and effects. Relieved of the cable chains which had served as its makeshift anchors, the buoy spun and plunged dizzily for some moments. Only by wrapping his arms and legs tenaciously about the flagstaff was Emery able to maintain his hold.

Gradually, however, this demented, precarious craft regained its equilibrium; and its helpless passenger was permitted to relax something of the cramping tenseness of his grip. This strange craft upon which he had been cast away would support him indefinitely, Fred realized; there was surface enough on it to accommodate half a dozen men; but the flagstaff supplied the only hand-hold.

Aware that he could count upon no immediate attempt at rescue, for the cable-ship would wait an hour or longer before suspecting that anything serious was wrong, Emery deliberately composed his mind to a synopsis of the reasons for his strange plight.

It was, he had to admit to himself, largely his own fault. Square and straightforward himself, he was prone to attribute the same characteristics to all his fellow-men.

But this job alone, upon which he was now engaged, was a contract which ran into millions. That was worth any man's attention: certainly a crook's.

Emery saw quite clearly now—too late—the whole sequence of the plot, commencing with the hold-up off South Street, and leading through the procession of events which had so artfully duped him: the deliberate assault which had crippled Mr. Kerr and the men Jefferson and Dowd, and left an opening for the agents of the enemy; the ingenious and partly successful attempt to cut and lose the cable—Swemm certainly had been the rat who had been gnawing there, for only a skilled electrician would have been up to that sort of sabotage.

Now, here, was Jones' last desperate measure, well planned, successful likely enough. Certainly successful if the *Magellan* went nosing into the mist through a sea improperly charted!

Unless the fog cleared—

It was characteristic of Fred Emery's courage that he did not at first consider his own desperate situation.

The imminence of the mortal peril to himself came to him now only with the sharp twinge of a cramp in the biceps muscle of the right arm with which he clung to the staff of the buoy's flag. He shifted his hold to his left arm as he jerked the cramp out of his right.

Suppose both arms should cramp? Big as the buoy was, there would be no staying upon its sleek and slippery surface without a solid handhold. Anchored and steady, several men might have perched on it comfortably enough—but bobbing and bowing and jerking to the surge of the running waves, a man must sustain a tense grip every instant in order to manage at all to stay aboard.

With considerable difficulty, awkwardly grabbing as he essayed to shift his hands, Emery finally divested himself of his reefer and uniform coat, pulled off his white broadcloth shirt, knotted the end of one sleeve securely into his belt, and fastened the other sleeve to the flagstaff. That would hold him relatively steady.

Then, as he jerked the last knot of the shirt's sleeve tight, an unpredictable lurch of the buoy caused him to grab out instinctively with both hands. In that motion the reefer and coat, which he had held clamped down under one knee, slid away from him and dropped into the sea. Thus he remained, protected only by his sleeveless undershirt; and while the weather is never freezing off the Azores, a driving November rain can prove paralyzingly chilly.

TIME dragged. His ears strained for some signal of rescue. But there was no sound at all across that dismally fog-smothered sea. It came to the drifting castaway that more than just the success of his job was imperiled.

To the shivering of his flesh, the gradual but perceptible diminution of his muscular strength, was added now the tremor of fear.

His mouth and tongue ached with dryness; ever more frequently the cramps in his arms wrenched at him. Then, as nausea shook and retched him, he thought he heard some one singing. Some one *was* singing: it was himself. The warning of the twilight of consciousness!

He tried to stir himself fully awake, to try to carry on with himself an argument for and against his chance of rescue. But this only brought him always around and back to his premise: if the fog does not lift during the hours of daylight so that the sea lies clear—

In the dark they could never find him.

And by the dawn of tomorrow, supposing that the buoy were moving into the open ocean at a pace no greater than a mile an hour, he would have, by that time, been carried far out of sight over the horizon.

Thus night laggingly did arrive. Spread-eagled on the reeling buoy, the all-but-unconscious man lay. The fog, ever darker and thicker, closed down to bury him in blackness.

IT was nearing sunset the following afternoon when three figures left the gray stone cabin of Manuel Maria above Horta, and picked their careful way down the black lava path which zigzagged steeply to a secluded beach. Maria himself went first down this precipitous trail, which was indeed no better than a goat run. Behind him were Jones and Swemm, no longer in uniform, but dressed scarecrow-like in the cast-off, disreputable garments which Maria had garnered for them. They proposed to land at Providence in the guise of destitute seamen—old papers would cover that; and there need be no mention at all of the cableship *Magellan*. Even if anyone were looking for them, it wouldn't be as workaways; but as drowned men drifting in the sea's swell.

The whaleboat, with sail and auxiliary, rocked on the gentle wavelets beyond the ebony-black volcanic sands of the beach. Thigh-deep, Jones and Swemm waded out to the native Brava crew. Before dawn they would raise Terceira. Thence home at leisure.

They were not disturbed by any fear of apprehension. Yesterday's fog, it is true had been burned up by the morning sun today; but by the time clear visibility might have been had from the *Magellan*, Fred Emery would have been on the drifting buoy for nearly twenty-four hours; that would be far away. Jones' forethought too should prove helpful. It had seemed an excellent idea to capsize the launch and set it also adrift, driven by wind and sea. The *Magellan*—

if not already aground—would likely spy the launch before it found the buoy. And the launch, with all four men vanished, would tell its own grim tale—discourage any search, or even suspicion, of the men who had vanished.

Nor did either of the fugitive rogues waste so much as a thought on the man Hardistock. The quantity of liquor the big seaman had swallowed, well salted with morphine, would keep him out of mischief for many hours. And even when he did awake to find himself deserted, it was practically certain that Hardistock would keep well clear of Azorean authorities. What the man would do later, how he would subsist, Jones neither knew nor cared. The boob had been of no use, anyway; so to hell with him! And the total cash reward for the completed job would be piled in two bundles of banknotes instead of three!

With the setting sun at his back Jones lounged comfortably in the bottom of the whaleboat, at peace with this admirable world. . . .

So far as Hardistock was concerned, Jones' reasoning had been entirely correct. The big fellow, waking in the dark, alone, drugged, dizzy, took a long while to try to make up his mind to any concrete course of action. When he did start to prowl about the windowless cabin in search of matches and light, he cut his hands on the glass of broken bottles. He was sick too, horribly sick—that'd have been the morphine. For the first time in his life all strength seemed drained from his burly, capable body.

He had no watch; and though he could read his direction cannily enough from the stars overhead, he was too ignorant to estimate even roughly the hour of the night. Nor, from this isolated cabin of Maria's, was even the faintest glow of the city of Horta visible.

HARDISTOCK wasn't thinking much about either time or place just at the minute, though. Water was what he wanted: fresh, cool drinking-water, to pour down in great gulps, to splash and lave himself in. Stumbling and falling in the pitch dark, he searched for it frantically. And water is about the scarcest thing there is in the Azores, which depend entirely upon rainfall for their potable supply.

At last, thirst overcoming his nausea at even the thought of wine, he brought himself to smash an earthenware demijohn, and to gulp the warm, smoky liquid from the splintered lip of the jug. After the first few swallows, the stuff began to taste good again. He guzzled it.

In a few minutes he began to feel strong enough to go somewhere—whither, it didn't matter. His feet stumbled at last upon a beaten track; in blind instinct he managed to pursue it. At last he came to a point where the path, at a great height above the ocean here, bent sharply round a jutting tor of lava.

DRAMATICALLY the twisting street-lights of Horta, the flat half-disk of the harbor—all was spread out beneath him. Recoiling at first, as if the lights of the street-lamps were so many accusing eyes glaring to discover him, the man gathered himself after a moment of tremulous listening and again ventured to poke his head around the angle of the pyramidal tor. That which he descried brought a fillip of hope into his misery.

A brightly lighted vessel lay athwart the gap between the horns of the harbor mole.

In full possession of his faculties, even so dull an intelligence as Hardistock's would not have mistaken that craft for a cable-ship. The official signal of the cable-layer—the two white lamps with a red lamp between—were missing from this ship's peak. But in Hardistock's fuddled, drugged consciousness there now existed only the overpowering obsession that he must find the *Magellan.*

Therein Jones' psychology had been awry. He had given too little credit to the seaman's innate honesty, the power of the man's conscience. Reasoning from his own point of view,—or Swemm's,—Jones would have avoided the *Magellan* as if she flew the yellow pest flag.

Hardistock, however, had no such scheming, logical soul. He wanted only to confess his guilt now; perhaps somewhat palliate his crime by a full avowal of the dirty work he had been hired to do. And most of all,—if not to late,—to give the information which might lead to the rescue of Mr. Emery. No, Jones nor Swemm could not have foretold that.

So, half mad, mumbling and gasping, the huge fellow went stumbling downhill, choking as he ran: *"Magellan! Der Magellan!"*

But even Mr. Jones would have laughed had he been able to perceive that stupidly pitiful figure. For Mr. Jones had known very well that the *Magellan* was the very last vessel which would have put into the harbor of Horta that week.

This hour of darkness now drew on toward the dawn of Saturday morning. If the transatlantic cable were not laid and operating by Sunday noon, the Triton Company would have failed in its contract, made itself liable to enormous damages and ruined its expectation of future lucrative business. The *Magellan* frantically grappling for the lost cable, unmarked by buoy or definite bearing, could be nowhere but in the open sea—or better yet so far as Jones was concerned, hard aground on some one of the uncharted, earthquake-upthrown shoals.

On and on poor Hardistock plunged, nevertheless, till he came to the crumbled wall and lighted street end of the town's confines. Then, discretion once more asserting itself vaguely, he turned left to the sea, seeking to slink along the darkness of the empty beach till he could come to the point of nearest swimming distance to the gayly illuminated vessel.

He could not know that the ancient fort, still used as a garrison post under Portuguese dominion, projects well out into the deep water. Its massive, medieval bulk rose now surprisingly before him. At the same moment came a sharp challenge.

Unmeaning as the words were, the glint of the sentry-box lantern on the steel of a soldier's rifle-barrel was easy to understand.

Hardistock was much closer to a thicket of nipa palms than he was to the water. He dived blindly for the dense shelter of the low-growing palms therefore. He crouched among the huge, drooping leaves; his heart beneath the bare flesh—for his shirt had been all but ripped from him—thumping so hard that he was a-tremble all over.

BUT to the phlegmatic sentry, this was all in a night's work: prowlers and petty thieves were always plentiful along this waterfront. Certainly the soldier did not intend to desert his post to go crashing around through a palm thicket after some beggarly skulker. Besides there was lots of activity out there in the main street, just a few paces from the sentry box. Tourists from that liner out there in the roadstead, undoubtedly.

Funny time to be coming ashore. These must be visitors for an extended stay, not those casual sightseers who dropped ashore for an hour and then were gone forever again. These were undoubtedly headed for the single local hotel, eh? Leaning his chin on his rifle-muzzle,—the piece was prudently charged only with blanks anyway,—the sentry inspected the newcomers. Two women these were, neither in their way unhandsome in the pale, skinny Northern fashion. Two men from the American cable office were escorting them.

But from his nipa palm concealment, Hardistock also had glimpsed the women.

In the dazzling shock of recognition, the man forgot his fear, plunged dizzily up and forward into the light of the street-lamps.

NO wonder that both of the women stopped short, amazed, alarmed; no wonder that one of the local cable-men gripped on his cane, while the other dropped his hand into his pistol pocket! The creature that stood in the cobbled street was a very nightmare of brute violence; blood and black lava dust smeared his face and naked, hairy chest; torn strips of rag trailed from shoulder and waistline; and the wide-staring eyes rolled crazily, horrifyingly pale against the grimy sunburn of the man's skin.

But: *"Inga, mine gurl!"* the man sobbed, with a dreadful choking gasp. Stumbling, then falling forward on hands and knees, he pressed his disfigured face against the blonde woman's dress. . . .

However casual a Portuguese gentleman may be in matters of mere commerce, he can never be accused of lack of chivalry. General Villa Nova, acting governor, roused from his sleep by the story of the villainy which Hardistock fumblingly confessed to the local constabulary, instantly placed the official government steam yacht at the disposal of the pretty American lady.

At sunrise the yacht had reached the *Magellan,* still toilsomely engaged in draggin the bottom with its grapnels. Extreme caution in navigation had saved the cable-ship from actually floundering onto the shoals; but Jones' artful scheme in setting adrift the capsized launch had worked out as he had planned it. The boat had been picked up by another scouting launch from the cable-ship. The natural grisly inference had been drawn.

The governor's yacht lay alongside the cable-ship only long enough to acquaint Captain Weatherby with the truth, and to put Hardistock aboard—and with him Inga, obdurately determined to care for her man. The big Scandinavian mumbled his inference as to the probable location of the lost cable buoy before the *Magellan's* doctor mercifully put him to sleep.

Then the doctor shipped himself over to the yacht to accompany Alice Emery in her search for her lost husband.

And, in not much more than three hours, they sighted the drifting buoy, fifty miles south-southwest of the volcano of Pico. The yacht's master wasted no time launching a boat, even. Careless of his immaculate white paint, he took the yacht right alongside.

Still tied to the flagstaff by the twisted rag of his shirt, the figure of Fred Emery lay face down on the buoy's smooth, greasy surface. Alice, tense at the rail above, tried to discern indications of life. The buoy, reeling to the action of the sea, kept the body sliding and jerking fantastically, as if, even in death, there was to be no rest for this silent, pitiable voyager.

Agile Portuguese sailors went swinging out on ropes from the yacht's bobstays. They were still swinging loose, however, in their attempt to get footing, when a heavier sea swell smacked the yacht's prettily gold-lacquered lace-piece directly against the steel plates of the buoy.

The huge bob careened tipsily; Emery's body slithered around so that one of his limp hands was thrown into contact with the flagstaff. Perceptibly, the fingers of that hand gripped the staff and clung.

They had him aboard in a jiffy.

THE young cable engineer, helpless from utter exhaustion as he was, wouldn't hear of a land hospital. He would stay in his berth in his stateroom till the *Magellan* retrieved the lost cable. While he breathed, he would stick close by the job, even if he himself could not personally finish it.

And with Fred Emery's return to his ship, his fabled luck returned also. At mid-afternoon the grapnels caught in ten fathoms. From that insignificant depth the deep-sea length of cable was easily raised to the deck. The work of splice went forward. And there was no need to hurry: there was ample time now.

Toward nine o'clock that night Alice wakened the deep-sleeping patient: cruel that might have seemed, but the two ends of the cable were now in the jointers' hands—the big job was nearly concluded. Not for anything would Fred Emery have missed that, Alice knew right well.

Few words had passed between husband and wife; her lips on his forehead, her fingers on his wrist had been all the speech their hearts could require. But now the strain was past. Lightly she said: "Lucky I brought Inga, darling—though in fact, I couldn't well have left her behind, after she had testified in that assault case. She had money of her own and insisted on coming." The forged telegram had been explained.

"Aint love ludicrous!" Fred grinned.

"Why, I don't think so!"

FOR a while they sat silent. Outside was the cheerful clangor of hammers, and the hiss of soldering forges.

"They picked up Jones—fellow who tried to finish me—over yonder at Angra, the Captain tells me. Funny thing, isn't it: if he'd played square with Hardistock, I'd have been—well—" He flipped his weak hand toward the wide empty ocean outside his porthole.

Alice Emery shuddered. But it was an odd commentary that the very callousness and greed of Jones which had led him to connive at murder should have, in the end, trapped him.

There was a smart rap on the door. "Final splice is going over, sir," announced Welsh. "Wouldn't you like to be carried up to see 'er?"

"You're damn' tootin'!" Fred Emery agreed eagerly. "I started this job. I sure ought to be on deck at least to *see* the thing finished!"

And despite the misgivings of his doctor and his wife, Emery's loyal men bore him up in triumph to witn s the big job's ending.

The reat submarine telegraph line, all in one piece now across the Atlantic Ocean, smacked down into the water.

"'Scuse me, boss," sounded a husky whisper from the shadow of the deckhouse. Fred, held up by his men, turned to see Hardistock and Inga. The cable engineer impulsively thrust out his hand.

But Hardistock was too abashed—still felt his guilt too strongly—to presume to take the proffered hand.

"I'm glad," he did manage finally. "Mister, Inga und me bot' glad der splice vass finished!" He wrung his cap in his giant hands.

Inga drew herself up like a Valkyrie. She, at least, was not ashamed of this hulk of a man of hers. "Und vee t'ank you, Mister und Missus, who vass gud to us. Vee, vee get spliced too, tomorra."

The lights on the shore were bright, shining through the darkness. But Fred Emery, his wife in his arms, knew that her eyes were brighter.

THE END

Illustrated by
John Clymer

"You and I can forget this nonsense about sacred virgins," said Hamat; but he said no more, for Tanit flew at him furiously, striking out with her flint knife.

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Man, according to Benjamin Franklin's definition, is a tool-making animal. His first and most important tools were the weapons he contrived, and by virtue of which he has triumphed or fallen. Last month we printed the story of the first flint-bladed spear. Here we have the fascinating record of the first fight won by a metal knife.

Arms and Men

II—The Iron Knife of Wild Amon

MY friend Martin Burnside is a queer old chap who believes in queer things and has a queer collection of weapons from ancient days. Yesterday he showed me a long, lumpy, flat bit of iron. It was a foot in length, shaped like a leaf, with ragged but sharp edges—evidently some kind of knife or sword, since it ran down into a handle.

"It looks," I commented, "like that very rare thing, pure iron."

"So it is," and he cackled mirthfully. "Do you know that the first iron came from Africa? Ask any archæologist. If I told you this was the first piece of iron ever forged by man, would you believe it?"

"Certainly," I replied, sarcastically. "With an affidavit from Tubal Cain or a movie reel for evidence."

"Well, I have evidence," he snapped at me. "You'd believe nothing; you're a cursed skeptic anyhow. I bought this lump of iron and the papers connected with it, at an auction sale in the Hotel Drouot, in Paris, forty years ago. It came from the estate of the Dupuy family. The original Dupuy was one of the scientists whom Bonaparte took to Egypt with his army, and set at work exploring the country.*

"This Dupuy was in a group which went to Upper Egypt and spread over the whole place, digging, measuring and so forth. In those days, knowledge of ancient Egypt was scanty. Dupuy got lost for a week or more. He was finally discovered and picked up, half dead, among the hills west of the Nile. Here's his own story, a story of Egypt before the days of the Pyramids, ancient Egypt in its primitive state before history dawned!"

"Bosh!" I said, to nettle him. "I wouldn't believe your fantastic fairy tales!"

"More fool you!" Burnside angrily replied. "I tell you, here's something you simply cannot explain!"

"Are you serious?"

"Entirely. You may set his story down to hallucinations. It might also be laid to some sort of play acted out by descendants of the ancient sun-worshipers. It might also be called a lie. As a matter of fact, the only plausible explanation is to accept it as truth. I myself believe it."

I shrugged. "Something that can't be explained, eh?"

"Absolutely. The closing sentences will give you a shock that I defy you to expound and explain away! Meantime, here's an idea to ponder. How could Dupuy have known where iron originated, since this is a rather late scientific theory? How could he have known the Egyptian ideas about Set, in connection with iron, when these have only recently come to light? Chew on that, my young friend. And here's something else."

He paused, and tapped me impressively on the shoulder.

"How could Dupuy have known that there was no bronze age in Egypt, but an abrupt transition from stone to iron? More chewing for you. This fact is one of the most recent conclusions of Egyptologists. So is the fact that iron, to the Egyptians, was unclean, therefore was seldom used in households or buried with the defunct. Unclean, the bloody metal, the invention of Set the demon who ruled the western deserts! Well, take the thing along, and the papers; I defy you to give me a logical explanation. Take 'em all along with you. Study them, and let me know what you think."

I was delighted to do so, of course. . . .

The paper bearing Dupuy's writing carried the vignette and imprint of the Commission of Arts and Sciences; his story had been written in Cairo after his return from Upper Egypt. Undoubtedly his fellow-scientists had scoffed at it with loud jests.

*A Victor Dupuy was actually a mineralogist on the Commission of Arts and Sciences of Bonaparte's army. —Editor.

It seemed that Dupuy had gone with a guide to look at the hills, west of the present-day Valley of the Kings. He was interested in the mineralogy of the desert crags. In brief, both he and the guide got lost, and Dupuy came down with fever. The faithful guide rigged a tent for him close to water, put their supplies within reach, made him as comfortable as possible, and then departed to reach the Nile and bring help.

Thus, Dupuy saw what happened in that niche among the hills. Lay it to fever-hallucinations, if you must be logical; but wait!

The valley, rimmed for miles by the gaunt yellow cliffs, had in the center a huge clump of upthrust rocks, quartz and hematite. Among these rocks, where there was a tiny spring, Dupuy found shade and rest; he was unable to move. The cliffs along one side of the valley showed numerous dark holes, the caves of prehistoric man. Perhaps some descendants of these troglodytes still lived there, as they do to this day on the northern verge of the Sahara.

IN intervals of his fever-delirium, Dupuy became aware of moving figures that issued from these caves. They came to the upthrust rocks where he lay, some bringing jars and pots for water. The bare trickle that kept him alive, had increased to a very fair flow. These people were clad in skins and rudely woven hair garments. Although Dupuy called out, they seemed neither to hear him nor to be aware of his presence.

The center of these jutting rocks was occupied by a crude basin formed of huge purple hematite and black basalt fragments. In the basin, the amazed Dupuy found a never-dying fire burning; it was fed by women who came at intervals, watching over the blaze, chiefly at night. At sunrise and sunset the primitive folk came from the caves, some scores of them in all, and grouped around this eternal fire. Here they worshiped the sun that gave light and warmth.

Erheb was the priest in this worship. A massive figure magnificently bearded, he was gifted with eloquence and with a certain crude sleight-of-hand which passed for magic among his people.

His daughter Tanit was one of the two women who were obviously the guardians of the sacred flame. Sometimes one or the other came, sometimes both together. From their conversation, which Dupuy seemed perfectly able to comprehend, he learned that they were virgins, devoted to the service of Ra the sun-god, the source of all life. This Tanit was a glorious creature, tall, slender and supple as a deer, and more brown than most of her fellows, despite her rippling flood of red-gold hair.

