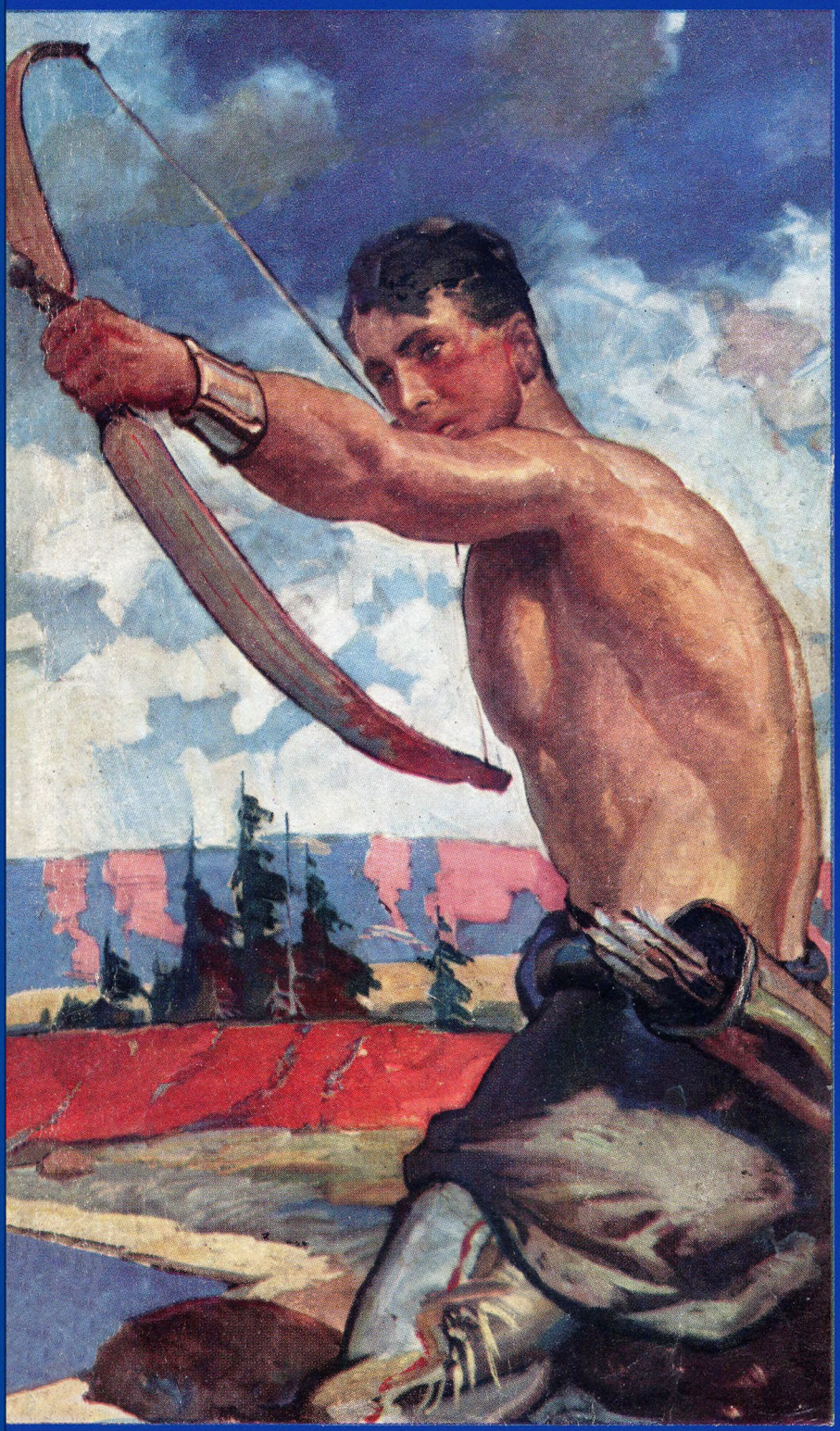
BLUE BOOK

OF FICTION AND ADVENTURE

MARCH 1938 THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE VOL. 66 No. 5



MARCH
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"Kioga of the Unknown Land"
An epic novel
By WILLIAM CHESTER