The curious thing, unless one stopped to regard it as logical, was that these people who worshiped the sun only emerged at nighttime from their cavern homes. The men, even, remained out of sight during the day, except in rare cases. None of them had any great covering against the heat, and in the daytime the blistering refracted heat of this valley was something fearful.

Here, though, about the sacred flame where the jagged rocks thrust up, one might endure the sun by finding shelter. Sometimes Tanit came, during the day, to keep the eternal fire alight. Sometimes there was another who came, not from the caverns in the cliff, but from straight up the valley. This was a man, Amon, who arrived always during the heat of the day and spent much time lingering about the basin of the flame, though he remained out of sight.

He was there one day when Tanit came from the cliffs. In a hide sack he had brought chunks of athol* roots, arranging these in the sacred bowl. At sight of him, the young woman showed no fear; obviously, they knew one another. But she was very grave, and gave no response to his delighted greeting.

"Beware, Amon!" she exclaimed, with an anxious glance back at the cliffs. "Your people are not my people; already there are rumors of your trips here. My father has heard tales of Set, the evil spirit that rules the desert, visiting the sacred flame to extinguish it!"

Amon broke into a laugh, and drew her into the shade of a jagged rock.

"Extinguish it? Rather, to keep it alive," he rejoined. "Look! I have brought more athol; it will keep fire for hours, and a hot fire too. Your labor is lightened, my dear. As for your people —let them look to themselves!"

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*Author's Note:

Athol, a variety of tamarisk peculiar to that region has roots hard as iron that run for hundreds of feet. I have some of the trees here on my California place, brought from Egypt. Like the mesquite roots of our own Southwest, they make a long-lasting fuel much better than the more easily procured standby of all desert countries, the dung of animals.

"What do you want?" she demanded. "You," said Hamat. "Will you go with me? I am your only hope, Tanit!"

And he shook his ax, a polished granite head set in a heavy shaft. Her eyes softened as she regarded him; he was young, this hunter from the desert, and had a savage vigor about him that was good to see: young, brown, hard, with fearless merry eyes and a disdain of older customs and superstitions.

"It is you who must look to yourself, Amon," she said. "If your visits here were discovered, they would hunt you down. They have weapons, too. It is sacrilege for you to speak with me; this is a sacred place; if I am discovered talking with any man, they will stake me, out in the sunlight, day after day—the terrible death by Ra—"

She shuddered a little at the thought, and small wonder. But Amon laughed, and caught her hand in his, and looked into her eyes.

"Tanit, my dear!" he said softly. "Be sensible. My people will welcome you; I have told them of your beauty, your

wisdom. There is a place for you among us—"

She snatched away her hand, in terror.

"Evil one from the desert! Son of Set! Do not dare to speak such things!" she exclaimed. "You know that I am devoted to the great Ra and his sacred flame—"

"Bah! A sheer waste of beauty. I refuse to allow it!" he cried out. "I know that you love me; I have read it in your eyes. My life is yours, my love is yours. You must listen to me, be reasonable—"

She turned and departed hurriedly, perhaps fleeing from herself as much as from him. Not daring to follow her toward the cliffs, where anyone looking out upon the valley must have caught sight of him, Amon gazed after her for a space, then turned and made his way to the basin of the sacred fire. There, among the rocks that jutted up on all sides, he was safe from casual sight. The blazing sun worried him not at all.

Now, as many a time before, he stood curiously examining the queer black drippings that had crawled out from beneath the eternal fire over the stones. Within the edge of the fire, they glowed red and translucent. He picked up a sliver of rock, shoved back the fire from this redness, and hammered at it. Surprise came into his face.

"It changed shape under the blows?" he murmured. "Impossible! And yet—no, the marks are there. When it is red, it can be hammered. It flows like water when the fire is very hot. Then it hardens, becomes black, and no blows affect it. This is strange!"

HE took his ax, and with the pointed edge chipped at the black stuff gathered in hollows of the rock. After a time he had separated some fragments of it. He noticed that these took the shape of the rock in which they had flowed and become hard. He took out his long knife of flint, a great flake chipped into the shape of a leaf with a handle, and tried it on the black substance. This was far harder than the knife, which could no more than scratch it. One edge of a fragment was quite sharp, and Amon cut his hand on it. He sucked the cut, his eyes narrowing angrily, then a frown came to his face. With sudden decision, he put the fragments that he had collected into his hide sack, slung this around his waist, and then set off back up the valley.

He departed hurriedly, yet carefully. The jutting rocks hid him from all sight of the caves in the cliff, until he gained the shelter of a dry wash that took him around the nearest corner of the cliffs and so clear out of sight. He went eagerly, hastily, forgetful even of the woman whom he loved.

BUT she had not forgotten him. Toward sunset, she returned again to the sacred flame. She stood looking up the valley; the wind, which blew eternally among these wastes of rock and sand, had quite covered all footsteps of the visitor. Satisfied, she turned to the bowl of rock where the holy fire burned.

The dried dung that was left there, she scraped into a hollow of the sand and covered from sight, for future use. It would burn all day long, smoldering hotly, where sticks would consume away. Upon the fire she put sticks, then paused in sudden quick fear and horror.

The spot where Amon had chipped the black substance away, showed the ugly gashes.

Frantically she worked at the place, covering it with sand, with bits of stone, smearing it with ashes and water, until she had hidden the fresh marks. The sun was touching the western hills when she finished. From the caverns were coming her people, the massive, bearded figure of her father striding in the lead.

The second virgin of the flame joined her. They stood together, while Erheb came up beside the basin and nodded in satisfaction at the glow of flame. He lifted his arms to the setting sun; the people, grouped about, prostrated themselves while he prayed in his deep, resonant voice.

The brief, simple ceremony over, the men went away by twos and threes, to spend the night roaming the hills and deserts, slaying all they found. They hunted even to the huge river on the east, and across it where dwelt a puny race who were easy victims. The women brought their jars to the spring of water, filled them in slow sequence, and wended back again to the caves in the cliffs.

Night closed down. The sacred fire, covered with ashes during the day, burned ruddily at night; unless it were kept tended, kept burning brightly, the sun-god would not return on the morrow. Thus, when the hunters returned home, they brought bits of wood or roots and left it near the jutting rocks for the fire-virgins to use. With that fire hot

in the basin and fanned by the eternal wind that swept the valley, more of the red substance seeped out of the rocks, creeping under the blaze until it cooled and hardened along the outer edge of the stones beyond the heat.

At night there were watchers on the cliffs, for the sacred flame had made this valley known among other men. One midnight, the watchers came running; they brought word of a raiding party from the desert. Erheb led forth his women and what men remained, and placed them in a swiftly savage ambush far down in the neck of the valley.

The raiders were caught unawares. The stone knives could scarce pierce skin garments, and hippopotamus hide put them quite at naught; but the stone axes, which could hammer the life out of an elephant caught in the river marshes, battered and smashed these raiders. Loot was brought home to the caverns, in the dawn, and dead men strewed the neck of the valley for jackals to crunch.

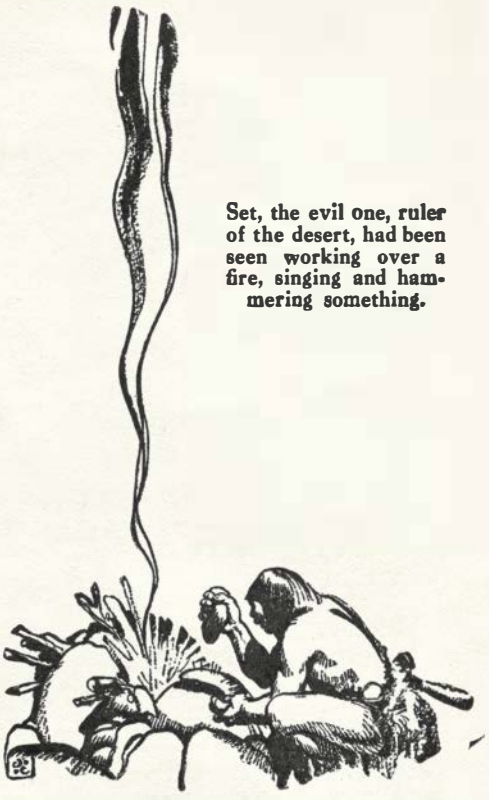
Those caverns pierced the yellow cliffs far and deep. During the three intervening days until Amon came again, Tanit heard strange shuddering tales that the hunters brought in. Waiting on her father in the cool depths, when the day's sleep was over, or in the early morning, she heard what the hunters whispered to Erheb the priest, and her heart grew cold within her.

All reported the same thing. Set, the evil one, the ruler of the desert, had been seen working over a fire. He was singing and hammering something, while other evil spirits brought fuel and aided him. At this vision, they had fled in fear. Erheb stroked his beard and frowned, to hide his own uneasiness.

"Fools! These were men of the desert people."

"Not so!" cried out Hamat the dark hunter, a cunning man who could read all the tracks and marks in the sand. "We were on the trail of elephants, which were close by. These spirits did not hunt them, as men would have done. Surely it was Set himself at work by the fire! He wore a leopard-skin, and we found his tracks in the sand. Aye, we found them not only coming in this direction, but even in the dry wash down the valley! Not the tracks of a man, but flat marks such as a spirit makes."

"Indeed?" growled Erheb, convinced despite himself. "Then we must be on the watch, my people! Set, the evil one, fights ever against the sun-god. Perhaps he thinks to extinguish the sacred fire so that no more may Ra return to warm the earth. Look well to it!"



Set, the evil one, ruler of the desert, had been seen working over a fire, singing and hammering something.

But the heart of Tanit was heavy within her, for she knew that Amon wore a leopard-skin, and upon his feet wore sandals. Her own people went always naked of foot.

THE next day at dawn, as she fed the sacred flame, a shape uprose among the jutting rocks and came toward her. She swung around, the name of Amon on her lips, but checked it unuttered. Not Amon, but Hamat the dark hunter, he whose hot eyes had rested upon her ever and anon.

"What do you want here, Hamat?" she cried out angrily, reaching for her flint knife.

"You, glorious one,"—and he laughed as he came up to her. "Once, not so long ago, you did not run or turn away when I approached, Tanit."

"Times have changed, Hamat, and so have I," she said. "Begone from this sacred place! You know the penalty for molesting a sacred virgin of Ra!"

The hand of Hamat clamped down upon her shoulder.

"And what of others who visit it?" he said darkly. "What of Set, the evil

As one impatient fellow leaped in, Amon thrust cunningly, so that the iron edge of the blade all but decapitated the man. "Set! It is Set himself!" yelled the throng.

one, who comes from his desert domain? Shrink, Tanit, shrink! I have traced his footsteps. Well I know that he has come here. What of it? Nothing, if you are kind to me. You and I can forget this nonsense about sacred virgins. I tell you—"

He said no more, for she flew at him furiously, striking out with the knife and shrieking aloud for help. The stone knife scratched his tough skin, no more, and slid from his hide garments, so that she lost her grip and lost it. She snatched up a great club then, and fought him off with desperation. And when men came rushing to the spot, the dark hunter fled, laughing. Tanit said only that some stranger had leaped upon her and fled. She dared not give the name of Hamat, lest he tell all he knew.

Next day at noon, when she came out in the blazing sunlight to tend the fire, Amon was there.

She did not see him at once. But she saw the basin of the god heaped solidly with dried athol roots, and knew Amon was near; so, when his voice reached her, she went swiftly into the shadow of the tall leaning rocks, and he caught her close in a burst of exultation.

"I have found it, Tanit, found it!" he cried, his face transfigured. "You shall see, this time tomorrow—will that be your day to come?"

"Yes; all this week I tend the fire," she replied. "But, Amon—"

"Ah, you do not know, you cannot realize what I have found!" he exclaimed. "I shall show you tomorrow, my precious one. But what is the matter?"

She clung to him in fear and terror. All the strength had gone out of her; she could not resist the impulse to hold him tight, to warn him in frantic anguish of what had befallen.

"You must not come here more!" she concluded, when she had made an end. "Already Hamat suspects; even now he may be watching us. And these stories of Set—"

"Set indeed!" Amon broke into a wild, jubilant laugh. "Yes, I was this spirit who worked over a fire; they saw me, and not Set. Bah! You must leave these people, my heart. You must come away with me—"

"With you? I cannot!" She drew away, her eyes widening upon him. "What have I done! The wrath of the sun-god is upon me! Ra may not return, because of my sin in loving you."

"Ra? Nonsense," and Amon drew her close again. "Listen! This morning I scraped your fire out. I was working; I forgot all about keeping it alight. Well, I had to kindle it again. Your sacred fire, do you understand? Do you think that the great Ra pays heed to the tiny fire of a few score people? All nonsense. Love me! Put your arms about me! By the gods, you are mine and I am yours while we live!"

"The fire?" she stammered. "It was out—out? The sacred fire?"

"Sacred nonsense," he laughed. "You'll see in the morning whether Ra returns."

"If he does, very well. If he does not," and she stared at him, terror in her face, "if he does not—if the world remains dark—"

Suddenly she turned and stumbled away, with a low wail, and Amon dared not follow her. But her beauty abode with him and uplifted his heart, so that he forgot to be careful about his tracks in the sand.

WITH sunset, Hamat the dark hunter came to the priest Erheb, by the basin of the sacred flame, and spoke cunningly with him for a long time, even until the moon rose over the river hills.

Erheb swore a great oath, and his deep voice went rolling to the cliffs and sounded resonantly up the valley.

"By the gods, Hamat! If this be a lie, you shall die!"

Hamat laughed to himself as the women and many of the men came streaming over the sand in answer to those deep shouts. The two virgins of the sacred flame came also, and stood before the assembled ranks.

"Now answer, Tanit my daughter!" cried out the priest, standing like an image of wrath. "There are tracks coming hither in the sand. More, there is a strange ash near the fire, that came from athol roots and not from the elephant dung we usually burn. And Set, the evil one, was seen coming here to visit you today. Answer! Swear by the sun-god, Ra!"

Confusion and consternation came upon Tanit at these words, for the oath by Ra was one she dared not break. At sight of Hamat the dark hunter, her wrath boiled up.

"I swear by Ra that I have not seen Set!" she returned fiercely. "This hunter Hamat came by night and sought my favors, and would have forced me to his will; but I beat him off. Oh, if he were but half the man that Amon of the desert people—"

"Amon!" rose a yell. "A man of the desert people has been here!"

That was enough. From all the folk outburst cries of grief and fury, and as they seized her, Erheb the priest rent his garment and tore at his beard. There in the moonlight was judgment held; but, because Hamat the dark hunter had a crafty tongue, no evil was attached to him and he stood free of all blame.

This was the judgment that was laid upon Tanit: that she should be staked out in the sun, day upon day, for the great god Ra to determine whether she be innocent or guilty. If guilty, she would be burned alive in the angry fire of the sun-god, for no mortal could endure naked the blazing heat of this valley, hour upon hour, day upon day.

When sunrise came, all the people witnessed what was done. Also, they sent over into the next valley, where lived others of the cave-folk who worshiped Ra, and these also assembled at dawn to witness the punishment. All the dwellers in the caves most earnestly believed that unless the sun-god were appeased, he would return no more.

Now, the neck of this niche among the desert hills lay to the westward, opening on the desert, and here men were placed on guard under hides stretched among the rocks, for shelter. To the east of the jutting rocks that held the spring and the sacred basin of fire, and close to these rocks, Tanit was staked out on the yellow sand, her wrists and ankles bound to heavy stakes; and she was left.

THE morning was still early when Amon came to where the guards were placed. The stretched hides gave him warning of their presence; and he worked craftily around them so that they saw nothing of him. Filled with eagerness, he finally reached the upthrust rocks that held the basin of the flame. As Tanit lay upon the eastward slope of sand, he saw nothing of her.

He had brought with him two long slivers of rock. He ran quickly to the sacred fire, and thrusting aside the covered sticks that smoldered there, he reached far in with the rock slivers, and drew out the thing he had placed there the previous day. This was a mold of soft stone in which he had scooped the shape of his flint knife, leaving in the mould the fragments of iron on which he had experimented.

To his delight, these had melted, taking the shape of the mold.

Swiftly, he freed the iron knife from the metal, thrust it back into the fire, and when it was red and glowing, drew it out with his rock slivers. Holding it thus, he hammered the edge with the rounded side of his ax, over and over, finding a hard stone upon which the iron might be beaten. Bits of embers had carbonized it into steel.

SWEATING, burned, but ecstatic, he labored on. Noon came. The edges and point were ragged, but so sharp as to amaze him. He thrust the thing, hissing, into water from the spring. Then, seeing one of the sacred virgins coming to tend the flame, he swiftly hid himself. Not Tanit, but another! His surprise and dismay were keen.

She came, built up the fire, and so departed again. Amon fell to work, in the shade of a rock, rubbing the iron edge on stone and sharpening it.

When, under the fierce noonday sun, all the cave people slept, Hamat the dark hunter came openly from the caves. Amon, seeing him come, lay hidden.

Hamat carried a gazelle hide and a jar. He put water in the jar, then went to where Tanit lay under the burning sun. She was not yet in torment, for the pain was slow to take hold upon her. He showed her the jar and the hide, and smiled in his beard as her wide eyes fastened themselves upon him.

"I have dared much for the sake of your love, my precious little dove," he said to her. "Here is water and a covering; ere sunset, your skin will be cracking, and tonight the blisters will rise. Already your lips are dry, your throat is dry, your whole body will be drained of moisture ere long. Think well!"

"What do you want?" she demanded thickly.

"You," said Hamat the dark hunter, eying her beauty hungrily. "Agree to go with me, and I will cover you and give you water. Later this afternoon I will come and take you away; we will go to the land beyond the great river. Many of our people are there already, more are going, for the folk who live there are a feeble race and all the land is ours for the taking. Will you go with me or not?"

She hesitated, as well she might, and while they talked together, Amon crept out among the farther rocks of the circle, wondering what the dark hunter was doing here. So he came upon sight of Tanit where she lay, and Hamat talking with her, and upon him fell a fury of wild dismay and rage at what he saw.

Yet, uncertain whether these people kept any watch from the cliffs, he waited cautiously, and listened.

"Your lover from the desert will come no more," said Hamat softly. "Guards are placed down the valley; the road is blocked for him. I am your only hope, Tanit! So think well before you answer."

Tears came from the eyes of the girl who lay there in the sun, and a groan broke from her parched lips.

"Oh! If Amon were here now, you would not tempt me thus!" she cried.

Hamat laughed raucously.

"Think not of him, but of yourself. Look! Already your breasts are red as fire, your arms are burning, your thighs and legs show the mark of Ra. What will they be like when night comes, when Ra comes again in the morning?"

"Ra—comes again!" She stiffened suddenly as she lay, and a sudden light broke out in her face. "Oh, that is true! Ra has come, he has come again; everything that Amon said was true, then! Away from me, traitor and seducer, tempter—away! Better to die under the hand of Ra than to endure you all my life long—"

The hunter, smiling cruelly, reached out with his ax and laid it on her body. The stone point was fearfully hot, and a cry of pain broke from her. But at this sight the watching Amon lost all caution and came rushing forth, unarmed as he was, and hurled himself at the dark hunter. In his wild fury he forgot everything.

Hamat caught up his ax, turned, saw the lithe cursing figure leaping at him across the sand. Almost did he turn

and run, thinking this no other than Set, the evil demon who ruled the desert. Then he heard the wild, glad cry of Tanit as she recognized her lover, and the anger in him uprose.

He struck, struck again. Amon dodged one blow, broke the force of the other, and struck Hamat like a leopard, in mid-leap. He got his fingers on the throat of the dark hunter as both of them hurtled to the sand and went rolling.

THEN the ax of Hamat struck him across the head, and his grip relaxed. Again Hamat struck, and the man from the desert went limp and motionless. A low shriek of agony burst from Tanit, as Hamat leaped to his feet.

"Spare him, Hamat, spare him!" she cried out frantically, writhing and tugging vainly at her bonds. The dark hunter lowered his ax, looked at her cruelly, then caught the unconscious Amon by one foot and dragged him across the sand. He dropped the battered, bleeding head on the breast of the woman.

"Spare him? Aye! Until I can waken your father and the others, and bring them!" he cried furiously. "Then you shall see this lover of yours staked out beside you. Take him, since you want him! You shall have your fill of him!"

And the hunter went leaping away toward the cave dwellings.

Tanit looked down at Amon, whose blood ran in a little pool between her breasts, and her voice lifted at him. Through the mists pierced this voice of hers, agonized, calling his name, wakening him with its urgency. He sat up, put both hands to his head, then looked at her and recognized her.

"Ah! Where is he?"

"Gone to bring the people. Fly!" she cried, in terror for him. "Run, Amon! You can get away—fly!"

He saw the forgotten mantle of hide and the jar of water. He reached out, threw the mantle over her body, caught up the jar and emptied it between her lips. Then he came to his feet and went staggering away toward the upthrust circle of rocks.

"Good-by, Amon!" she cried out. "Run, run swiftly! The gods keep you."

He was gone from her sight. His only response was a harsh laugh.

Back at the basin of the sacred flame, he heaped wood and dung on the fire so that it smoked fiercely. Ripping off his leopard-skin, he held it over the smoke for a moment, then drew it away. A thick puff went up into the brazen sky; another puff, and another.

Then he slung the skin about him once more, picked up his ax and small round shield of hide, his flint knife and the knife of iron he had fashioned, and staggered back to where Tanit lay. From the cliffs were issuing shouts, and the figures of men were coming forth and beginning to run across the sand toward the sacred spot.

Amon sank down across the body of the woman, and laughed into her wide eyes.

"Run? Not I!" he cried fiercely. "Look you! My people are hidden, waiting for a signal. I have sent the signal. They will come—wait and see! First, to get you out of here, back among the rocks—"

He fell to work with his flint knife upon the cords that bound her.

These cords of rawhide had shrunk and hardened in the sunlight, until the edge of the flint would no more than scratch them. Impatient, Amon remembered the knife he had made. He caught it up and thrust with it against the hard thongs. To his amazement and delight, it sheared through them easily. Tanit sat up, but she could not walk, so tightly had her ankles been bound.

AMON caught her, lifted her. Aye, though the blood rushed to his hurt head and for an instant he was dizzy and without sight, he lifted her. His head cleared. He carried her back among the rocks, looking now at the first of the cave people who were running for him. They were close, and first of all was Hamat the dark hunter, throwing up his ax as he leaped forward.

Coolly now, Amon set down his burden amid the circle of rocks. Between two of these great stones, he took his place, the iron knife in his right hand, the little round shield in his left. Then Hamat was upon him, with a yell.

Far ahead of all those other men was Hamat, for the sight of Amon on his feet spurred the dark hunter with new hatred and fury. To see what took place, there in the blinding sunlight, was impossible, so swiftly did it all pass. One instant, Hamat was leaping, his ax a-swing; the next, he had fallen forward on his face with a dark tide of blood rushing from his throat.

Only Amon knew just what had happened in this sharp, quick meeting. A

great yell of wild delight pealed from him as his thrust went home, as he drew his weapon free and leaped back. Then, poised between the spires of rock, he gave no more thought to the flint knife and the ax at his feet, but awaited the rush with his strange new weapon in hand.

They came running up, but not more than one could spring at him, so narrow was the space between the rocks. The first came running in, flint-tipped spear in hand, and thrust forward with it. Amon took the thrust on his shield, turning it aside, and drove once with that knife of his. The blade burst through hide garment and flesh, and as the cave man sank down, Amon freed his knife and met the next.

HERE was the great warrior of the tribe, garbed in a length of hippopotamus hide impervious to weapons, swinging a huge ax aloft. Amon dodged that sweeping blow and lunged in, laughing fiercely, his eyes a-glitter. The iron point sheared through the tough hide and wounded the man beneath. Swiftly Amon thrust again, and that man stood for an instant until his knees loosened and he pitched forward.

The others drew back, dismayed, wondering. More and more were coming, streaming over the sand. One impatient fellow leaped in, battering with his ax; the blow deflected from his shield, Amon thrust once more, cunningly, so that the iron edge of the blade all but decapitated the man before him.

"Set! It is Set himself!" yelled the throng.

Amon caught a sharp gasping cry behind him, and turned. A man had come in among the stones from another side, and he saw Tanit beat him down with a lump of rock. She was on her feet now, eyes ablaze, crying at him in warning. Others were penetrating the circle, thinking to take him from behind. The deep voice of Erheb was upraised, as his massive figure swept forward.

Amon caught the ax from the sand at his feet and hurled it. Through the air it flew, and struck the priest of Ra in the chest, shattering the breath out of him so that he stood shaking and gaping.

With a nimble leap, Amon was back in the circle, and Tanit joined him, and he gained the upraised platform where the sacred flame burned invisible in the bright sunlight. Once more came a rush, as the crowd burst through the circle of stones. Once more they drew back in awe and terror, as the knife bit out terribly, and two of them died under the slim hard blade.

But an ax had gone home. Amon was clinging to one of the rocks, momentarily helpless under the blow that left his shield-arm helpless. The priest Erheb recovered and charged forward, and his voice rolled forth.

"Set is vanquished! On him, my people, cut him to pieces! And the woman with him—ah!"

That deep, thundering voice ended in wild dismay and terror, and the charge was halted, and every eye was fastened upon the figure of Tanit.

She had reached in with an ax, into the sacred basin of eternal fire. She was scooping out the brands and embers, tumbling them out, scattering them right and left. And as she extinguished the flame, her voice rose in mockery:

"Ra comes no more! Flee, for Set has vanquished his eternal flame—flee and hide yourself, priest of Ra!"

"Ra comes no more!" echoed up the yell of consternation. "The fire is dead! She has scattered the sacred fire—"

Terror rushed upon all those folk, and in the midst, Amon drew himself up and pointed, and laughed as he stretched out his sword of iron.

"The desert folk! The people of Set are upon you—look, look! Flee for your lives, ye rascals!"

DUST was rising, and a flood of desert warriors were scurrying up the narrow valley of sand. Their fierce yells struck upon all ears. The priest, Erheb, wailed aloud in fear and anguish, and stooping, caught up a jagged rock and hurled it.

"Accursed of Ra!" he panted out, then turned and fled with his people, while the yells of the desert fighters rose in shrill pursuit.

Amon stood transfixed, stupefied for an instant. That jagged rock hurled by the priest had struck the girl Tanit, so that she lay drooping across the rocks, blood flowing from her face and neck.

A great cry of grief and horror burst from Amon. Instantly, he forgot all else; the knife flew out of his hand and he hurled himself upon the figure of the woman, and caught her head up in his arms, holding her face against his breast. Then, after a minute, her eyes came open and a smile touched her lips, and her hand went out to his face.

"Thanks be to Ra! I thought you were dead," panted Amon, and kissed her heartily. He helped her to her feet, then he sprang to the still-hot basin of rock, and because of his sandals, it burned him not. He shook his fist after the fleeing cave-people.

"Woe to you!" he cried hotly. "The curse of Set, the dark blade of iron that I have discovered, shall drink your lives and those of your children. Flee into the land across the great river! We shall come after you, all of us, armed with these new weapons!"

Then he turned to look for the knife, but he found it not. It had dropped from his hand into a cranny between two of the great jutting rocks. At first he was gripped by keen dismay, then he looked at the cooling iron in the basin of the sacred flame, and laughed aloud, as he caught hold of Tanit in joyful ecstasy.

THERE, according to Dupuy's account, the story ended.

For, as all the rush and tumult died away into silence, there was a sluff-sluff of hoofs in the sand, and with eager cries up came a number of French and the guide who had led them here.

When Dupuy talked of Amon and of Tanit and the others, they thought he was out of his head, and they were sad for him.

But next morning, before camp was broken for the return to the Nile, Dupuy led one of his friends to a certain place, and pointed out two basaltic rocks.

"Look in between these two rocks," he said. "Dig away the sand there, dig deep, and see if anything lies under it. Do this to humor me, my friend."

The other shrugged, took his saber, and went to the spot. He churned up the sand and scooped it out of the recess. Presently the saber-point struck against something hard, metallic. A moment later, Dupuy held in his hands the iron blade that Amon had made and lost again. . . .

As Martin Burnside said, the closing sentences did give me a bit of a shock, for Dupuy swore that they were true, and his friend bore witness to finding the blade. And for the life of me, I could find no explanation except that his story was true. But—was it?

"The Bow of Ulysses," the third story in this fine series, will appear in the next, the April, issue.

In Devil's

A spirited little drama of the forest service and a Conservation Camp.

BILL BOGAN checked Annabelle, his jasshonkey. He pinched out the fire in his cigarette, leaned forward and silently gave the snipe into Annabelle's greedy lips. And he listened keenly.

Annabelle had made no noise, coming down the soft trail into Devil's-club Cañon. It was a dank, eerie haunt. On its steep sides huge firs rose like ancient columns, their branches so matted as to shut out the light. Its bottom was a morass. Old logs were sprawled as they had been felled by storm. In the ooze six-foot butts and twisted, huge roots were imbedded, rotting. Over them a soft brown moss spread like a thick couch.

Over all swarmed devil's-club, shoulder high, its broad, bright green leaves inviting the unwary. The under sides of these leaves were armed with hooks. The strong, tough canes carried rows of thorns, long and hard as ironwood—and hooked and barbed like fishhooks. An odor of death and decay filled the forest here, and the cañon was a secret place of silence and of mystery, avoided by all.

Bill saw a great gray owl winging noiselessly in the afternoon twilight. Something farther up had disturbed the owl. And Annabelle again was cocking her big ears forward and back, one at a time.

Bill Bogan, old-time forest ranger, scowled while he listened. He had troubles enough and wasn't looking for more. Man and boy, he had put in his thirty years guarding Uncle Sam's forests, since first the Forest Service was formed; and now, as a reward, Uncle had wished onto him the job of riding herd on a gang of city dudes from the East! Uncle had formed a Forest Army, single bucks of from nineteen to twenty-five. And a squad of half a dozen, including the fellow who gave his name as Tony Palezzo, had been turned over to Bill Bogan, to drive him mad. . . .

Abruptly Annabelle drew a deep, questing breath, her ears pricked forward. The

Club Cañon

By CHARLES ALEXANDER

grizzly-tipped red hackle on Bill's neck tingled, his small gray eyes narrowed. Some one was in that Devil's-club hell-hole! A sobbing, gasping wail came, then silence.

Freeing his rope, Bogan put Annabelle to picking her way along the steep side of the morass, his keen eyes searching for the victim. . . .

The man Bogan roped and pulled to safe ground was Wilber, a thin pallid school-teacher out of work. His face and uniform were a mess of mud and slime. Mostly his clothes were torn to tatters. Blood and mud were mixed, where devil's-club had savagely hooked him.

He had not been able to climb the steep sides of the cañon, because his hands were tied behind him. Falling, thrashing in the mud and devil's-club, he had floundered like a trapped, pain-racked beast. Soon he would have died, to be logged as lost, body never found.

Bill cursed, bitterly, furiously, while he cut the tent-rope from the youth's wrists. It was a guy-rope from one of the tents pitched beside his ranger cabin. More work of that Palezzo, this! How the devil had he got into Uncle Sam's forest army? He was a rat, a big-city killer, signed on under a false name for his six months in the new Forest Army —no doubt to save his hide from other gangsters' guns.

And in the two weeks Bogan had had the squad, Palezzo had clubbed and fought his way to the post of Big Shot among them. Bill hadn't seen Palezzo work them over. He had patrolling to do, and couldn't be with them as they worked at trail-grading. But he knew. He'd seen broken noses, bloody heads. And fear, too, had kept them from complaining—fear of Tony Palezzo.

Wilber, his blue eyes staring from the mud of his face, likewise was silent.

"Tony, damn him, tied you up an' threw you in Devil's-club?" barked Bill.

"I—I don't know, sir," mumbled Wilber. "Some one took me from behind. I didn't see—"

"So you can't guess it was Tony?" frothed Bill.

"I didn't see—"

"What'd you have that he stole?"

"A little automatic pistol my sister mailed to me, sir. It's against the rules, I know. But you see, sir, she was afraid there'd be bears, or wild animals. It was foolish. I was going to leave it in my bunk after this. But some one found out I had it. I don't know who—"

Bogan took a grip on his black rage. No use quizzing this specimen, afraid of the forest, scairt of a yellow gangster! And he had other things to do. Palezzo now was armed.

"Can you walk?"

"I think so, sir," said Wilber, trying his bloody legs.

"Get to camp an' doctor yourself!" snapped Bill. "I'm going the other way!"

He rode back up Green Mountain trail. . . .

Bill hadn't minded the boys being green. When Wilber balanced a cross-cut saw on his shoulder, the inch-long teeth biting his neck instead of pointing outward, he had showed him how to carry it. Blasting down huge snags in old burns, he'd taught them how to handle powder. They'd been wary of the powder-gun, hesitant to pound it deep into the heart of a snag, with a six-pound sledge. All but Palezzo. The fellow seemed fascinated by powder and fuse. He liked to load the short, wicked gun,

fire the fuse, and watch a monster two-hundred-foot snag break and topple in sections.

Damn him! Bill's heel nudged Annabelle in the ribs, indicating to her that he was in a hurry. No, Bill didn't mind playing wet-nurse to some of Uncle's city greenhorns, if Uncle said for him to. Mostly they were clean boys. Just so long as they respected his big trees, and felt the deep pull of the silence, and of the illimitable vastness of range beyond range, all mighty and forested save for the white guardian peaks. These things were Bill's gods. His boys might fear them; that was proper. But they must not scoff.

He rode out at a break in the forest, on the ridge above Devil's-club Cañon.

HALF a mile away he had set Tony to burning a quarter-acre of slashing for a site for a new trail cabin. Tony had had a shovel, with orders first to throw a trench round the slashing, then carefully burn it.

Now as Bogan stared, his jaw set, his little eyes became points of steel: Smoke was rising from a five-acre fire; slowly it rolled in the still, heavy air.

With a nudge of his heel Bogan sent Annabelle into high gear. At the slashing he did not turn off. The fire was on the ground, slow, smoldering, not dangerous. Humidity was high; a damp west wind hung in the air, forerunner of a violent chinook. But Palezzo hadn't known that; he'd let his little fire get away, danger or no danger.

Nowhere about the fire could Bogan see Palezzo. Riding on half a mile, he came to the job Wilber had been doing—widening and grading trail. Wilber's ax, shovel and canteen lay where he had dropped them when Tony had attacked. Wilber had been thrown into Devil's-club.... Palezzo had armed himself with Wilber's toy automatic. If he'd gone loco, if he'd gunned the other boys—

Grimly Bogan swept along the trail, loosening his revolver in its holster.

But the four others, spread out a few hundred yards apart, he found steadily hacking at their work. He rounded them up, hurried them to the slashing, and set them to trenching around the slow fire. Bogan could smell a west wind coming. This fire must be blanketed first.

His eyes darted everywhere for sign of Palezzo. On a soft heap of moss he found the gorilla-like gangster—sound asleep. Standing in his stirrups, Bill Bogan stared. At first he could not believe his eyes. Then his rage rose, choking in his throat.

Flat on his back, hat over his face, Tony Palezzo snored contentedly. Fifty yards away was the shallow fire-trench he had lazily started, before working out his plan of robbing Wilber and throwing him into the quagmire of Devil's-club. The fire had burned the slashing. Let 'er burn! It was Uncle's forest, not Tony's; Tony had other things in mind.

With a growl, Bill hopped down from Annabelle. He crouched over Tony. His steely fingers clamped on the gorilla's flat, fleshy nose, dragged him to his feet. A right-hand slap, with the speed of a mule-kick in it, crashed to Tony's jaw. He went sprawling.

"Get up!" howled Bogan. "Climb to your feet. Feller, I'm gonna eddicate you. I'm gonna learn you to let fires get away while you burn up your shovel an' snooze. Get up!"

Painfully Tony rolled over onto hands and knees. His rear was to Bogan. Slowly the squat gorilla came to his feet.

Then like a snake he whirled. In his hand was the black automatic he had taken from Wilber. Bogan had forgotten about that.

"Reach, punk!" the gunman snarled. As Bill hesitated, suddenly turned cool, Tony advanced. His fat hand was steady. The gun never wavered from Bill's belt-line. The black eyes, with a bead of red in them, drilled into Bogan's eyes.

"I'll burn you down," gritted Tony. "Reach that hand away from that gun!"

SLOWLY Bogan raised his hands. With a jerk Tony's left hand emptied the ranger's holster. He tossed the forty-five far into the ash-heap of the slashing.

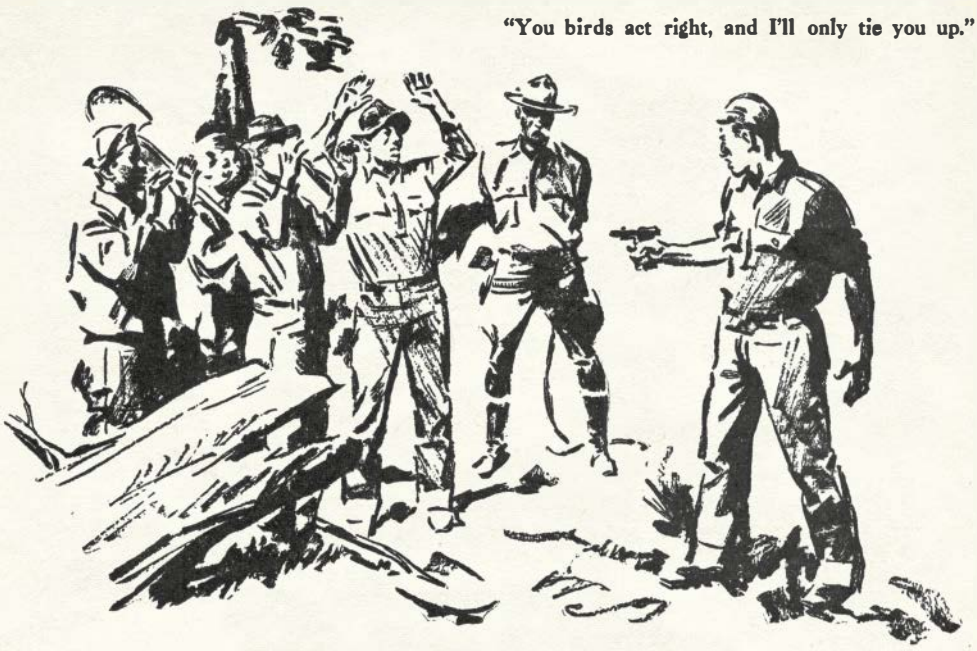
"That damn' cannon oughta be on wheels," he grunted. "Turn round, you!"

From a pocket he drew more tent-rope. Keeping his automatic in Bill's back, he drew down one hand, then the other, and suddenly threw a running bowline over the two wrists.

Bogan was trussed helplessly. "Now them other guys!" Palezzo began.

Bogan heard them coming, one whistling. Bogan didn't believe in whistling in the forest, where anything might wait for you round the corner. But these boys didn't know a forest trail from a city street.

One of them sang out: "She's trenched



"You birds act right, and I'll only tie you up."

clear round, Chief. Anything else for us to do today?"

Then they came on Tony—a changed Tony. Brows drawn, lips snarling away from wolfish teeth, he covered them with the black automatic. Four faces blanched. Trembling hands were raised above their heads.

"You, Ballard!" barked Palezzo to a huge ex-football lineman. "Take the end of this rope that's hangin' to this smart little brush-cop here. Tie it to Grittke's wrists behind him, an' Sansone's an' Hope's. *Then* stick your own wrists behind you."

"Palezzo," said Bogan, deadly warning in his voice, "you're buckin' something too big for you. There's things in the woods you don't know. You're gonna get your neck in a sling, feller. Uncle, he don't like—"

"Uncle?" broke in Tony, puzzled. Then he scowled in derision. "Uncle Sam, hey? Your damn' Forest Service!"

He strode to Bogan, ripped the bronze ranger's shield from his shirt and hurled it into the ashes after Bogan's gun.

"Listen to me, punk! I ducked here when I was bust—for a long vacation!" He grinned at his own humor. "But I'm not stayin'. I'm lammin'. There's towns on the Coast I never been in.

"There's a big roll walkin' in here tomorrow—we been here a month, and tomorrow's first pay-off! A bale of greenbacks, so the boys can cash their checks. You told us yourself! An' only a lousy brush-cop like yourself carryin' it—not even a guard. You an' your Uncle is saps!"

Bill's head drummed with rage. It was true. More than a hundred men of the new Forest Army to be paid, scattered in squads beyond Green Mountain. Thirty a month per man. And he, Ranger Bill Bogan, stuck up by a Chicago rat! Uncle'd never get over that.

He smelled the restless west wind. The chinook was hovering, gathering itself to strike. He'd never see the storm and the forest savagely battle again. He knew what Palezzo would do to him.

The leer of the gorilla's grin fastened on him. "I'm takin' no chances on them cannons you punks carry," he told Bill. "Takin' no chances on nothin'. You birds act all right, an' maybe I'll only tie you up to trees. Get funny, an' I'll blow you to hell!

"I got a blast-gun, rammed full of powder, hid in a box in the cabin. Fuse runs outside. When that pay-roll brush-cop walks in tomorrow, I'm blowin' him an' his cannon through the roof. No chance of him shootin', that way."

Bogan set his lips, smelled the ominous chinook. An implacable, deadly anger burned in him; his wrists strained against the cutting cord.

This crime, this killing, couldn't be. It couldn't happen, not to Bill, in his own forest! There were things in the forest— A damp, warm breath of wind touched his grizzled cheek. It brought him hope—and a plan. The forest never had failed him.

Palezzo, too, had looked sharply about him. "Get goin'!" he ordered. "I gotta get to camp an' eat. It'll be darker'n hell in a minute."

Bill moved off slowly. Behind him stumbled along the four boys left of the squad Uncle had given him. A deep, ominous sigh whispered in the tops of the firs.

Half a mile brought them to the break in the timber where Bogan first had sighted the slashing. Here, below them, an old burn spread away. At their backs was the dark line of forest on the rim of Devil's-club Cañon.

Bogan paused. Palezzo, too, stopped and stared out over the burn. His thick black brows drew together. Here was something he did not understand. Low gray clouds plowed by in the dusk. Halfway down the burn, an eagle sprang from a stump. He shot to heights, screamed fiercely, somersaulted as though in a dog-fight with an unseen foe. Climbing into a high wind-current, he set his wings and shot over the watchers, his screams dying in the distance.

"What the hell?" grunted Palezzo, his eyes staring.

Huge brown rabbits fled by, seeking the deep forest. Over and among the black logs in the burn he saw gray bodies leaping—Oregon timber wolves, six-foot beasts with fangs to drag down an elk. A startled gray buck, horns laid back on shoulders, skimmed the brush and logs of the burn as he sought the safety of deep timber. From somewhere a cougar squalled, a demoniac cry in the eerie fading light.

The chinook was coming. With it came the killers, wolves and cats and small furred snakelike drinkers of blood. Tony Palezzo muttered.

FROM the west a black line traveled up the sky. Far on the lower edge of the burn a lone snag stood, one living frond of green held against the heavens. Abruptly this huge branch writhed, beat helplessly, and was torn off. It did not fall. Like a spear it was hurled across the burn, over Palezzo's head, and struck in the timber lining the cañon. The air was full of flying branches, the debris of the forest. As though mowed down, the gangster saw a row of firs on the lower fringe of the burn topple, and crash into the opening.

A moan and roar like storm surf bellowed from the whipping forest. A thousand high screams of rending, writhing wood streamed on the wind. As the blast struck Palezzo, he was flung down, unable to breathe. Cursing, he got to his feet, clinging to a sapling. Not twenty steps behind him a great doaty, wind-shaken and its heart filled with dry rot, crackled its two-hundred-foot length, shivered, bent and crashed.

It did not crash slowly. The wind flung the giant down bodily. Its thousand pitchy limbs crackled like deafening rounds from machine-guns. One limb caught Palezzo, hurled him a dozen yards.

"Jeez!" cursed Tony. "Jeez!"

THE black line now covered the sky as though a curtain had fallen. Darkness hid the battle around him. And as if waiting for darkness, the wind doubled in velocity. Flying cones as large as his head, limbs and sticks and wet earth from uprooted trees, beat on Palezzo's face. These were fearful to him in the darkness, like unseen fists hammering him.

He saw two green oblique eyes staring at him from the dark. They burned from green to a golden fluorescent yellow, notched with red.

Palezzo yelled: "Bogan! You punks! You punks! Here!"

A cougar-squall—scream upon scream that rocked and pierced with the wind—answered him. Bill Bogan and his four boys were gone.

Tony Palezzo felt a horrified sweat breaking out on his body. He shivered, and muttered continually. Hunched like an ape, he glared into the darkness at the green eyes. A flying branch struck his neck, and he cursed frenziedly. Then other eyes he saw, burning on him, shifting, reappearing.

The city killer went mad. Never had he known there were such brute forces as the storm and the wolves. He was a city wolf, a skulker who shot down helpless victims; here he was himself the victim, and helpless. In the darkness he could not see. Nothing could he hear but the roar of battle as the wind charged the forest and was flung back. The shriek of rending trees was the cry of the lost.

Deep in Palezzo an animal desperation drove him to fight back. That pay-roll was coming up; it was *his* pay-roll. He'd kill to get it. He'd already killed that rabbit Wilber. He'd blow up the brush-cop that stopped him. He'd light a fuse—

Fire? . . . Fire'd put the fear on these wolves! He clawed wet twigs together and whipped match after match on his rough pants. The wind tore the flame from the match-heads. Mouthing curses, Tony rose.

The eyes were closer. Wide-set, as high as his own eyes, two slanting green and coal-red eyes bored on him. In the night and the noise they were merciless, deadly. He heard the click of fangs.

Tony whipped out his automatic and fired. Again and again, madly, he squeezed the trigger, till the gun clicked after the last shell and would not click again. Gibbering, he flung it at the eyes.

He whirled and ran. A faint cloudy light now streamed over the burn. The black snags loomed like monsters. Palezzo did not run this way. Blindly, tripping and breaking an arm, he plunged into the black forest for hiding and protection. It was the thin fringe of forest rimming the steep side of Devil's-club Cañon.

Back where the first doaty had cracked beside Palezzo, was a deep crater, left when the roots of the tree had been torn out. Above its edge projected the head of Bill Bogan as he watched Palezzo's flight. When a frenzied scream, faint and shriller than the noises of the storm, came to his ears, he slid down the bank into the calm of the crater.

His hands were free. He had had Grittke, tied behind him, lean forward and chew in two the light cotton tent-rope on his wrists. Grittke had good teeth—reg'lar beaver teeth.

With his boot Bogan had scooped a hole in the soft dirt at the bottom of the pit. In this, protected from the gusts that sucked at the pit, he nursed a little fire of pitchy fir-cones. Rolling a smoke, he settled back comfortably, his four boys crouched over the fire-hole.

BOGAN nodded to himself, combing his mustache between smokes. All was well. No damn' city rat could come here an' raise hell with his and Uncle's forest! You had to know the forest. You couldn't get gay with it. Bill'd been there a long time. He knew. . . .

Before dawn the old ranger started from a doze to strain his ears. Where had he heard that schoolroom yelp before? The wind had slackened; the fir tops whistled a high song of victory. Only the weak among them had fallen. Again Bogan heard a long, "Hal-oo-oo!"

He stuck his grizzled head above the edge of the crater. A lantern bobbed on the trail. Shouting, Bogan drew the attention of a scared, halting man to him.

It was Wilber. Bogan felt a swell of pride. Yes sir, even this white-faced school-teacher had got up his nerve an' come lookin' for him. Musta been scared green, too. . . . The trees made men of *some* men.

"Your donkey came in, sir," Wilber stammered. "I thought maybe you—maybe you were hurt—"

"Hurt, hell!" scoffed Bogan. "Snug as a bug! An' listen, feller: Don't you call Annabelle no donkey. She's a lady an' a jasshonkey, an' she'll kick the daylights out o' any green dude—" He combed his mustache fiercely.

AFTER daylight, at the ranger cabin, the five Forest Army boys waited for Bogan. He had sent them in, and had ridden from the trail-crossing up the steep sides of Devil's-club Cañon.

When he appeared, he demanded to know why they hadn't fried bacon and coffee. "I gotta write up my log for yesterday," he grumbled. "Hell of a note, wet-nursin' dudes an' writin' reports on 'em every day, like a damn' white-collar ranger settin' in his office!"

He sat down before the neat printed form Uncle furnished for him to scribble on. He wrote:

Little wind. Laid out last night, kind of toughenin the boys in. Remarks: None.

As was their custom, the "dudes" read the log.

"Where—where is Tony, sir?" ventured Wilbur. "Is he—"

Bogan snorted. "Clear forgot that damn' rat. Hate to spoil good paper with tellin' about him."

He mused, rolling a smoke. He could tell about a point on Devil's-club Cañon where the walls were straight up and down. Below was a muggy stretch crammed with giant devil's-club. He and Annabelle had seen patches of muddy uniform impaled on those iron-stout hooks. Below was a soup-hole a man wouldn't miss stumbling into, in the dark. Nothing falling in it ever came to the top.

Would Uncle want to know all that? Bogan reflected deeply. Uncle sent his boys here to see 'em made into something. Results were all Uncle wanted; the rest he left to Bogan. Bogan wrote:

Tony Palezzo. Was in storm last night. Lost—body not found.

SWORDS of MARS

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

The Story Thus Far:

AN emigrant from Earth, I—John Carter of Virginia—had become Warlord of Mars. I had been seeking to extirpate the vicious criminal organizations and guilds of professional assassins which infest that planet. With this end in view, I finally decided to go alone, secretly and in disguise, to the city of Zodanga—nearly two thousand miles from my capital Helium—which is headquarters for the most powerful guilds of assassins on Mars; and one night I set forth in a fast one-man flyer. Taking advantage of heavy air-traffic next day, I evaded the patrol planes, slipped into the city and landed at an unpretentious public hangar.

I found lodgings for myself in a public house. And here I contrived to strike up an acquaintance with a professional assassin called Rapas the Ulsio(the Rat). And when I stated that I too was a fighting-man, and that I had been compelled to flee my own city because of a murder, he offered to introduce me to his employer, the wealthy inventor Fal Sivas.

That night a slave admitted us to a great walled mansion; and presently I was answering the questions of Fal Sivas. To test my ability, the inventor proposed a fencing-match between me and Rapas. In the duel which followed, I twice disarmed Rapas, earning his secret hatred; but Fal Sivas, highly pleased, hired me.

That night a girl burst into my quarters and begged me to hide her. Later, she told me a dreadful story.

"Fal Sivas," she told me, "is not so great an inventor as he is a murderer. . . . His greatest invention is a ship that will travel through interplanetary space, controlled by a mechanical brain. To duplicate the human brain, he must examine it. For this he needs slaves, who are purchased or kidnaped for him—slaves like me. These he tortures to death in his experiments."

Next day I selected this girl Zanda for my slave, and so contrived to protect her for the time being. And that night, with Fal Sivas' permission, I undertook a scouting raid upon the headquarters of Ur Jan's guild of assassins. While I was in hiding there, I saw Rapas enter, and overheard him tell Ur Jan of my employment by Fal Sivas, and agree to point me out for assassination.

The stirring story of an American's tremendous adventure via a brain-controlled space-ship to the moons of Mars.

Illustrated by Robert Fink

I slipped away from this dangerous spot, and later succeeded in foiling repeated attempts upon my life. Upon the bodies of my would-be assassins I cut a cross in the flesh above the heart—the mark of John Carter, Warlord of Mars.

Meanwhile Fal Sivas had shown me his marvelous airship controlled by a mechanical brain; secretly I discovered it would obey my thought-commands quite as well as those of Fal Sivas.

Several days later I chanced to overhear Ur Jan's plan to kidnap my wife, the princess Dejah Thoris, take her to the planet Thuria in a space-ship flown by Gar Nal—an inventor-rival of Fal Sivas—and hide her there while negotiating for a huge ransom. Meanwhile I was to be captured—and later killed.

My hurried return to Helium to safeguard my princess proved too late; she had been abducted the previous night. So, taking with me the young padwar Jat Or, I at once returned to Zodanga. Fal Sivas, however, proved too cowardly to emulate Gar Nal; therefore I fought off his servants, seized control of his huge ship, and rescuing the girl Zanda, I started for Thuria, taking aboard Jat Or at a designated meeting-place.

The journey to Thuria through the dark reaches of space proved uneventful save as it demonstrated the almost incredible speed of the space-ship and its uncanny ability to respond to thought-control, and even to reason independently.

At dawn we reached Thuria; discern-

"You know, Ozara," said the man, "that we are saving them for the Fire God." The woman shrugged. "Why kill them at all?"

ing Gar Nal's ship grounded in the courtyard of what seemed a deserted castle, we too landed there. From a lofty tower came the voice of Dejah Thoris, anxiously warning us of danger; then as we started for the castle, we were seized by invisible hands, overpowered and bound. The invisible force propelled us inside, to separate imprisonment.

I was thrown into a tower room where was likewise incarcerated a weird catman—a creature with one enormous eye centered in his forehead, rudimentary ears, and two mouths—a toothless upper one for sucking the blood of his prey, and a lipless lower one equipped with fangs. He possessed a chameleon-like faculty of protective coloration. After we had warily observed each other, I succeeded in making friends with the strange creature and within a short time I learned his language. He was Umka, of the Masenas, he told me, and our captors were the Tarids, a sun-worshiping people who had developed a hypnotic power of rendering themselves invisible and inaudible to their enemies. But, he said, this invisibility could be pierced by strong mental effort; and I thereupon set myself to this task. A few days later, at our meal-time, I heard sounds in the corridor as of men approaching. Then—I heard the lock click; slowly the door swung inward; and there, distinctly visible, were two men. *(The story continues in detail:)*

IN conformation they were quite human. Their skins were very fair and white, and in strange contrast were their blue hair and blue eyebrows. They wore

Just as I jumped I heard a voice raised in alarm. We had been discovered!

short close-fitting skirts of heavy gold mesh and breastplates similarly fabricated of gold. For weapons, each wore a long sword and a dagger. Their features were strong, their expressions stern.

I noted all these things in the few moments that the door remained open. I saw both men glance at me and at Umka, and I was sure that neither of them was aware that they were visible to me.

I was tremendously delighted to find that I had been able to throw off the strange spell that had been cast upon me; and after they had gone, I told Umka that I had been able both to see and hear them.

He asked me to describe them; and when I had done so, he agreed that I had told the truth.

"Sometimes people imagine things," he said, in explanation of his seeming doubt as to my veracity.

The next day, in the middle of the forenoon, I heard a considerable commotion in the corridor and on the stairway leading to our prison. Presently the door was opened and fully twenty-five men filed into the room.

As I saw them, a plan occurred to me that I thought might possibly give me an advantage over these people if an opportunity to escape presented itself later on; therefore I pretended that I did not see them. When looking in their direction, I focused my eyes beyond them; but to lessen the difficulty of this play-acting I sought to concentrate my attention on Umka, whom they knew to be visible to me.

Twelve of the men came close to me, just out of reach. One man stood near the door and issued commands; the others approached Umka.

Umka looked dumb, and fortunately he remained dumb.

"Half of you get the Masena," ordered the officer in charge of the detachment; "the rest of you take the black-haired one. As you can see, he does not know that we are in the room; so he may be surprised and struggle when you touch him. Seize him firmly."

I suppose Umka must have thought I was again under the influence of the hypnotic spell, for he was looking at me blankly when the warriors surrounded and took him in hand.

Then twelve of them leaped upon me. I might have put up a fight, but I saw nothing to be gained by doing so. As a matter of fact, I was anxious to leave this room. I could accomplish nothing while I remained in it; but once out, some whim of Fate might present an opportunity to me; so I did not struggle much, but pretended that I was startled when they seized me.

They then led us from the room and down the long series of stairways up which I had climbed weeks before, and finally into the same great throne-room through which Zanda, Jat Or, and I had been conducted the morning of our capture. But what a different scene it presented now that I had cast off the hypnotic spell under which I had labored at that time!

NO longer was the great room empty, no longer the two throne-chairs untenanted; instead, the audience-chamber was a mass of light and color and humanity.

Men, women, and children lined the wide aisle down which Umka and I were escorted toward the dais upon which stood the two throne-chairs. Between solid ranks of warriors, resplendent in gorgeous trappings, our escort marched us to an open space before the throne.

Congregated there under guard, their hands bound, were Jat Or, Zanda, Ur Jan, another whom I knew must be Gar Nal, and my beloved princess, Dejah Thoris.

"My chieftain!" she exclaimed in an undertone which evidently did not reach Zanda's ears. "Fate is a little kind in that she has permitted me to see you once again before we die."

"We still live," I reminded her, and she smiled as she recognized this, my long-time challenge to whatever malign fate might seem to threaten me.

Ur Jan's expression revealed his surprise when his eyes fell upon me. "You!" he exclaimed with a wry smile.

MY attention was now attracted to the man on the throne. He was demanding that we be silent.

He was a very fat man, with an arrogant expression; and I noted in him those signs of age that are so seldom apparent among the red men of Barsoom. I had also noted similar indications of age among other members of the throng that filled the audience-chamber, a fact which indicated that these people did not enjoy the almost perpetual youth of the Martians.

Occupying the throne at the man's side was a young and very beautiful woman. She was gazing at me dreamily.

"Splendid!" she whispered languidly.

"What is that?" demanded the man. "What is splendid?"

She looked up with a start, as one awakened from a dream. "Oh!" she exclaimed nervously. "I said it would be splendid if you could make them keep still; but how can you if we are invisible and inaudible to them? Unless,"—she shrugged,—"you silence them with the sword."

"You know, Ozara," demurred the man, "that we are saving them for the Fire God—we may not kill them now."

The woman shrugged. "Why kill them at all?" she asked. "They look like intelligent creatures. It might be interesting to preserve them."

I turned to my companions. "Can any of you see or hear anything that is going on in this room?" I asked.

"Except for ourselves, I can see no one and hear no one," said Gar Nal, and the others answered similarly.

"You are the victims of a form of hypnosis," I explained, "which makes it impossible for you either to see or hear our captors. But by the exercise of the powers of your own mind you can free yourselves from this condition. It is not difficult. I succeeded in doing it. If the rest of you are also successful, our chances of escape will be much better, if an opportunity to escape arises. Believing that they are invisible to us, they will never be on their guard against us."

"We cannot work together," said Gar Nal, "while half of us have it in our hearts to kill the other half."

"Let us call a truce on our own quarrels, then," I said, "until we have escaped from these people. Do you agree?"

"Yes," he replied.

"And you, Ur Jan?" I asked.

"It suits me," said the assassin of Zodanga.

"And you?" demanded Gar Nal, looking at Jat Or.

"Whatever the—Vandor commands, I shall do," replied the padwar.

Ur Jan bestowed a quick glance of sudden comprehension upon me. "Ah!" he exclaimed. "So you are also Vandor! Now I understand much that I did not understand before. Did that rat of a Rapas know?"

I ignored his question. "And now," I said, "let us raise our hands and swear to abide by this truce until we have all escaped from the Tarids, and further, that each of us will do all in his power to save the others."

Gar Nal, Ur Jan, Jat Or and I raised our hands to swear.

"The women, too," said Ur Jan; and then Dejah Thoris and Zanda raised their hands, and thus we six swore to fight for one another to the death until we should be free from these enemies.

It was a strange situation, for I had been commissioned to kill Gar Nal; and Ur Jan had sworn to kill me, while I was intent upon killing him; and Zanda, who hated them both, was but awaiting the opportunity to destroy me when she should learn my identity.

"COME," exclaimed the man on the throne, irritably, "what are they jabbering about in that strange language? We must silence them; we did not bring them here to listen to them."

"Remove the spell from them," suggested the girl he had called Ozara. "Let them see and hear us. There are only four men among them; they cannot harm us."

"They hall see us and they shall hear us when they are led out to die," replied the man, "and not before."

"I have an idea that one of the men among them can see us and hear us now," said the girl.

"What makes you think so?" demanded the man.

"I sense it when his eyes rest upon mine," she replied. "Then, too, when you speak, Ul Vas, his eyes travel to your face; and when I speak, they return to mine. He hears us, and he sees us."

I WAS indeed looking at the woman as she spoke, and now I realized I might have difficulty in carrying on my deception; but this time, when the man she had called Ul Vas replied to her, I focused my eyes beyond the girl and did not look at him.

"It is impossible," he said. "He can neither see nor hear us. You are always imagining things."

The girl shrugged her shapely shoulders and turned away with a bored yawn; but presently her eyes came back to me, and though I tried not to meet them squarely thereafter, I was aware during all the rest of the time I was in the audience-chamber that she was watching me.

"Let us proceed," said Ul Vas.

Thereupon an old man stepped to the front and placed himself directly before the throne. "All-highest," he intoned in a singsong voice, "the day is good, the occasion is good, the time has come. We bring before you, most august son of the Fire God, seven enemies of the Tarids. Through you, your father speaks, letting his people know his wishes. You have talked with the Fire God, your father. Tell us, All-highest, if these offerings look good in his eyes; make known to us his wishes, Almighty One."

Ever since we had come into the audience-chamber, Ul Vas had been inspecting us carefully; and especially had his attention been centered upon Dejah Thoris and Zanda. Now he cleared his throat.

"My father, the Fire God, wishes to know who these enemies are," he said.

"One of them," replied the old man who had spoken before, and whom I took to be a priest, "is a Masena that your warriors captured while he was hunting outside our walls. The other six are strange creatures. We know not from whence they came. They arrived in two unheard-of contraptions that moved through the air like birds, though they had no wings. In each of these were two men and a woman. They alighted inside our walls; but from whence they came or why, we do not know, though doubtless it was their intention to do us harm, as is the intention of all men who come to the castle of the Tarids. These things we know and nothing more. We await the wishes of the Fire God from the lips of his son, Ul Vas."

The man on the throne pursed his lips, as though in thought, while his eyes traveled again along the line of prisoners facing him, lingering long upon Dejah Thoris and Zanda.

Presently he spoke again.

"My father, the Fire God, demands that the Masena and the four strange men be destroyed in his honor at this same hour, after he has encircled Ladan seven times."

There were a few moments of expectant silence—a silence that was finally broken by the old priest.

"And the women, All-highest?" he asked. "What are the wishes of the Fire God, your father, in relation to them?"

"The Fire God, to show his great love," replied the Jeddak, "has presented the two women to his son, Ul Vas, to do with as he chooses."

CHAPTER XXI

Ozara

LIFE is sweet; and when I heard the words of doom fall from the lips of the Jeddak, Ul Vas, the words that condemned five of us to die on the seventh day, I must naturally have experienced some depressing reaction; but I was not conscious of it, in view of the far greater mental perturbation induced by the knowledge of Dejah Thoris' fate.

I was glad that she was mercifully deaf to what I had heard. It could not help her to know the fate that was being reserved for her, and it could only cause her needless anguish had she heard the death sentence pronounced upon me.

All my companions, having seen nothing and heard nothing, stood like dumb cattle before the throne of their cruel judge. To them it was only an empty chair; for me it held a creature of flesh and blood—a mortal whose vitals the point of a keen blade might reach.

Again Ul Vas was speaking. "Remove them now," he commanded. "Confine the men in the Turquoise Tower, and take the women to the Tower of Diamonds."

I thought then to leap upon him and strangle him with my bare hands, but my better judgment told me that that would not save Dejah Thoris from the fate for which she was being reserved. It could only result in my own death, and thus would be removed her greatest, perhaps her only, hope of eventual succor; and so I went quietly, as they led me away with my fellow-prisoners.

Umka and I were not returned to the cell in which we had previously been incarcerated; but were taken with Jat Or, Gar Nal, and Ur Jan to a large room in the Turquoise Tower.

We did not speak until the door had closed behind the escort that had been invisible to all but Umka and myself. The others seemed mystified; I could read it in the puzzled expressions upon their faces.

"What was it all about, Vandor?" demanded Jat Or. "Why did we stand there in silence in that empty chamber before those vacant thrones?"

"There was no silence," I replied; "and the room was crowded with people. The Jeddak and his Jeddara sat upon the thrones that seemed vacant to you, and the Jeddak passed the sentence of death upon all of us—we are to die on the seventh day."

"And the princess and Zanda, too?" he demanded.

I shook my head. "No, unfortunately, no."

"Why do you say unfortunately?" he asked, puzzled.

"Because they would prefer death to what is in store for them. The Jeddak, Ul Vas, is keeping them for himself."

Jat Or scowled. "We must do something," he said; "we must save them."

"I know it," I replied; "but how?"

"You have given up hope?" he demanded. "You will go to your death calmly, knowing what is in store for them?"

"You know me better than that, Jat Or," I said. "I am hoping that something will occur that will suggest a plan of rescue; although I see no hope at present, I am not hopeless. If no opportunity occurs before, then in the last moment, I shall at least avenge her, if I cannot save her; for I have an advantage over these people that they do not know I possess—they are neither invisible nor inaudible to me."

"Why are they going to kill us?" demanded Gar Nal, who had overheard my conversation with Jat Or.

Presently I saw a scarf fluttering across the sill of a lighted window. Silently the ship drew closer.

"We are to be offered as sacrifices to the Fire God whom they worship," I replied.

"The Fire God?" demanded Ur Jan. "Who is he?"

"The sun," I explained.

"But how could you understand their language?" asked Gar Nal. "It cannot be possible that they speak the same tongue that is spoken upon Barsoom."

"No," I replied, "they do not; but Umka, with whom I have been imprisoned ever since we were captured, has taught me the language of the Tarids."

"What are Tarids?" asked Jat Or.

"It is the name of the people in whose power we are," I explained.

"What is their name for Thuria?" asked Gar Nal.

"I am not sure," I replied; "but I will ask Umka. —Umka," I said, in his language, "what does the word *Ladan* mean?"

"That is the name of this world we live on," he replied. "You heard Ul Vas say that we should die when the Fire God had encircled Ladan seven times."

We Barsoomians fell into a general conversation after this, and I had an

opportunity to study Gar Nal and Ur Jan more carefully.

The former was, like most Martians, of indeterminate age. He was not of such extreme age that he commenced to show it, as did Fal Sivas. Gar Nal might have been anywhere from a hundred to a thousand years old. He had a high forehead and rather thin hair for a Martian, and there was nothing peculiarly distinctive about his features, except his eyes. I did not like them; they were crafty, deceitful, and cruel.

Ur Jan, whom of course I had seen before, was a burly, brutal fighting-man of the lowest type; but of the two, I thought then that I should have trusted Ur Jan farther than Gar Nal.

It seemed strange to me to be confined here in such small quarters with two such bitter enemies; but I realized, as they must have also, that it would profit us nothing to carry on our quarrel under such circumstances, whereas if an opportunity to escape presented itself, four men who could wield swords would have a very much better chance to effect the liberty of all than if there were only two of us. There would not have been more than two, had we dared to continue our quarrel; for at least two of us, and possibly three, must have died in order to insure peace.

Umka seemed rather neglected as we four talked in our own tongue. He and I had grown to be on very friendly terms, and I counted on him to assist us if an opportunity arose whereby we might attempt escape. I was therefore particularly anxious that he remain friendly, and so I drew him into the conversation occasionally, acting as his interpreter.

For days, day after day, I had watched Umka play with the hapless creatures that were brought to him for his food, so that the sight no longer affected me; but when the food was brought us this day, the Barsoomians watched the Masena in fascinated horror; and I could see that Gar Nal grew actually to fear the cat-man.

SHORTLY after we had completed our meal, the door opened again and several warriors entered. Zamak, the officer who had conducted Umka and me to the audience-chamber, was again in command.

Only Umka and I could see that anyone had entered the room; and I, with difficulty, pretended that I was not conscious of the fact.

"There he is," said Zamak, pointing to me; "fetch him along."

The soldiers approached and seized my arms on either side; then they hustled me toward the door.

"What is it?" cried Jat Or. "Where are you going?" The door was still ajar, and he saw I was headed toward it.

"I do not know where I am going, Jat Or," I replied. "They are taking me away again."

"My prince, my prince," he cried, and sprang after me, as though to drag me back; but the soldiers hustled me out of the chamber, and the door was slammed in Jat Or's face between us.

"It's a good thing these fellows can't see us," remarked one of the warriors escorting me. "I think we should have had a good fight on our hands just now, had they been able to."

"Even the best of men can't fight antagonists that are invisible to them," remarked another.

"This one did pretty well in the courtyard the day that we captured him; he bruised a lot of the Jeddak's guards with his bare hands, and killed two of them."

This was the first intimation that I had had any success whatsoever in that encounter, and it rather pleased me. I could imagine how they would feel if they knew I could not only see them but hear them and understand them.

QUITE different from any portion of the palace that I had hitherto seen was the part to which I was now conducted. It was even more gorgeous in its lavish decorations and appointments than the splendid throne-room.

Presently we came to a doorway before which several warriors stood on guard.

"We have come, as was commanded," said Zamak, "and brought the white-skinned prisoner with us."

"You are expected," replied one of the guardsmen; "you may enter," and he threw open the large double doors.

Beyond them was an apartment of such exquisite beauty and richness that, in my poor vocabulary, I find no words to describe it. There were hangings in colors unknown to earthly eyes, against a background of walls that seemed to be of solid ivory, though what the material was of which they were composed, I did not know. It was rather the richness and elegance of the room's appointments that made it seem so beautiful, for after all, simplicity was its dominant note.

There was no one else in the room when we entered. My guard led me to the center of the floor and halted.

Presently a door in the opposite side of the room opened, and a woman appeared. She was a very good-looking young woman. Later I was to learn that she was a slave.

"You will wait in the corridor, Zamak," she said; "the prisoner will follow me."

"What, alone, without a guard?" demanded Zamak in surprise.

"Such are my commands," replied the girl.

"But how can he follow you," asked Zamak, "when he can neither see nor hear us; and if he could hear us, he could not understand us?"

"I will lead him," she replied.

As she approached me, the soldiers relinquished their grasp upon my arms; and taking one of my hands, she led me from the apartment.

THE room into which I was now conducted, though slightly smaller, was more beautiful than the other. However, I did not immediately take note of its appointments, my attention being immediately and wholly attracted by its single occupant.

I am not easily surprised; but in this instance I must confess I was—when I recognized the woman reclining upon a divan, and watching me intently through long lashes, as Ozara, Jeddara of the Tarids.

The slave girl led me to the center of the room and halted. There she waited, looking questioningly at the Jeddara; while I, recalling that I was supposed to be deaf and blind to these people, sought to focus my gaze beyond the beautiful empress whose veiled eyes seemed to read my very soul.

"You may retire, Ulah," she said.

The slave girl bowed low and backed from the room.

For several moments after she departed, no sound broke the silence of the room; but always I felt the eyes of Ozara upon me.

Presently she laughed, a silvery musical laugh. "What is your name?" she demanded.

I pretended that I did not hear her, as I found occupation for my eyes in examination of the beauties of the chamber. It appeared to be the boudoir of the empress, and it made a lovely setting for her unquestionable beauty.

"Listen," she said, presently; "you fooled Ul Vas and Zamak and the High Priest and all the rest of them; but you did not fool me. I will admit that you have splendid control, but your eyes betray you. They betrayed you in the audience-chamber; and they betrayed you again just now as you entered this room, just as I knew they would betray you. They showed surprise when they rested upon me, and that can mean only one thing: you saw and recognized me.

"I knew, too, in the audience-chamber, that you understood what was being said. You are a highly intelligent creature, and the changing lights in your eyes reflected your reaction to what you heard in the audience-chamber.

"Let us be honest with one another, you and I, for we have more in common than you guess. I am not unfriendly to you. I understand why you think it to your advantage to conceal the fact that you can see and hear us; but I can assure you that you will be no worse off if you trust me, for I already know that we are neither invisible nor inaudible to you."

I could not fathom what she meant by saying we had much in common, unless it were merely a ruse to lure me into an admission that I could both see and hear the Tarids; yet on the other hand, I could see no reason to believe that either she or the others would profit by this knowledge. I was absolutely in their power, and apparently it made little difference whether I could see and hear them or not. Furthermore, I was convinced that this girl was extremely clever and that I could not deceive her into believing that she was invisible to me. I saw no reason to attempt to carry the deception further; so I looked her squarely in the eyes and smiled.

"I SHALL be honored by the friendship of the Jeddara, Ozara," I said.

"There!" she exclaimed. "I knew that I was right."

"Yet perhaps you had a little doubt."

"If I did, it is because you are a past master in the art of deception."

"I felt that the lives and liberty of my companions and myself might depend upon my ability to keep your people from knowing that I can see and understand them."

"You do not speak our language very well," she said. "How did you learn it?"

"The Masena with whom I was imprisoned taught me it," I explained.

I knew my position was hopeless. . . . Then a blow upon my head sent me down to a merciful unconsciousness.

"Tell me about yourself," she demanded; "your name, your country, the strange contrivances in which you came to the last stronghold of the Tarids, and your reason for coming."

"I am John Carter," I replied, "Prince of the house of Tardos Mors, Jeddak of Helium."

"Helium?" she questioned. "Where is Helium? I never heard of it."

"It is on another world," I explained, "on Barsoom, the great planet that you call your larger moon."

"You are, then, a prince in your own country?" she said. "I thought as much. I am seldom mistaken in my estimate of people. The two women and one of the other men among your companions are well-bred," she continued; "the other two men are not. One of them, however, has a brilliant mind, while the other is a stupid lout, a low brute of a man."

I could not but smile at her accurate appraisal of my companions. And if she really cared to befriend me, I felt that she might accomplish much for us; but I did not allow my hopes to rise too high, for after all she was the mate of Ul Vas, the Jeddak who had condemned us to death.

"You have read them accurately, Jeddara," I told her.

"But you have not told me why you came to our country."

"The two men that you last described abducted a princess of the reigning house of my country."

"She must be the very beautiful one," mused Ozara.

"Yes," I said. "With the other man and the girl, I pursued them in another ship. Shortly after we reached Ladan, we saw their ship in the courtyard of your castle. We landed beside it to rescue the princess and punish her abductors. It was then that your people captured us."

"Then you did not come to harm us?"

"Certainly not," I replied. "We did not even know of your existence."

She nodded. "I was quite sure that you intended us no harm," she said, "for enemies would never have placed themselves thus absolutely in our power; but I could not convince Ul Vas and the others."

"I appreciate your belief in me," I said; "but I cannot understand why you have taken this interest in me, an alien and a stranger."

She contemplated me in silence for a moment.

"Perhaps it is because we have so much in common," she said; "and again perhaps because of a force that is greater than all others and that seizes and dominates us without our volition."

She paused and regarded me intently, and then she shook her head impatiently.

"The thing that we have in common," she said, "is that we are both prisoners in the castle of Ul Vas. The reason that I have taken this interest in you, you would understand if you are one-tenth as intelligent as I gave you credit for."

CHAPTER XXII

We Attempt Escape

OZARA may have overestimated my intelligence, but she underestimated my caution. I could not admit that I understood the inference that I was supposed to draw from what she had said to me. I was inclined to believe it was a ruse intended to trap me into some sort of an admission of ulterior designs upon her people, after she had wholly won my confidence; and so I sought to ignore the possible confession in her final statement by appearing to be dumb-

founded by her first statement, which really was a surprise to me.

"You, a prisoner?" I demanded. "I thought that you were the Jeddara of the Tarids."

"I am," she said, "but I am no less a prisoner."

"But are not these your people?" I asked in surprise.

"No," she replied; "I am a Domnian. My country, Domnia, is far away across the mountains that lie beyond the forest surrounding the castle of Ul Vas."

"And your people married you to Ul Vas, Jeddak of the Tarids?" I asked.

"No," she replied; "he stole me from them. My people do not know what has become of me. They would never willingly have sent me to the court of Ul Vas, nor would I remain here, could I escape. Ul Vas is a beast. He changes his jeddaras often. His agents are constantly searching other countries for beautiful young women. When they find one more beautiful than I, I shall go the way of my predecessors; but I think that he has found one to his liking already, and that my days are numbered."

"YOU think that his agents have found another more beautiful than you?" I asked. "It seems incredible."

"Thank you for the compliment," she said, "but his agents have not found another more beautiful than I. Ul Vas has found her himself. In the audience-chamber, did you not see him looking at your beautiful compatriot? He could scarcely keep his eyes from her, and you will recall that her life was spared."

"So was the life of the girl, Zanda," I reminded her. "Is he going to take her also to be his Jeddara?"

"No, he may only have one at a time," replied Ozara. "The girl whom you call Zanda is for the High Priest. It is thus that Ul Vas propitiates the gods."

"If he takes this other woman," I said, "she will kill him."

"But that will not help me," said Ozara.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because while one Jeddara lives, he cannot take another," she explained.

"You will be destroyed?" I asked.

"I shall disappear," replied Ozara. "Strange things happen in the castle of Ul Vas, strange and terrible things."

"I commence to understand why you sent for me," I said; "you would like to escape; and you think if you can help us to escape, we will take you with us."

"You are commencing to understand at least a part of my reasons," she said. "The rest," she added, "I shall see that you learn in time."

"You think there is a chance for us to escape?" I asked.

"Just a bare chance," she said; "but inasmuch as we are to die anyway, there is no chance that we may not take."

"Have you any plans?"

"We might escape in the ship, the one that is still in the courtyard."

NOW I was interested. "One of the ships is still in the courtyard?" I demanded. "Only one? They have not destroyed it?"

"They would have destroyed it, but they are afraid of it; they are afraid to go near it. When you were captured, two of Ul Vas' warriors entered one of the ships, whereupon it immediately flew away with them. It did not fly away before the first one who had entered it had called back to his companion that it was deserted. Now they think that these ships are under a magic spell, and they will not go near the one that lies in the courtyard."

"Do you know what became of the other ship?" I asked. "Do you know where it went?"

"It lies in the sky, far above the castle. It just floats there, as though it were waiting—waiting for something, but we know not what. Ul Vas is afraid of it. That is one reason why you have not been destroyed before. He was waiting to see what the ship would do; and he was also waiting to screw up his courage to a point where he might order your destruction, for he is a great coward."

"Then you think that there is a chance of our reaching the ship?" I asked.

"There is a chance," she said. "I can hide you here in my apartment until nightfall, and the castle sleeps. Then if we can pass the guard at the outer doorway and reach the courtyard, we should succeed. It is worth trying, but you may have to fight your way past the guard. Are you skilled with the sword?"

"I think that I can give a good account of myself," I replied, "but how are we to get the rest of my party into the courtyard?"

"Only you and I are going," she said.

I shook my head. "I cannot go unless all my people go with me."

She eyed me with sudden suspicion. "Why not?" she demanded. "You are in love with one of those women; you

will not go without her." Her tone was tinged with resentment.

If I were to effect the escape of the others, and especially of Dejah Thoris, I must not let her know the truth; so I thought quickly, and two good reasons occurred to me why she and I could not depart alone.

"It is a point of honor in the country from which I come," I told her, "that a man never deserts his comrades. For that reason, I could not, in honor, leave without them; but there is another even more potent reason."

"What is that?" she asked.

"The ship that remains in the courtyard belongs to my enemies, the two men who abducted the princess from my country. My ship is the one that floats above the castle. I know nothing at all about the mechanism of their ship. Even if we succeeded in reaching it, I could not operate it."

FOR a while, she studied this problem and then she looked up. "I wonder if you are telling me the truth," she said.

"Your life depends upon your believing me," I replied; "so does mine, and so do the lives of all my companions."

She considered this in silence for a moment, and then with a gesture of impatience she said, "I do not know how we can get your friends out into the courtyard and to the ship."

"I think I know how we may escape," I said, "if you will help us."

"How is that?" she demanded.

"If you can get me tools with which we can cut the bars to the windows of their prison cells, and also describe exactly the location of the room in which the girls are imprisoned, I am sure that I can be successful."

"If I did these things, then you could escape without me," she said suspiciously.

"I give you my word, Ozara, that if you do as I ask, I shall not leave without you."

"What else do you want me to do?" she asked.

"Can you gain entrance to the room where the princess and Zanda are imprisoned?"

"Yes, I think that I can do that," she replied, "unless Ul Vas should realize that I suspected his intention and might think that I intended to kill the women; but I am not so sure that I can get the tools with which you may cut the bars to the windows of your prison. I can get them," she corrected herself, "but I do not know how I can get them to you."

"If you could send some food to me, you might conceal a file or saw in the jar with the food," I suggested.

"Just the thing!" she exclaimed. "I can send Ulah to you with a jar of food."

"And how about the bars on the windows of the girls' prison?" I asked.

"They are in the Diamond Tower," she replied, "very high. There are no bars on their windows because no one could escape from the Diamond Tower in that way. There are always guards at its base, for it is the tower in which are the Jeddak's quarters; so if you are planning on your women escaping through a window, you might as well abandon the idea at once."

"I think not," I replied. "If my plan works, they can escape with even greater ease from the Diamond Tower than from the courtyard."

"But how about you and the other men of your party? Even if you are able to lower yourselves from the window of your cell, you will never be able to reach the Diamond Tower to insure our escape."

"Leave that to me," I said; "have confidence in me, and I think that if you do your part, we shall all be able to escape."

"Tonight?" she asked.

"No, I think not," I said; "we had better wait until tomorrow night, for we do not know how long it will take to sever the bars of our window. Perhaps you had better send me back now and smuggle the tools to me as soon thereafter as possible."

She nodded. "You are right."

"Just a moment," I said. "How am I to know the Tower of Diamonds? How am I to find it?"

SHE hesitated. "It is the central, loftiest tower of the castle," she explained, "but I do not know how you will reach it without a guide and many fighting-men."

"Leave that to me, but you must help guide me to the room where the two women are imprisoned."

"How can I do that?" she demanded.

"When you reach their room, hang a colored scarf from a window there—a red scarf."

"How can you see that from inside the castle?" she demanded.

"Never mind; if my plan works, I shall find it. And now, please send me away."

She struck a gong hanging near her and the slave girl, Ulah, entered the apartment. "Take the prisoner back to Zamak," she instructed, "and have him returned to his cell."

ULAH took me by the hand and led me from the presence of the Jeddara, through the adjoining apartment and into the corridor beyond, where Zamak and the guards were waiting. There she turned me over to the warriors who conducted me back to the room in the Turquoise Tower, where my companions were imprisoned.

Jat Or voiced an exclamation of relief when he saw me enter the room. "When they took you away, my prince, I thought that I should never see you again; but now fate is growing kinder to me. She has just given me two proofs of her returning favor—I have you back again, and when the door opened I saw the Tarids who returned with you."

"You could see them?" I exclaimed.

"I could see them and hear them," he replied.

"And I, too," said Gar Nal.

"How about you, Ur Jan?" I asked, for the more of us who could see them, the better chance we would have in the event there was fighting during our attempt to rescue the women and escape.

Ur Jan shook his head gloomily. "I could see nothing or hear nothing," he said.

"Don't give up," I urged; "you *must* see them. Persevere, and you shall see them.

"Now," I said, turning to Gar Nal, "I have some good news. Our ships are safe; yours still lies in the courtyard. They are afraid to approach it."

"And yours?" he asked.

"It floats in the sky, high above the castle."

"You brought others with you from Barsoom?" he asked.

"No," I replied.

"But there must be somebody aboard the ship, or it could not get up there and remain under control."

"There is some one aboard it," I replied.

He looked puzzled. "But you just said that you brought no one with you," he challenged.

"There are two Tarid warriors aboard it."

"But how can they handle it? What can they know about the intricate mechanism of Fal Sivas' craft?"

"They know nothing about it and cannot handle it."

"Then how in the name of Issus did it get up there?" he demanded.

"That is something that you need not know, Gar Nal," I told him. "The fact is, that it is there."

"But what good will it do us, hanging up there in the sky?"

"I think that I can get it, when the time comes," I said, although, as a matter of fact, I was not positive that I could control the ship through the mechanical brain at so great a distance. "I am not so much worried about my ship, Gar Nal, as I am about yours. We should recover it, for after we escape from this castle, our truce is off; and it would not be well for us to travel on the same ship."

He acquiesced with a nod, but I saw his eyes narrow craftily. I wondered if that expression reflected some treacherous thought; but really it did not make much difference what Gar Nal was thinking as long as I could keep my eyes on him until I had Dejah Thoris safely aboard my own craft.

Ur Jan was sitting on a bench, glaring into space; and I knew that he was concentrating his stupid brain in an effort to cast off the hypnotic spell under which the Tarids had placed him. Umka lay curled up on a rug, purring contentedly. Jat Or stood looking out of a window.

THE door opened, and we all turned toward it. I saw Ulah, the Jeddara's slave, bearing a large earthen jar of food. She set it down upon the floor inside the door, and stepped back into the corridor, closed and fastened the door after her.

I walked quickly to the jar and picked it up; and as I turned back toward the others, I saw Ur Jan standing wide-eyed staring at the door.

"What's the matter, Ur Jan?" I asked. "You look as though you had seen a ghost."

"I saw her!" he exclaimed. "I saw her. Ghost or no ghost, I saw her."

"Good!" ejaculated Jat Or. "Now we are all free from that damnable spell."

"Give me a good sword," growled Ur Jan; "and we'll soon be free of the castle, too."

"We've got to get out of this room first," Gar Nal reminded him.

"I think we have the means of escape here, in this jar," I told them. "Come, we might as well eat the food, as long as

we have it, and see what we find in the bottom of the jar."

The others gathered around me, and we started to empty the jar in the most pleasurable fashion; nor had we gone deep into it before I discovered three files, and with these we immediately set to work upon the bars of one of our windows.

"Don't cut them all the way through," I cautioned; "just weaken three of them so that we can pull them aside when the time arrives."

The metal of which the bars were constructed was either some element unknown upon Earth or Barsoom, or an equally mysterious alloy. It was very hard. In fact, it seemed at first that it was almost as hard as our files; but at last they commenced to bite into it, yet I saw that it was going to be a long, hard job.

WE worked upon those bars all that night and all the following day.

When slaves brought our food, two of us stood looking out of the window, our hands grasping the bars so as to cover up the evidence of our labors; and thus we succeeded in finishing the undertaking without being apprehended.

Night fell. The time was approaching when I might put to trial the one phase of my plan that was the keystone upon which the success of the entire adventure must rest. If it failed, all our work upon the bars would be set for naught, our hopes of escape blasted.

Ur Jan was at the window looking out. "We can pull these bars away whenever we wish," he said, "but I do not see what good that is going to do us. If we fastened all our harnesses together, they would not reach to the castle roof below us. It looks to me as though we had had all our work for nothing."

"Go over there and sit down," I told him, "and keep still. All of you keep still; do not speak or move until I tell you to."

Of them all, only Jat Or could have guessed what I purposed attempting, yet they all did as I had bid them.

Going to the window, I searched the sky; but I could see nothing of our craft. Nevertheless, I sought to concentrate my thoughts upon the metallic brain wherever it might be. I directed it to drop down and approach the window of the tower where I stood. Never before in my life, I think, had I so concentrated my mind upon a single idea.

Behind me the room was as silent as the grave; and through the open window where I stood, no sound came from the sleeping castle below me.

The slow seconds passed, dragging into a seeming eternity of time. Could it be that the brain had passed beyond the sphere of my control? Was the ship lost to me forever? These thoughts assailed me as my power of concentration weakened. My mind was swept into a mad riot of conflicting hopes and doubts, fears and sudden swift assurances of success that faded into despondency as rapidly as they had grown out of nothing.

And then, across the sky I saw a great black hulk moving slowly toward me out of the night.

For just an instant the reaction left me weak; but I soon regained control of myself and pulled aside the three bars that we had cut.

The others, who had evidently been watching the window from where they either sat or stood, now pressed forward. I could hear smothered exclamations of surprise, relief, elation. Turning quickly, I cautioned them to silence.

I DIRECTED the brain to bring the ship close to the window; then I turned to my companions.

"There are two Tarid warriors aboard her," I said. "If they found the water and food which she carried, they are still alive; and there is no reason to believe that starving men would not find it. We must therefore prepare ourselves for a fight. Each of these men, no doubt, is armed with a long sword and a dagger. We are unarmed. We shall have to overcome them with our bare hands."

I turned to Ur Jan. "When the door is opened two of us must leap into the cabin simultaneously on the chance that we may take them by surprise. Will you go first with me, Ur Jan?"

He nodded and a crooked smile twisted his lips. "Yes," he said, "and it will be a strange sight to see Ur Jan and John Carter fighting side by side."

"At least we should put up a good fight," I said.

"It is too bad," he sighed, "that those two Tarids will never have the honor of knowing who killed them."

"Jat Or, you and Gar Nal follow immediately behind Ur Jan and me." And then, in his own language, I told Umka to board the ship immediately after Jat Or and Gar Nal. "And if the fighting is not all over," I told him, "you will

know what to do when you see the two Tarid warriors." Umka's upper mouth stretched in one of his strange grins, and he purred acquiescently.

I stepped to the sill of the window, and Ur Jan clambered to my side. The hull of the craft was almost scraping the side of the building; the doorway was only a foot from the sill on which we stood.

"Ready, Ur Jan," I whispered, and then I directed the brain to draw the doors aside as rapidly as possible.

Almost instantly, they sprang apart; and in the same instant Ur Jan and I sprang into the cabin. Behind us, came our three companions. In the gloom of the interior, I saw two men facing us; and without waiting to give either of them a chance to draw, I hurled myself at the legs of the nearer.

He crashed to the floor, and before he could draw his dagger I seized both his wrists and pinioned him on his back.

I did not see how Ur Jan handled his man; but a moment later, with the assistance of Jat Or and Umka, we had disarmed them both.

Ur Jan and Gar Nal wanted to kill them offhand, but that I would not listen to. I can kill a man in a fair fight without a single qualm of conscience; but I cannot kill a defenseless man in cold blood, even though he be my enemy.

As a precautionary measure, we bound and gagged them.

"What now?" demanded Gar Nal. "How are you going to get the women?"

"First, I am going to try and get your ship," I replied, "for even if we extend our truce, we shall stand a better chance of returning to Barsoom if we have both ships in our possession, as something might happen to one of them."

"You are right," he said; "and, too, I should hate to lose my ship. It is the fruit of a lifetime of thought and study and labor."

I now caused the ship to rise and cruise away until I thought that it was out of sight of the castle. I adopted this course merely as a strategy to throw the Tarids off our track in the event that any of the guards had seen the ship maneuvering among the towers; but when we had gone some little distance, I dropped low and approached the castle again from the side where Gar Nal's ship lay in the courtyard.

I kept very low above the trees of the forest and moved very slowly without lights. Just beyond the castle wall, I

"Save me, John Carter!" cried Ozara. "Save me, or I shall be killed!"

brought the ship to a stop and surveyed the courtyard just ahead and below us.

Plainly I saw the outlines of Gar Nal's ship, but nowhere upon that side of the castle was there any sign of a guard.

This seemed almost too good to be true, and in a whisper I asked Umka if it could be possible that the castle was unguarded at night.

"There are guards within the castle all night," he said, "and upon the outside of the Tower of Diamonds, but these are to guard Ul Vas against assassination by his own people. They do not fear that any enemy will come from beyond the walls at night, for none has ever attacked except by day. The forests of Ladan are full of wild beasts; and if a body of men were to enter them at night, the beasts would set up such a din of howling and roaring that the Tarids would be warned in ample time to defend themselves; so you see, the beasts of the forest are all the guards they need."

Thus assured that there was no one in the courtyard, I took the ship across the wall and dropped it to the ground beside Gar Nal's.

Quickly I gave my instructions for what was to follow. "Gar Nal," I said, "you will go aboard your ship and pilot it, following me. We are going to the window of the room where the women are confined. As I draw in and stop at their window, both the doors in the sides of my ship will be open. Open the door on the port side of your ship and place it alongside mine, so that if it is necessary you can cross through my ship and enter the room where the women are confined. We may need all the help that we have, if the women are well guarded."

VAGUE misgivings disturbed me as I saw Gar Nal enter his ship. They seemed a premonition of disaster, of tragedy; but I realized that they were

based upon nothing more substantial than my natural dislike for the man, and so I sought to devote my thoughts to the business in hand.

CHAPTER XXIII

In the Tower of Diamonds

THE night was dark; neither Mars nor Cluros had risen. It was, indeed, because of the fact that I knew neither of them would be in the sky that I had chosen this hour for my attempt to rescue Dejah Thoris and her companion.

Presently I heard the motors of Gar Nal's ship, which we had decided should be the signal that he was ready to start. Leaving the ground, I rose from the courtyard, crossed the wall and set a course away from the city. This I held until I felt that we were out of sight of any possible watcher who might have discovered us. Trailing us was the dark hulk of Gar Nal's ship.

In a wide spiral, I rose and circled back to the opposite side of the castle; and then, approaching it more closely, I picked out the lofty Tower of Diamonds.

Somewhere in that gleaming shaft were Dejah Thoris and Zanda; and if Ozara had not betrayed me and if no accident had befallen her plan, the Jeddara of the Tarids was with them.

There had been moments when I had been somewhat concerned as to the honesty and loyalty of Ozara. If she had spoken the truth, then there was every reason why she should wish to escape from the clutches of Ul Vas. However, she might not be so enthusiastic about the escape of Dejah Thoris and Zanda.

I confess that I do not understand women. Some of the things that they do, their mental processes, I find inexplicable. Yet I was not so stupid that I did not sense something in Ozara's manner toward me, something in the very fact that she had sent for me, that indicated an interest on the part of the Jeddara of the Tarids that might prove inimical to the interests of the Princess of Helium.

Ozara, Jeddara of the Tarids, however, was not the only doubtful factor in the problem which confronted me. I did not trust Gar Nal. I doubt that anyone who had once looked into the man's eyes could trust him. And Ur Jan was my avowed enemy. His every interest demanded that he either betray or destroy me.

Zanda must have learned by this time from Dejah Thoris that I was John Carter, Prince of Helium. That knowledge would, undoubtedly, free her from all sense of obligation to me; and I could not but recall that she had sworn to kill John Carter if ever the opportunity presented itself. This left only Jat Or and Umka upon whom I could depend; and, as a matter of fact, I was not depending too much upon Umka. His intentions might be good enough, but I knew too little of his fighting heart and ability to be able to definitely assure myself that the cat-man of Ladan would prove an important and effective ally.

As these discouraging thoughts were racing through my brain, I was causing the ship to drop slowly toward the Diamond Tower; and presently I saw a scarf fluttering across the sill of a lighted window, and beyond, a silhouetted figure.

Silently the ship drew closer. The doors in both sides of the cabin were open to permit Gar Nal to cross from his ship to the window in the tower.

I stood upon the threshold of the port doorway, ready to leap into the room the instant the ship drew close enough.

The interior of the room beyond the window was not brilliantly lighted, but in the dim illumination I could see the figures of three women, and my heart leaped with renewed hope.

The discovery of the scarlet scarf flying from the window had not wholly reassured me, as I was fully conscious of the fact that it might have been placed there as a lure; but the presence of the three women in the chamber appeared reasonable evidence that Ozara had carried out her part of the agreement.

As the ship came closer to the sill, I prepared to leap into the room beyond; and just as I jumped I heard a voice raised in alarm and warning far below me at the base of the tower. We had been discovered!

AS I alighted from the floor of the chamber, Dejah Thoris voiced a low exclamation of happiness. "My chieftain!" she cried. "I knew that you would come. Wherever they might have taken me, I knew that you would follow."

"To the end of the universe, my princess," I replied.

The warning cry from below that told me that we had been discovered left no time now for greeting or explanation, nor would either Dejah Thoris or myself reveal to strangers the emotions that

were in our breasts. I wanted to take her to my heart, to cover her lips with kisses; but instead I only said, "Come, we must board the ship at once. The guard below has raised the alarm."

Zanda came and clutched my arm. "I knew you would come, Vandor," she said.

I could not understand her use of that name. Could it be that Dejah Thoris had not told her who I was? Ozara also knew my name. It seemed incredible that she should not have mentioned it when she came to the room to explain to the two women imprisoned there that a rescue had been planned and who was to execute it.

OZARA, Jeddara of the Tarids, did not greet me. She scrutinized me under narrowed lids through the silky fringe of her long lashes; and as my eyes rested for a moment on hers, I thought that I recognized in her glance a hint of malice; but perhaps that was only my imagination, and certainly I had no time now to analyze or question her emotions.

As I turned toward the window with Dejah Thoris, I was filled with consternation. The ships were gone!

Running to the opening, I looked out; and to the left I saw both craft moving off into the night.

What had happened thus to wreck my plans in the very instant of success?

The three women shared my consternation. "The ship!" exclaimed Dejah Thoris.

"Where has it gone?" cried Ozara.

"We are lost," said Zanda, quite simply. "I can hear armed men running up the stairway."

Suddenly I realized what had happened. I had directed the brain to approach the window, but I had not told it to stop. I had jumped, and it had gone on before my companions could follow me; and Gar Nal, not knowing what had occurred, had continued on with it, following me as I had directed.

Instantly, I centered my thoughts upon the mechanical brain and directed it to bring the ship back to the window and stop there. Self-reproach now was useless but I could not help but be cognizant of the fact that my carelessness had jeopardized the safety of my princess and those others who had looked to me for protection.

I could now plainly hear the warriors approaching. They were coming swiftly. From the window, I could see both ships turning now. Would they reach us before it was too late? I commanded the brain to return at the highest speed compatible with safety. It leaped forward in response to my wishes. The warriors were very close now. I judged that they were approaching the next level below. In another moment they would be at the door.

I carried the sword of one of the Tarid warriors that we had overpowered in the cabin of the craft, but could a single sword for long prevail over the many that I knew must be coming?

The ships drew closer, Gar Nal's almost abreast of mine. I saw Jat Or and Ur Jan standing in the doorway of Fal Sivas' ship.

"The alarm has been raised and warriors are almost at the door," I called to them. "I will try to hold them off while you get the women aboard."

Even as I spoke, I heard the enemy just outside the door of the chamber. "Stay close to the window," I directed the three women, "and board the boat the moment it touches the sill!" Then I crossed the room quickly to the door, the Tarid sword ready in my hand.

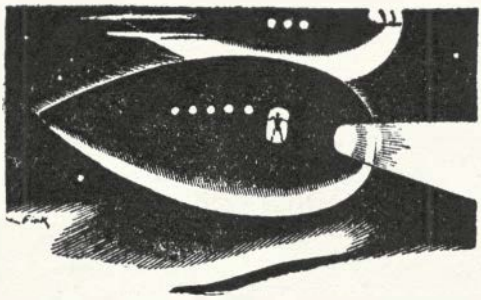
I had scarcely reached it, when it was thrown open; a dozen warriors crowded in the corridor beyond. The first one to leap into the room leaped full upon the point of my blade. With a single, piercing scream he died; and as I jerked my steel from his heart, he lunged forward at my feet.

In the brief instant that my weapon was thus engaged, three men forced themselves into the room, pushed forward by those behind.

One thrust at me, and another swung a terrific cut at my head. I parried the thrust and dodged the cut, and then my blade clove the skull of one of them.

For a moment I forgot everything in the joy of battle. I felt my lips tense in the fighting smile that is famous in two worlds. Again, as upon so many other fields, my sword seemed inspired; but the Tarids were no mean swordsmen, nor were they cowards. They pushed forward into the room over the bodies of their dead companions.

I THINK that I could have accounted for them all single-handed, with such fierce enthusiasm did I throw my whole being into the defense of my princess; but now from below I heard the tramp of many feet and the rattling of accouterments. Reinforcements were coming!



Ur Jan's figure was outlined in the doorway.

It had been a glorious fight so far. Six lay dead upon the floor about me; but now the other six were all in the room, yet I would have felt no discouragement had I not heard the thunderous pounding of those many feet leaping rapidly upward from below.

I was engaged with a strapping fellow who sought to push me back, when one of his companions attempted to reach my side and distract my attention, while another edged to my opposite side.

My situation at that moment was embarrassing, to say the least, for the man who engaged me in front was not only a powerful fellow but a splendid swordsman; and then I saw a sword flash at my right and another at my left. Two of my adversaries went down, and in the next instant a quick glance showed me that Ur Jan and Jat Or were fighting at my side.

As the three remaining Tarids bravely leaped in to take the places of their fallen comrades, the vanguard of their reinforcements arrived; and a perfect avalanche of yelling warriors burst into the apartment.

As I finally succeeded in spitting my antagonist, I snatched a momentary opportunity to glance behind me.

I saw the three women and Umka in the room and Gar Nal standing upon the sill of the window.

"Quick, Gar Nal," I cried, "get the women aboard."

For the next few minutes I was about as busy as I can remember ever having been before in my life. The Tarids were all around us. They had succeeded in encircling us. I was engaged constantly with two or three swordsmen at a time. I could not see what was taking place elsewhere in the room, but my thoughts were always of Dejah Thoris and her safety; and suddenly it occurred to me that if all of us who were fighting there in the room should be destroyed, she would be left in the power of Gar Nal without a defender.

Jat Or was fighting near me. "The Princess!" I called to him. "She is alone on the ship with Gar Nal. If we are both killed, she is lost. Go to her at once."

"And leave you, my prince?" he demanded.

"It is not a request, Jat Or," I said; "it is a command."

"Yes, my prince," he replied, and fought his way to the window.

"Help him, Ur Jan," I commanded.

The three of us managed to cut a path for Jat Or to the window, and as we stood with our backs to it, I saw something which filled me with consternation. At one side, struggling in the grip of two warriors, was Ozara, the Jeddara of the Tarids.

"Save me, John Carter," she cried. "Save me, or I shall be killed."

THERE was nothing else I could do. No other path would be honorable. Ozara had made it possible for us to escape. Perhaps her deed had already succeeded in saving Dejah Thoris. My own stupidity had placed us in this position, which now had become a definite threat to the life of the Jeddara.

Jat Or, Ur Jan, and I had succeeded in cutting down the warriors that immediately faced us; and the others, probably the least courageous of the band, seemed to hesitate to engage us again immediately.

I turned to my companions. "On board with you, quick," I cried, "and hold the entrance to the ship until I bring the Jeddara aboard."

As I started toward the warriors holding Ozara, I saw Umka at my side. He had given a good account of himself in the fight, although he had carried no sword, which, at the time, I did not understand because there was a plentiful supply of weapons aboard the craft; but later I was to learn that it is not the manner of the Masenas to fight with swords or daggers, with the use of which they are wholly unfamiliar.

I had seen in this encounter how he fought; and I realized that his powerful muscles and the terrible jaws of his lower mouth were adequate weapons even against a swordsman, aided as they were by a certain cat-like agility.

Umka had received a number of wounds and was bleeding profusely, as, in fact, were all of us; but I thought that

he looked about finished and ordered him back to the ship. He demurred at first, but finally he went, and I was alone in the room with the remaining Tarids.

I knew that my position was hopeless, but I could not leave to her death this girl who had aided me.

As I sprang forward to attack her captors, I saw another contingent of reinforcements burst into the room.

My case was now, indeed, hopeless.

The newcomers paid no attention to me; they ran straight for the window where the ship lay. If they succeeded in boarding her, the doom of Dejah Thoris would be sealed.

There was only one way in which I could circumvent them, though it definitely spelled the end for me.

The two men holding Ozara were waiting for me to attack them, but I paused long enough to hurl a mental order at the mechanical brain in the nose of Fal Sivas' ship.

I cast a glance back at the craft. Ur Jan's figure was outlined in the doorway; Jat Or was not there; but at the very instant that the ship started to move away in obedience to my command, the young padwar sprang into view.

"My prince," he cried, "we have been betrayed. Gar Nal has fled with Dejah Thoris in his own ship."

Then the Tarids were upon me. A blow upon my head sent me down to a merciful unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XXIV

In the Dark Cell

ENVELOPED in darkness, surrounded by the silence of the grave, I regained consciousness. I was lying on a cold stone floor; my head ached; and when I felt it with my palms, it was stiff with dried blood; my hair was matted.

Dizzily, I dragged myself to a sitting posture and then to my feet. Then came realization that I probably was not seriously injured, and I commenced to investigate my surroundings.

Moving cautiously, groping through the darkness with outstretched hands before me, I soon came in contact with a stone wall. This I followed for a short distance, when I discovered a door. It was a very substantial door, and it was securely fastened from the opposite side.

I moved on; I encircled the room and came to the door again. It was a small room, this new cell of mine. It had nothing to offer to either my eyes or to my ears. I commenced to realize the sort of world that the blind and the deaf must live in.

There were left to me then, only the senses of taste and smell and touch.

The first, of course, was useless to me under the circumstances; my nose, at first, identified a stale and musty odor; but presently becoming accustomed to it, it did not react at all. There was left to me then only the sense of touch. A strong wall broken by a wooden door—this was my world.

I WONDERED how long they would leave me here. It was like being buried alive. I knew I must steel my will against the horrible monotony of it, with only my thoughts for company.

My thoughts! They were not pleasant. I thought of Dejah Thoris alone in the power of Gar Nal; I thought of poor Jat Or imprisoned in a ship that he could not control, with Ur Jan, the brutal assassin of Zodanga—knowing nothing of my fate, and feeling his responsibility for the safety of Dejah Thoris, whom he was helpless either to protect or avenge.

I thought of poor Zanda, to whom fate had been so unkind, condemned now to almost certain death above this distant satellite.

And Umka. Well, Umka had expected to die; and so he was no worse off now than he would have been had he never met me.

But the bitterest thought of all was that my own carelessness had brought disaster upon those who had looked to me for aid and protection.

Thus, futilely, I added mental torture to the monotony of those dragging hours.

The vault-like hole in which I was incarcerated was chill and damp. I surmised that they had placed me in the pits beneath the castle where no ship could reach me. My muscles were stiff; my blood ran sluggishly through my veins; hopelessness engulfed me.

Presently I realized that if I gave way to my morbid reflections, I should indeed be lost. So I began to move around my cell, encircling it several times until I knew its dimensions; and then I trotted to and fro, back and forth, around and around; and like a shadow boxer, I led and feinted and parried, until at last I had my blood flowing again and felt the warmth of life renewing my vitality and flushing the sediment of foul worry from my brain.

I could not keep this up constantly, and so I sought to find other diversions by counting the stones set in the walls of my cell. I started at the door and moved around to the left. It was not the most entertaining pastime in which I had indulged, but at least there was a spice of excitement added to it by the thought that I might find some loose stones and possibly uncover an aperture leading to another apartment and to escape. Thus my imagination helped to alleviate the horrors of the darkness and the silence.

I could not, of course, measure time. I did not know how long I had been imprisoned there, but finally I became sleepy. I lay down upon the cold, damp floor and fell asleep.

WHEN I awoke, I did not know how long I had slept; but I was much refreshed, and so I concluded that I had passed the normal number of hours in rest.

Again, however, I was numb and cold; and once more I set myself to the exercises that would restore my circulation to normal; and as I was thus engaged, I heard sounds beyond the door of my cell.

I stopped and listened. Yes, someone was approaching. I waited, watching in the direction that I knew the door to be; and presently it opened, and a light flared in.

It was a blinding light to one whose eyes had become accustomed to the total darkness of the cell. I had to turn away my head and shield my eyes with my hand.

When I could look again, I saw a single warrior carrying a torch, a bowl of food, and a jug of water.

He had opened the door only wide enough to permit him to pass the receptacles through and set them on the floor of my cell. I saw that a heavy chain prevented the door from opening farther, as well as preventing me from attacking the bearer of my food and escaping.

The fellow raised his torch above his head and looked at me, inserting it through the crack of the door so that it fully illuminated the entire interior of the cell, or at least as high as some heavy wooden beams that spanned the room about twenty feet from the floor.

"So you weren't killed after all," commented the warrior.

"That is more than you can say for some of the others who fought in the Diamond Tower last night," I replied; "or was it last night?"

"No, it was night before last," he said. "It must have been some fight," he added. "I was not there, but the whole castle has been talking about it ever since. Those who fought against you say you are the greatest swordsman that ever lived. They would like to have you stay here and fight for them instead of against them, but old Ul Vas is so furious that nothing will satisfy him but your death."

"I can imagine that he doesn't feel very kindly toward me," I agreed.

"No, my life on it, he doesn't. It was bad enough letting all his prisoners escape, but planning to take his Jeddara with you! Phew! By my life, that was something! They say that the reason that you still live is because he hasn't been able to think of any means of death commensurate with your crime."

"And the Jeddara?" I asked. "What of her?"

"He's got her locked up; she'll be killed, too. I imagine that he is planning to put you both to death at the same time and probably in the same way. It is a shame to kill such a swordsman as you, but I am sure that it is going to be very interesting. I hope I shall be fortunate enough to see it."

"Yes," I said, "I hope you enjoy it."

"Everyone will enjoy it but you and Ozara," he said, good-naturedly; and then he withdrew the torch, closed and locked the door; and I heard his footsteps receding as he departed.

I groped my way over to the food and water, as I was both hungry and thirsty; and as I ate and drank, I speculated upon what he had told me and upon what I had seen in the light of the flaring torch.

The beams, twenty feet above the floor, intrigued me. Above them there seemed to be nothing but a dark void, as though the ceiling of the cell was much farther above.

AS I finished my meal, I determined to investigate what lay above those beams. On Mars, my earthly muscles permitted me to jump to extraordinary heights. I recalled the calculation that a full-sized earth man on Thuria could jump to a height of 225 feet. I realized, of course, that my size had been reduced, so that in proportion to Thuria I was no larger than I had been upon Barsoom; but I was still certain that my earthly muscles would permit me to jump much higher than any inhabitant of Ladan.

As I prepared to put my plan into practice, I was confronted by the very serious obstacle which the total darkness presented. I could not see the beams. In jumping for them, I might strike my head squarely against one of them with painful, if not fatal, results.

When you cannot see, it is difficult to tell how high you are jumping; but I had no light and no way of making a light; so all I could do was to be as careful as I could and trust to luck.

I tried springing upward a little way at a time at first, my hands extended above my head; and this proved very successful, for eventually I struck a beam.

I jumped again to place its exact position, and then I leaped for it and caught it. Raising myself onto it, I felt my way along to the wall. There I stood erect and reached upward, but I could feel nothing above me.

Then I went to the opposite end of the beam, and still I found nothing to give me any ray of hope.

IT would have been suicidal to investigate further by leaping up from the beam, and so I dropped to the floor again. Then I leaped for another beam and made a similar investigation, with the same result.

Thus, one beam at a time, I explored the void above them as far as I could reach; but always the result was the same.

My disappointment was intense. In a situation such as mine, one grasps at such tiny straws. He reposes all his hopes, his future, his very life upon them; and when they are inadequate to support the weight of so much responsibility, he is plunged into the uttermost depths of despair.

But I would not admit defeat. The beams were there; they seemed to have been providentially placed for me to use in some way.

I racked my brain, searching for some plan whereby I might escape. I was like a rat in a trap, a cornered rat; and my mind commenced to function with all the cunning of a wild beast seeking to escape a snare.

Presently an idea came to me. It seemed Heaven-sent; but that was probably more because it was the only plan that had presented itself, rather than because it had any intrinsic merit. It was a wild, hair-brained plan that depended upon many things outside my control.

I was sitting disconsolately upon the last beam that I had investigated when it came to me. Immediately I dropped to the floor of my cell and went and stood by the door, listening.

How long I remained there, I do not know. When fatigue overcame me, I lay down and slept with my ear against the door. I never left it. I took my exercise jumping about in the same spot there by that fateful door.

At last my ears were rewarded by that for which they had been listening. Footsteps were approaching. I could hear them shuffling in the distance; I could hear the clank of metal upon metal. The sounds were increasing in volume. A warrior was approaching.

I leaped for the beam directly above the door; and crouching there like a beast of prey, I waited.

The footsteps halted just outside my cell. I heard the bars that secured the door sliding from their keepers, and then the door was pushed open and a light appeared. I saw an arm and hand extend into the room and set down jars of food and water. Then a flaming torch was thrust into the room, followed by a man's head. I saw the fellow looking around the interior of the cell.

"Hey, there!" he cried. "Where are you?"

The voice was not that of the man who had brought my food on the previous occasion. I did not reply.

"By the crown of the Jeddak," he muttered, "has the fellow escaped?"

I heard him fussing with the chain that held the door from opening but a few inches, and my heart stood still. Upon this hoped-for possibility hinged all the rest of my plans.

THE door swung open, and the man stepped cautiously into the room. He was a sturdy warrior. In his left hand he carried the torch, and in his right he gripped a keen long sword.

He moved cautiously, looking around him at every step.

Very slowly he started across the cell, muttering to himself; and in the darkness above, I followed along the beam, like a panther stalking its prey. Still mumbling surprised exclamations, he started back. He passed beneath me; and as he did so, I sprang.

Hopeless indeed seems this situation in which John Carter finds himself. And what is the fate of his companions? Don't miss the next thrilling installment, in the forthcoming April issue.

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"The wardrobe!" I cried. "They've stuffed him into it!"

It was Mr. Ledyard who opened the wardrobe. Mr. Howarth was lying there trussed up like a fowl, a gag in his mouth. He looked to be just recovering consciousness. His black silk coat was missing.

Dragging him out was the work of an instant. Mr. Magsey cut the cords, and half crying with hysteria, I spluttered out words. "Look at the spot on his pants where I dropped the ink!" I shouted. "Didn't I know? Didn't I know it wasn't Mr. Howarth when I looked at his knee as he passed me!"

Miss Caffrey put a glass of water to Mr. Howarth's lips. He sipped it slowly, his gaze passing from one to the other of us.

AFTER a few minutes he looked at Mr. Ledyard. "How much did they get away with, George?" he asked.

Mr. Ledyard was crying. "Nothing, sir," he sobbed. "I paid out a hundred thousand on the check, but Billy—Billy grabbed it back from the hound when he was climbing into the car. It's all here."

Mr. Howarth looked at me. "How did you guess, Billy?" he asked.

"There was—there was no spot of ink on his trousers," I stammered. "It didn't come to me for a minute, but—but I remembered in time."

After a silence Mr. Howarth spoke. "The bank is shut?" he asked.

"Yes sir," said Mr. Ledyard.

"Anyone see this?" demanded Mr. Howarth.

"No sir," I said. "The street was empty when I took the *attaché* case from him. I remember well. When—when the chauffeur hit me, I—I looked around, hoping some one was about to help me, but there was no one. It was just a question of seconds."

Mr. Howarth got up with the assistance of Mr. Ledyard and Miss Caffrey and seated himself in his chair. He sat there for about ten minutes, the five of us standing around staring at him. At last he looked at me and put a question. "You want to be a hero, Billy?" he asked. "Big front-page story in the *Beacon*. Biggest story Fodderville has ever known. Cincinnati and New York papers calling up and asking for your photograph. Savior of Fodderville Bank. Billy Phelps, who made the big story that our friend Spenzer is always talking about. Want to be a hero, Billy?"

"No sir," I answered.

"Sure, Billy?"

"No sir," I answered. "I—I don't want to say anything about it."

Mr. Howarth considered a moment. He looked at Mr. Ledyard and smiled. "We'll all act like Billy," he said. "We'll say nothing. It would—it would do the bank a lot of harm if—if it got out. . . . George, bring me in—let's see: Two thousand dollars for Billy, five hundred apiece for you, Mr. Magsey and Miss Caffrey, two hundred for Johnny Fleming. That's three thousand, seven hundred. Bring it in here. The Fodderville Bank is going to cut a melon in silence. In supreme silence! Each one of you will give his or her word never to mention this to a living soul till I am dead. Get the money, George."

That afternoon as I walked up McKinley Avenue, I passed Carl Spenzer. He was talking to Mr. Carmichael, and as I passed, I caught a few words spoken by Spenzer. He said: "Of course, news is scarce in Fodderville, but I've got a hunch that a big story will break here one day, and that the *Beacon* will spread—"

I was out of earshot then, so I heard no more. Of course no big story has broken in Fodderville during the nine years that have elapsed since that day when the imitation Lord Dowsehollow nearly got away with a hundred thousand dollars from Mr. Howarth's bank.

WHEN you publish this, Mr. Editor, I am going to carry a copy of the magazine to the office of the *Beacon* and put it in the hands of Carl Spenzer. That will teach him not to publish stories about my wife's aunt who was afflicted by the Almighty. That will teach him! Him and his Big Story! Gosh, how mad he'll be to think—to think that I stopped him from publishing it! For Mr. Benjamin Howarth asked me. Put it to me straight. "Want to be a hero, Billy?" were his very words. And I did! *I did!* But I remembered those silly paragraphs about the "local Casanova" and that ugly one that told how my wife's aunt chased the gas-collector. I remembered. Please publish this quick, Mr. Editor, so that I can take it to Carl Spenzer.

"The Thousand Eyes of Fire," the terrific adventure of a jewel dealer in Africa, will be James Francis Dwyer's next contribution—in an early issue.

REAL EX-Bear

MOST of us have been through at least one tremendously exciting experience that deserves record in print. And in this department each month five of your fellow-readers tell you of their most thrill-filled moments. (For details of our prize offer for these stories, see page 3). First we learn what happened to a man who took a job as cook for a National park trail-crew.

By L. M. McKAY

IN the summer of 1931 I was cooking for a trail-crew in one of our National parks. Of all the sly, thieving, scheming hoodlums who ever robbed a cook of a pie, those boys were the champions.

They were paced, so to speak, by an elongated yegg we called Hi-pockets, an ex-sergeant of the regular army. He received his Ph. D. in the science of orneriness and deviltry about the time he got his sergeant's stripes. Crowding on his heels came Swede, the "Terrible Swede," a big bruiser with a perverted sense of humor, and a mania for mayhem.

The rest of the hooligans played second fiddle to these two leaders. Their practical jokes might rate as masterpieces among ordinary crews, but they lacked the ingenuity and technique that marked the works of Hi-pockets or Swede. Darwin, or Monk, or Missing-link was a bright, conniving young ape, a protégé of Hi-pockets. All he lacked was experience. Yodelade earned his nickname from his ungodly habit of yodeling in the early dawn, before anyone else was awake. He was cured of his early-morning activities when Swede threw him in the creek two mornings hand-running.

The boss, Slim, acted as peacemaker, referee and umpire. He saw that no lives were lost or limbs broken. He had been a mule-skinner in younger days, and had complete command of mule-skinner phraseology.

We also had bears, in, around or above camp, all the time. You might not see them, but they were always there: Five of them—just five too many. I don't know which was the worst scourge, the crew or the bears. The crew had nicknamed them after the characters of a popular comic strip.

Mamma, mother of Hans and Fritz—two black, impish cubs—was seemingly possessed of superhuman cunning and deviltry. She had lived a long and mischievous life. When it came to plundering a cook-tent she could give Hi-pockets cards and spades and beat him hands down. Mamma and all the rest of the bears were unafraid of humans. They nosed around, right under our feet, until we got peeved and stoned 'em. Then they would shuffle off, breaking into a clumsy gallop if one of the stones hurt too much.

Hans and Fritz inherited most of their mother's cunning. They didn't hesitate to gang on a fellow, either. I had just placed a hot, juicy pie on the table one night, when I heard a whimper outside our cook-tent door. I went to see what it was. There was Fritz, begging for something to eat. I set a pail of refuse out for him, and stood and watched him eat it. I heard a shuffle of dishes on the table and rushed inside, to see Hans slap that hot pie clear across the tent. He had stuck his nose in it, and it had made him mad. It made me mad too. His nose wasn't all that got burned—I caught him on the rump with a smoking hot skillet as he went out the front door. I distrusted those cubs from then on.

There were two other bears, the Captain and the Professor. They didn't bother me much. In fact, I was glad to have the Captain around camp, for he didn't like the cubs any better than I did. They always climbed the highest tree they could find, when the Captain was around!

My feud with Mamma and the cubs started when I was young and green on the job. I was all alone in camp during the day. One afternoon I decided to go fishing. I should have known better—I did know better; but there was a wonderful trout pool just out of sight of

PERIENCES *Facts*

camp, and the Ike Walton urge was strong.

I hooked a big trout my second cast and was about to land him when—*crash! Rattle, rattle, rattle!* Something was radically wrong at the cook-tent. I lost my best leader and the only Royal Coachman I had, in an effort to snap the hook out of that trout's mouth.

I dropped my pole and made that two-hundred-yard dash to the tent in nothing flat. I picked up an ax as I passed the wood-pile. The bear population in the park was going to be reduced if I could overtake some of 'em! I dashed in the back door—and Mamma and the cubs galloped out the front door.

Some of you fellows that went through the Big Push may think you know all about desolation and destruction. You don't—not the half of it. You never saw a cook-tent raided by bears. The wrath of God and the ravages of flood, fire and earthquake—they have nothing on a band of pilfering bears!

Hans and Fritz had cleaned up on the bread, butter and pastry. They had consumed most of the cooked ham. Mamma had completely smashed a case of eggs and scattered a hundred-pound sack of flour over them. Then she'd knocked over a kettle of soup on the stove, extinguishing the fire. She broke down a bunch of shelves with canned goods and clean dishes into the eggs and flour mess. She was busy on a three-gallon pail of honey when I arrived. She knocked the top clean off the table in her rush to get out and leave me alone with my wrath.

It isn't advisable for a man to get as mad as I was. I was so mad that I couldn't chase the bear. I just stood and jumped up and down. I couldn't even find time to cuss. When my voice did return, it was cracked and broken.

What a mess!

Not a clean dish in the place, not a bit of food cooked. A fifty-pound sack of flour to last a crew of ten men for two weeks. Eight hungry hooligans and a boss to feed in two hours.

The tent was still a sorry mess when the crew came in, but I had a good supper ready for 'em. The reactions of those pleasant playmates of mine still give me a qualm when I think of them.

I sat them down to a supper of hot biscuits and honey, fried ham and baked spuds, string beans and stewed tomatoes, and topped it off with strawberry short-cake—strawberries that I had been saving for a special occasion. With a meal like that, you would think they would be sympathetic, maybe. A normal human crew would have offered sympathy and condolences. Not this outfit!

The boss rudely interrupted, "Just like a damn' tenderfoot!" and left the tent. A slight chuckle escaped Hi-pockets' lip, and the rest of those perverted, degenerate morons broke into vulgar mirth. Man, they broke my heart!

I suddenly decided that if I couldn't kill bears, the early demise of a few hooligans might help. So I grabbed a stick of stove-wood, and using the club, and harsh unholy words, cleared that tent of hoodlums quicker than Mamma could filch a pie.

That eased my mind and I finished my work. Then I spent three hours making a bow and a dozen arrows. It was open season on bears and hooligans from now on!

Mamma and the cubs came ambling into camp the next morning, but gave the cook-tent a wide berth. Mamma shuffled into a sleeping-tent and came out with a pack-sack. I stood in the door of the cook-tent and watched her scatter clean clothes all over the camp ground. There was an apple in that pack-sack,

and she wanted it! I would have chased her out of camp, but I felt that the crew had no favors coming from me.

Yodelade had seventeen fits when he came in that night. It was *his* pack-sack. He had spent three hours of a fine Sunday morning washing those clothes, and he had it all to do over again. He stuttered and muttered under his breath all during supper hour. He thought I should have driven the bear off—and he said so emphatically.

AT bedtime that night I heard a yelp of pain, followed by a flood of angry stuttering. It came so staccato-like, I couldn't understand it, so I hi-balled up to the tent to see what it was all about. . . . Yodelade stood in the middle of the tent, naked as the day he was born. He had four or five very dead and odoriferous fish, which he waved around as he stuttered:

"If I ff-f-ff-find the f-ff-ff-foolish bb-b-bb-bum that p-p-p-put t-t-those f-f-fish in my b-b-bed, I'll ku-kk-kill him."

Everybody but me kept a sober face. I couldn't. The sight of that guy in his birthday clothes, waving those reeking fish and stuttering like a jack-hammer was too much. I folded up and whooped.

Yodelade stopped his chattering and looked at me.

"W-wh-wh-what are you laughing at, you s-silly ape?" *Wham!* A fish caught me in the face, and I faded.

Some one had noticed his habit of sleeping *à la* September Morn and put those fish in his bed, head-first, so the fins raked the most tender parts of his anatomy. The boss finally got Yodelade cooled off to the point where he wasn't dangerous, and we went to bed.

I slept alone in the cook-tent to protect the provisions from raids from the bears. I was wakened during the night by a scratching sound on the tent near the provisions.

"That," I thought, "must be the Professor. What a welcome he'll get!"

I took my bow and arrows and slipped out the front door. It was pitch-black outside, but as I eased around the tent, I could see a dark object down near the other end. I nocked my first arrow and let drive.

Friends, what a rumpus that stirred up! A wild howl of agony split the air, and some one went around the tent so fast it threw gravel in my face. Just some hooligan getting funny. Did I fix him?

So, with a light heart and a grin, I went around to the back door and pulled it open to go in.

Splash! I was on the receiving end of a pail of cold water, set on a trigger to fall when I opened the door.

I started up to the sleeping-tent, mad as a wet hen.

The tent was in an uproar. The boss had just finished pulling the arrow out of Yodelade's posterior when I arrived, wet as a drowned rat. Three of us were sore: Yodelade was sore, physically and mentally, because I had shot him; I was sore because I was wet and cold; the boss was peeved because he was losing a lot of good sleep. The rest of the crew were happy—they were seeing a good comedy, free.

"T-t-there he is. He sh-sh-shot me."

"Yes, you silly chattering magpie, I shot you. You blank blank bluejay, you ever soak me with water again, and I'll drownd you."

OUR long-suffering boss blew up. "By the unholy jumpin' Judas Priest!" he roared. "Of all the ——, ——, so and sos and such and suches I've ever seen, this crew takes the bacon. I've a good notion to fire the whole works and get a new crew. The next hoosier to pull anything funny gets his time."

He went on. He intimately and delicately discussed our ancestors, separately and collectively. He got his second wind and fluently discussed the quality and quantity of brains we possessed. I still remember detached fragments, like: "No more judgment than the offspring of a jug-headed misbegotten jackass—half the sense that God gave a gander—it's a crime to have such animals at large—there should be a thousand-dollar bounty." There was a lot more, but I've forgotten it. Taken by and large, it was a masterpiece.

Things were pretty quiet around camp for a few days. With closed season declared on humans, the crew devoted their attentions to the bears. They stoned them and drove them up trees; if the boss wasn't around, they then chopped the trees down. The bears retaliated. Instead of a visit once every other night, they came around a half dozen times a night. I shot most of my arrows into the north end of bears going south, or *vice versa*. I had Mamma looking like an overgrown porcupine, but she lost the arrows in the woods and came back for more.

It was a dreadful place for a poor peace-lovin' cook. I told 'em so one day. Hi-pockets said I was not quite correct in that statement: I might be peaceful but I wasn't a cook; I was a blacksmith. The boss claimed that my fortune was made if I could learn to temper razor-blades the way I tempered pie-crust. . . .

About two nights later Swede came into the tent and told me to come out and see the fun. Darwin had a cub roped. I didn't want to miss it, so I slid a batch of bread into the oven and pulled off my apron. The boss was away from camp, so Darwin had chased a cub into a small tree. He grabbed a rope and climbed a taller tree next to it. As soon as he got above the cub, he climbed over into the tree the cub was in, scared the cub out on a limb and slipped a rope over its head.

He had the cub pulled out of the tree when I got there, and the cub was fighting the rope. He soon got tired of that and decided to fight Darwin. That was funny!

Darwin had an eight-foot lead and held it for fifty yards, but he forgot to drop the rope, and stumbled over it. The cub ran right over him and climbed a tree near by.

Slim entered the scene about the time Darwin was picking himself up. It was against Park rules to rope bears, and Slim was a stickler for rules.

"You punks get that rope offa that cub, or you will all have a quick pay-day," he roared. It was Darwin's move, but the fall had jarred all the ideas he ever had. I got a wash-tub and upset it over the cub, leaving his hind legs out. One of the boys handed me a rope, and I slipped a noose over his hind legs.

THEN, like a big-hearted sap, I took hold of that rope and helped Darwin stretch the cub out. Two of the boys got a short piece of pole and held it across his shoulders, holding him down till he could hardly wiggle an ear. Hi-pockets volunteered to take the ropes off.

"Hi, Swede," he called, "get me that pair of leather gloves offa my bunk; he can't bite through them." Darwin eased up on the rope; the cub turned his head, and there was a nice foot ready and handy. There was a snap like that of a steel trap as he missed the first bite, and a howl of agony from Hi-pockets as he connected on the second try. The cub opened his mouth to get a second bite, and Hi-pockets went away from there.

He met Swede. "I doan' need them gloves," he drawled. "That bear like to bit my foot off."

Swede had a bright idea then. He got a short stick and prodded at the rope on the cub's neck, finally getting it off.

Then those two morons on the ends of the pole eased off, leaving me in sole possession of a riled, belligerent cub. The rest of the crew backed off to see the fun.

The cub got to his feet, turned around and looked me over. He evidently decided I wasn't very tough, for he made for me, little red piggish eyes shining with rage. I yanked on the rope and pulled him off his feet; I swung him the way one swings a small child by the hands. I whirled him seven or eight complete circles, and set him down to see what he would do.

There wasn't any question what he would do if given half a chance. I started swinging him again.

I BEGAN to get dizzy. The steady whirl commenced to resemble perpetual motion. I wondered where Mamma was. Mamma bears get tough with humans that mistreat cubs. She had no reason to like me, anyhow. Darwin was offering odds of three to one on the cub, with no takers.

I looked across the creek, and there was Mamma, ambling along, looking for her cub. I decided that the cub could have that rope. Uncle Sam could afford to lose a rope better than I could afford to lose my pants.

I looked down at my feet. There were ten or twelve coils of rope wrapped tight around my ankles, as tight as a hobble. I began to get panicky.

I dropped that cub like a hot coal, and started whirling him the other way to clear the rope off my legs. Darwin offered odds of five to one. I got a break. The rope slipped off the cub's foot. The cub sailed for eight or ten feet, rolled over a couple of times and headed for the woods. Hi-pockets was in direct line of flight, and as he jumped to get out of the way, Swede tripped him. The cub ran right over him and disappeared in the woods.

You have heard the saying, "a bear for punishment"? Next morning Hans and Fritz were outside as usual, looking for breakfast.

Two weeks later we pulled camp for the winter. With a sigh of deep relief I boarded the train, bound east, where there were no bears or trail crews.

ALL during the big mix-up I sailed in armed and unarmed ships. I went through a half-dozen submarine scares and attacks. I saw a torpedo rip into a beautiful ship and send her staggering to the bottom. But all those war experiences seem remote and impersonal compared with what happened to me one night in Genoa, Italy.

Our first engineer had disappeared. We had come to believe that boatmen, while rowing him back to our ship, had robbed him and heaved him overboard. Our captain warned us to go ashore in twos and threes—for at that time Italy was on the verge of revolution. . . .

This night in question I disregarded the possible danger and took a boat back to my ship. Two men, who insisted they were brothers, were rowing the boat. I sat in the stern sheets. I had a bottle of wine, and from time to time I took a sip, trying to keep out the rain and cold. Everything went O. K. until we came to a fleet of tied-up ships, a regular graveyard of them, ships that had been hit by the after-the-war depression.

The two boatmen rowed in close to the ships. They feathered their oars. I became alert and suspicious and strained my eyes to watch them. I lit a cigarette. Then I held the match so that I could see their faces. But the rain put out the light. However, I saw a glint of steel. One of the brothers had his knife out!

I gripped my hands tightly around the bottle of wine, my only weapon.

"You savvy hard work to row boat?" he demanded. "We want hundred lire!"

The regular price was only two lire and I had only a few lire. I could see the lighted ports of my ship. She was only about two cable-lengths away.

"I will pay you when I get aboard," I promised them.

"You pay now, savvy?" demanded the brother with the knife—and he came for me.

The first blow often wins for you two-thirds of any mix-up. I intended to get in the first blow. The man with the knife did not see the bottle coming. I did not swing it; the motion of my arm sweeping down in a swift arc would have given me away. Instead I jabbed the neck forward like a pool cue. I could feel something give at the end of the bottle—and I knew it wasn't the glass, either.

I had cracked the man's jaw—stunned him. The force of my weight behind the bottle toppled him on over, and he went splashing backward into the water, nearly capsizing the boat as he fell.

The other brother was coming in with a raised oar. I had lost my balance. I tried to regain my balance and heave the bottle, but I was too late. The oar came whistling down on my back, knocking me overboard. I shot under water, but the blow had knocked the wind from my lungs and I was unable to swim far before I had to come up.

I could barely see the boat. The man in it was calling frantically to his brother in the water. The interval gave me a break.

I swam as quietly as possible to the anchored ships. There were about ten moored together. I held onto an anchor-chain and looked back. I could not see the boatman, in the dark, but I could hear him shouting excitedly. He had found his brother.

Presently I heard a splash of oars. The sound grew louder. . . . If the men found me, I knew they would murder me.

The anchor-chain, although just my head and shoulders were above the water, was a poor hiding place. I was too much in the open. If they came anywhere near me, they would find me. I knew there should be fenders between the hulls of the ships to keep them from scraping together.

I shoved off from the anchor chain and, careful not to splash the water, swam in between the bows of two ships. There was a small space between the hulls. I jammed myself in and waited. Only my head was above the water.

The brothers rowed up to the anchor-chain, the one which I had just left. I

The Bandit Brothers

An American's fight for life in an Italian harbor.

By JAMES W. SMITH

saw the wisdom of my move. But I didn't dare to draw a breath. The boatmen seemed to be in doubt as to whether or not I had gone down. But the one with the cracked jaw insisted they should make sure. His only desire at that moment, I gathered from his jumble of snarling oaths, was to find me and run a knife through my throat!

They rowed on to the next ship. I drew a long breath. I felt better! I thought I was safe.

I started to swim out to the anchor, but I heard a splash of oars again. The brothers were returning!

I quickly jammed myself in between the hulls again and trusted to the rain and darkness to hide me as before.

But this time the brothers came closer, came inside the curve of the bows. I could almost reach out and touch them. I remained as still as I possibly could. The man I had knocked overboard was muttering curses. The other brother tried to strike a match. But apparently the rain had soaked through to them. He threw the box into the water. And that break, I believe saved my life at that moment.

THE brothers jabbered something to each other, then rowed off. I could hear the squeak of oars in the rowlocks and hear the splash of them in the water. The sound grew fainter. However, I stayed low for another ten minutes.

I slipped off all my clothes, except a cotton singlet and a pair of shorts, and tied them up on the anchor-chain, intending to return for them in a boat early the next morning. Then I started for my ship.

I am a fairly decent swimmer. I was sure I could make my vessel. However, the brothers had played a ruse. They had rowed off and then had sneaked back. I didn't hear them until they were close to me.

Then I knew I could not turn back. They would find me this time for sure. And I knew I could not reach my ship. They could row faster than I could swim. I saw no way to save myself. However, I didn't intend to give up without a struggle. I was outside the last ship in the tied-up fleet. I decided to swim for the stern.

The brothers were gaining rapidly upon me. Their oars were splashing whitely in the water. I could hear the men cursing and shouting excitedly.

"We got him this time!" they were saying. "We will kill him!"

I am no champion swimmer. However, I am sorry there were no officials to time me that night, for I believe I shattered a half-dozen swimming records! I clawed the water for dear life. But I saw I could not make the stern. However, my luck was still to hold out.

There was a Jacob's ladder hanging down to the water. I pulled myself up on the ladder. The boat shot up under me. I had gained the ladder not a second too soon. I skinned up quickly like a cat, for there is a knack in climbing a Jacob's ladder. One of the brothers whacked me across the legs with an oar. The other brother tried to throw out the ladder to shake me from it.

I vaulted over the rail. There was some dunnage lying on deck. I heaved down a walloping piece and it brought a frightful scream from one of the men and an explosive curse from the other.

Oars got busy. The boat pulled away from the side. I sat down to get my breath. The rain was cold, but I felt a warm glow inside of me.

I knew I had been within an inch of death. . . .

But I felt a certain satisfaction in having defeated those two thugs, in having kept them from robbing me. I felt that satisfaction then; but the next morning when I returned for my clothes, which I had left tied to the anchor-chain, I found them gone. It was just daybreak. No one else could have seen my slops and togs.

The brothers had robbed me after all!

THE Churchill—grandest of all Northern streams: a river, and not a river, a succession of lakes and bottle-neck rapids, scenery bordering on the sublime. In such a setting lies Stanley—post of the Hudson's Bay Company and of Revillon Frères; an ancient church and four hundred Indians.

There, during the short months of summer, is life: the cries of the little brown children at play; howls of wolf-dogs; the whine of the fiddles in the "Red River Jig," and the cracked tones of the Mission bell calling aside to prayer. And in the evening the harsh rasping of the mosquito-hawks; birch-smoke from the cooking-fires and tepees; a river like a stained-glass window at sunset; and the blue evening haze of the High North.

I spent five years there as post-manager. The summers were halcyon days, but the winters were something else. Then, with not a soul in the village excepting the men of the two fur companies, the battle for fur began. Night-trips to the far-flung trapping-camps, harness-bells stripped from the dogs so that the midnight start might not carry to the "opposition" ears across the river; snow trails, slushy trails, no trails at all. Frozen-footed dogs, short rations, sixty degrees below. . . . .

But between the summer and the winter came a breathing spell before the lakes and the creeks were frozen for travel. And during these periods I ran a line of fox-traps along the Churchill. Fifty traps there would be in all, extending eastward for ten miles. Until the freeze-up I used a canoe to make the round, but when ice began to form, I decided to use the dogs.

Six of them I had at the post, all cross-bred huskies and great-hearted brutes, though not one amongst them was a leader. However, any of the dogs should know enough to keep ahead of his mates along that narrow shelf, for there was bare rock on the one side and the water on the other.

I selected one and put him out in front of the rest. Whisky was his name, a hammer-headed brute whose sole ambition was speed. Turning his nose down-river, I gave the yell—"*Mar-rche!*"—and he struck off like a maniac, his mates bawling at his tail.

Immediately in front of the post, the river followed a flattish shore, and so into a deep bay. Here was a portage over a steep hill, and a mile distant, the river again. Where I had quit the river was little but open water; here, across the portage, the river was practically frozen over. I tested the ice with my hatchet, found it little more than a half-inch thick, headed the dogs down the shelf again, and continued on my way.

A fox leads a fur-trader

The sleigh I was using was a high-headed toboggan of three birch boards. The load—grub and trapping gear—weighed no more than ten pounds. So I sprawled face down on my sleigh, watching the black of the new ice going by.

Now, ice forms peculiarly in the North Country. Here it was, twelve hours old, onyx-like; the whole of its surface dotted with crystalline lacy "frost-ferns." I noticed another thing—that was a fresh fox-track through the ferns. It too followed the shore, but taking the new ice instead of the shelf. . . .

And then—I guess I drowsed. It's easy to do. Then there was the jingle of the bells on the harness; the *scuff-scuff!* of the paws of the dogs; the rhythmic bumping of the sleigh. Yes, I fear I slept—only to be awakened by a bump that almost rolled me from the toboggan.

I raised my head, blinked—and yelled like a fiend. The dogs were out on the new ice!

A glance around me showed what had happened. The flat shore-line had petered out, and where I now was, a huge cliff of bedrock rose precipitously from the water's edge. And Whisky, that hammer-headed leader of mine, had elected to go around instead of over and up.

I YELLED—but I quit immediately. For I knew what would happen should the dogs come to a stop. The ice, a half-inch thick and rubbery, was giving to each step of the dogs, and by my side rose that cliff, smooth and polished as marble. We were twenty or thirty feet from shore with ten fathoms of water beneath us; and it is next to impossible to claw one's way through green ice.

Thin Ice

By H. S. M. KEMP

an ultra-hazardous chase.

But the dogs kept on. We were rounding the boulder. Another minute or so, and we would be back on the shelf again. . . . . Then my heart did a loop. The dogs were following the fox-track and the track struck straight for where, in midstream, the water showed inky-black with the current's sweep—a quarter-mile away.

Lying there on the sleigh, I yelled at the leader, grabbed the headline and sent it snaking around his legs—tried frantically to beat him shoreward again.

"Cha, cha! Whisky! . . . *Cha!*"

The sleigh settled. There was a sickening lurch. I yelled again, but this time to urge him on. But there was no need of that. Crazed with the scent of the fox, and maddened by the chase, wild horses could not have headed off that bawling string of mine. They lunged ahead—making for midstream.

Scared? I was nerveless with fright!

It was just at that moment that the lead-dog felt himself breaking through. I can hear his yell yet. It was a croak of stark canine fear. Then he had lunged to one side, his mates with him—off on the fox-chase again. . . .

The rest of that mad ride I fail to remember very well. I recall forcing myself to stay on the toboggan. Something told me that once I quit the security of those narrow boards I would be lost. So I whirled the headline, yelling at the dogs, watched that inky strip draw nearer and the bush-line shrink behind.

Open water was beside me now—oily, black. . . . . .

I closed my eyes against the sickening slide; and when it failed to come, opened them again. And instead of facing death and eternity, I was looking at the distant bush-line that had so far been behind me.

It was the fox who did it. Doubtless he too had punched through at every few steps just as those dogs of mine were doing now. Anyway, his trail was streaking back through the frost-ferns, making for the blessed sanctuary of the shore.

And now the dogs seemed to know their danger. They raced on, whimpers of fear coming through their throats. The toboggan dipped perilously at times; once, for a yard or so, it skimmed the water. But four of the six dogs were on solid ice, so they hauled us to comparative safety.

We *did* make shore, else this would not be written. I remember Whisky clambering over the shelf-ice with the others beside him. I can see him, and the rest of them, sprawled out with the lust of the fox-chase gone; they were panting, gasping, slaver running over their blood-red tongues. And I can see myself head down on the sleigh, heart pumping like a trip-hammer.

After a while I stood up, shaking.

Then, for my own satisfaction, I picked up a rock. It wasn't a big one—a few pounds at the most. I swung back my arm, lobbed it onto the ice, two or three yards from shore. There was a tinkle and a splash as the thing disappeared; a round, jagged hole and oily water.

"But for the grace of God," I muttered, awed, "there goes Kemp!"

LATER, I went on. But this time I traveled ahead of the dogs. No longer had I any confidence in half-trained leaders.

A portage lay on my road, skirting the thundering Nepuketuk Rapid. I crossed the portage, came out on a rock-strewn shore at the rapid's foot. And there, twenty feet distant, was a trap-fast fox, a glistening three-quarter-neck silver-black. A silver! I grabbed my hatchet, kicked back the yelping dogs—and a moment later the prize was mine.

Now the Indians will tell you that a silver fox has a track peculiarly his own. His feet, so the woods Crees claim, are as different as his hide, for he makes a track as round as a silver dollar.

On my way home, I tried to pick up the tracks that skirted the shelf-ice, the tracks that almost had caused my undoing. And at last I found them—clean-punched, tiny, round as a silver dollar.

I began to wonder—was the fox I had caught the same fox who had wandered out through the frost-ferns and back? It seemed possible, even probable. And as I looked at his carcass, I felt that there was a bond between us. We had both taken desperate chances; both been "out and back." But where I'd gambled and won, he'd gambled—and lost.

Murder in

City criminals carry their victim to the peaceful countryside.

FOR years I have been considered "odd" around Locust Corners. The children, God bless them, call me "the pan-a-cake man." That's because when the weather grows cold they love to stop on their way to school and peep in at my door. They want to see me turning the crispy, brown pancakes that I always bake for my breakfast when the leaves begin to turn to red and gold.

My home is an old barn—almost a hundred years old, they say around these parts. Twenty years ago I fixed up one end of it into two rooms, and it's been home to me ever since. I sleep in one room, and the other is my kitchen.

I own twenty head of Devonshire cattle that I exhibit each year at the State fair. I am proud of my cattle. The money that they bring me in is my living, and as my wants are few—just a little tobacco for my old corn-cob, and a pair of shoes once in a while—it more than suffices. I've always been happy and contented in my humble abode—that is, until a year ago and the incident of which I am about to tell. . . .

It was August 24th, to be exact. It had been an unusually hot day. I didn't bother lighting my kerosene lamp at all that night, but sat out on the doorstep, smoking my pipe, until along about ten o'clock.

The air was sultry, and a blue haze hung over the mountains.

A little after ten I went in and lay down on my cot. The barn, I may mention, is located on a famous highway where traffic is always heavy in the summer months. That night was no exception. Everybody seemed to be out trying to catch a breeze.

I must have fallen asleep for an hour or more, but when I awakened, it was with a start, as if my subconscious mind had caught a sound. I listened, but only the plaintive call of a katydid could be heard. All traffic had ceased.

I flashed on my pocket light and looked at my watch. It was half after midnight. It was while I was looking at my watch, that I heard—or *did* I hear—a shot? And then the soft purr of a motor, getting closer and closer every minute, until it stopped altogether directly in front of the barn. I could hear the sound of angry voices—men's voices. They grew louder until I could hear that they were saying: "C'mon. We'll bring 'im in here an' finish 'im off."

My blood seemed to freeze.

I raised up on my elbow, and could see them now, even in the darkness, half carrying, half dragging, a dark form up the pathway that led to my kitchen door. They opened the door, and uttering vile oaths, almost threw their victim inside. As I always kept the door between the two rooms closed at night, I was unable to tell whether they were using flashlights or were in total darkness.

There was dead silence for perhaps three minutes. Then came the clatter of tools. They were rummaging through my tool-chest!

An awful groan—then another and finally a queer, gurgling, choking noise, smothered, as if by a cloth or handkerchief. Then silence again.

I thought for a few minutes that they had gone out. I knew that the car was still outside, as I could distinguish its faint outline in the light of the waning moon. But what chance would I have with this mob of gangsters, for I had come to the conclusion that that's just what they were! They must all have guns; of that I was pretty certain, and I knew that my life wouldn't be worth a nickel if I should be discovered.

Suddenly I heard footsteps. They were going up the stairs that led to the loft above—scuffling footsteps, so that it was hard to tell how many were going up. I secretly wondered what in the world they could want up there. And then, the

the Old Barn

By A. R. PAGNAM

thought struck me—they were going to burn the barn! I must get out.

But scarcely had the thought entered my mind, before the same scuffling was heard again, this time, coming down. I tried to count the figures in the dark as they went out and down the pathway to the waiting car. As near as I could make out, there were four. Then I heard the car pull away, the sound of its motor growing less and less.

I got up and went into the kitchen, taking my flash with me. I didn't want to trust a kerosene lamp, because—well, I wasn't so sure that the intruders wouldn't be back and a lamp isn't just the best thing in the world to have in one's hand if there happen to be any stray bullets flying around.

Although I hadn't known what to expect, I was wholly unprepared for the scene of chaos and horror that greeted my eyes as I trained my light about the room. Blood was everywhere! An old mattress had been pulled off a couch in the corner and thrown on the floor, and it was on this that the victim had evidently been killed. My own "go-devil" lay on the floor about a foot from the mattress. A go-devil is what we woodsmen use—on one side a sharp ax-like blade, on the other a sharp steel point, such as that on a pick-ax. They had used my go-devil to batter in the victim's skull. Strands of hair still clung to its steel point.

I stumbled out, dizzy and sick at my stomach. The next house was nearly three-quarters of a mile away, and I found out when I got there that the folks were either away or too frightened at the frantic knocking at the door to get up and answer it.

There was nothing to do but go back and wait until daylight to notify the authorities. I think it is unnecessary to say that the rest of the night afforded me no sleep. A hundred questions raced through my mind: Who had those men been? Where had they disposed of the victim's body? And then I remembered—they had gone up into the loft. Taking my lantern, I went up the creaking old stairs, and pushed open the crude door in the rafters.

There, in the hay, was the body of a man—he had been about twenty-eight years old, I should say. The face and head were battered in beyond recognition, and judging from the appearance of the rest of the body, he had been shot several times and beaten as well. He wore a light gray tweed suit and black silk socks and oxfords.

Of course I notified the State Police immediately, and before the morning was half over there were hundreds of morbidly curious people gathered around and inside my old barn home. They hindered the work of police and detectives. . . .

But they never were able to establish the identity of the victim. Just some mother's boy, who had perhaps got into bad company and had been "taken for a ride." Some believed they had seen him several times before, dining and dancing at a near-by roadhouse, with a roll of money that he had flaunted openly. Of course, if that was true, he may possibly have been killed for his money.

AS I said before, I am considered "queer" hereabouts, and my opinion wouldn't count for much. . . . Why, some of the folks around here have even gone so far as to say that I aided in the killing. The little children who come to my door have told me so. Their parents try to keep them away from the old barn since that night last August, but they still come once in a while to watch me bake my "pan-a-cakes."

But my old home is different somehow. I do not take comfort here any more as I used to. When I lie here in the darkness, I sometimes imagine in the dead of night that I hear some one groaning, or that the stairs are creaking that lead up to the loft.

Maybe I *am* getting queer. . . . I wonder!

Don't Forget to Duck

By RUSSELL (YOUNG) HARDIE

YES, I am one of those box-fighters—maybe not one of the "up in the money" boys, but a fair second-rater who manages to put a few shekels in the sock every so often. But I've had an experience that very few of these high-priced boys can boast of.

It was in a town down in Texas, where I was matched over the ten-round route with a local boy who answered to the fighting moniker of "Sailor Kriby." This boy was not long on boxing ability but how he could sock—with either hand! He had a run of twelve straight knock-outs; and the promoters now were building him up. These same promoters had decided that it was time to push him into a little faster company, so they got in touch with my manager.

I trained hard and faithfully, for I didn't want to take any chances with this bird hanging one on me, as I had a reputation of my own to take care of. I hadn't dropped a decision in the last twenty starts; and nine out of the twenty had been knock-outs.

The night of the fight my opponent and I climbed into the ring, selected corners and went through all the formalities.

The "Sailor" proved to be tall and rangy, with thin arms and legs. This surprised me, as with his record I had expected to see a short, stocky man with bunched muscles and heavy shoulders.

We received our instructions from the referee, and the gong sounded for the first round. I slipped out of my corner in a crouch with my arms carried close to my body. I was determined to take no chances until I felt him out. As I had expected, he immediately took the lead and proceeded to flail out at me with long sweeping overhanded punches, which I blocked or picked off with an open glove. He was still swinging when the bell ended the first session.

During the minute rest, I mapped out my campaign and smiled to myself. This fellow was going to be easy—as long as I was careful. I knew that there was plenty of steam behind those long, swinging arms; but I had it all planned, and as the gong clanged for the second I bounced off my stool and opened up. With a straight left I jabbed him every time he swung; and when he was off balance, I alternated with a short right chop to the body.

The rounds went along pretty much the same up until the seventh. I had my opponent's body red from the constant chopping, and he seemed to be in a bad way. I decided that this was the round that I could open up and take a chance. When the bell rang, I jumped off my stool and caught him in his own corner. With a one-two, I brought his hands up to his head; then with all the power of my right hand and with the full force of my body behind it, I sent in a short right over the heart and toppled him to the canvas.

I thought the fight was over. Imagine my surprise when he bounced off the floor at the count of five and came tearing at me! I set myself to meet his rush and ducked two or three punches that had dynamite smeared all over them. Then I worked my opponent into a corner with the idea of ending it.

Here I crouched and sent my left to the body and crossed my right to the chin. My left was in position for a left hook to the solar plexus. I let it go, and at the same time I saw my opponent start that right of his. I was off balance, and I couldn't block it or duck it, though I knew that it was coming. Then there was a jolting, jarring sensation and the lights all went out. . . .

I came around in my corner a few minutes later, and out of a haze I noticed them working on my opponent in the opposite corner. The crowd was in an uproar. My manager was grinning and saying: "It's the first one I ever saw in my life!" Then he explained.

My left hook had landed at the same instant that my opponent's right hand landed on my jaw. It was a double knock-out and we were both counted out.

The referee's decision was a draw.

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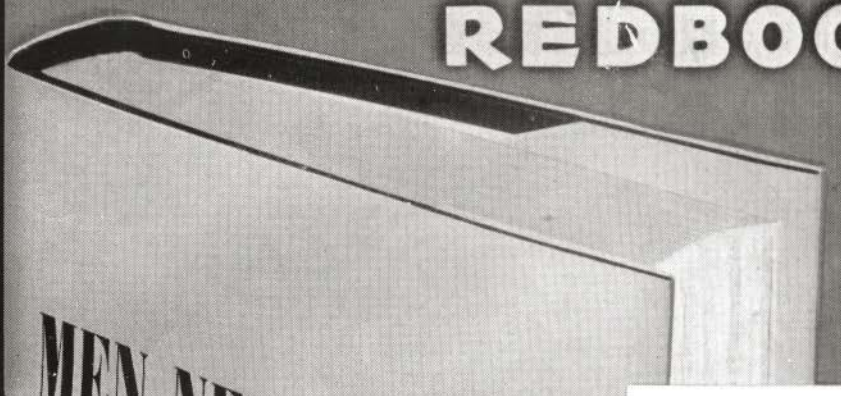

MEN NEVER KNOW

VICKI BAUM

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