•

LELAND JAMIESON
H. BEDFORD-JONES
WILLIAM MacLEOD RAINE
STEFAN ZWEIG
GORDON KEYNE

•

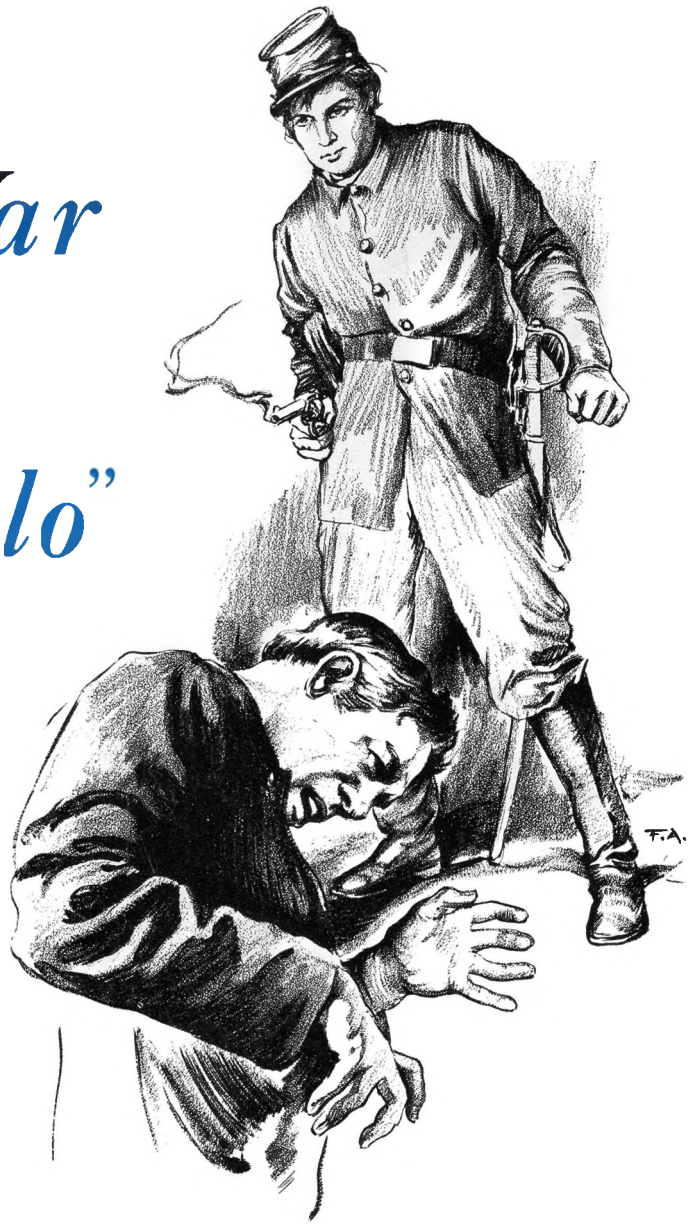
"Death on Talisman Mountain"
By FULTON GRANT

•

Fully Illustrated

Painted by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS *to Illustrate* "KIOGA OF THE UNKNOWN LAND"

"De Yar of Jubilo"



A thrill-crammed short novel of the Civil War, which will appear, complete in our next issue.

By

CARL M. CHAPIN

Say, darkies, hab you seen de massa
Wid de mustache on his face?
Come 'long de road sometime dis mawnin'
Like he gwine to leave de place. . . .
De massa run, ha-ha!
De darkies stay, ho-ho!
Mus' be now de kingdom comin'
An' de Yar of Jubilo!

TO begin with, my horse lay down. With the five weeks' marching and fighting he'd had since Spotsylvania, he had a right to die.

A McClellan saddle is a load, without counting carbine, saber, pistol, blanket and what ammunition I had left. And cavalry boots were never meant to walk in.

It must have been ten miles down that road, with my eyes half blind from sweat, that I almost tripped over the body of Stump Parsons. When my brain began to work again, I realized that Stump must have been carrying dispatches from Sheridan to Grant, to be off here alone, like this. The sun was setting when I rolled Stump Parsons into his grave and tramped the dirt down, and set out again.

Presently I came to a lane running through oaks to a great plantation house, far back. There was candle-light from a window and door but no one answered when I knocked and called. I went to the dining-room. I leaned my carbine against the table, laid my pistol beside a plate and was just sinking into a chair when a woman's voice said, from the doorway: "Yank, put up your hands!"

From this point on, you are not likely to lay down this exceptional story. And with it will appear the best work of such writers as Fulton Grant, H. Bedford-Jones, Leland Jamieson, William Chester, Gordon Keyne, William Makin and William MacLeod Raine.

Next Month:

"The Treasure Of Abdul the Damned"

A fascinating adventure of the Anglo-American intelligence officer known to the natives as the Red Wolf of Arabia.

By WILLIAM MAKIN

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

MARCH, 1938 VOL. 66, NO. 5

Two Serial Novels

Short Stories

A Novelette

True Stories of Adventure

Cover Design Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

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

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Prize Offer for Real Experiences

THERE is material for a novel in every person's life, it has been said. Whether this is true or not, we do believe that in the lives of most of us some experience has occurred sufficiently exciting to merit description in print. With this idea in mind we shall be pleased to receive and to print true stories of real experience, running from one thousand to four thousand words each. For each of those accepted each month we will pay, according to our appraisal of its length and strength, an average price of $50.

In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is barred. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably but not necessarily they should be typewritten, and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable.

A pen name may be used if desired, but in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return. As this is a monthly contest, from one to two months may elapse before you receive a report on your story.

A Wanderer's Scrapbook

High-lights in the memory of a noted writer and globe-trotter.

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

HERE and there in these reminiscences I have mentioned my dislike to policemen. At the holy city of Kairouan in Tunisia, I scored on a policeman. With my dislike to police, I have also a dislike to guides, and in Kairouan I refused all the offers of the guides (who are a particularly insolent lot), who have been trained for their duties.

I had seen a hundred mosques and had no desire to see more, so I drove here and there around the town, to the great annoyance of the guild of guides who begged me each time the car halted to get out and visit one of the holy places. It was a lean season for guides, and my contempt for mosques annoyed them.

We came to a spot near the market-place which the chauffeur, knowing that I was a writer, thought might have some interest for me. It was an old water-tower that had been worked by camel-power for four hundred years. The camel who operated the wheel lived in the top of the tower, and he never returned to earth till he died, when a new camel was hoisted up to take his place.

I wished to see the camel, and went up the stairs with my chauffeur. When I came down again, there were nine guides, a policeman and two thousand Arabs waiting for me. My chauffeur had broken the rules of the town. He had acted as a guide in taking me to visit the *chameau*. The cop decided to arrest him.

I bluffed and cussed, but it was of no avail. The guides wanted my blood. They urged the policeman to make an example of me.

I took the cop aside, having come to the decision that a bribe was cheaper than a police-court matter. At first he wouldn't fall for the bait. He asserted, and it was the truth, that I was a man lacking in politeness and good manners. I had cursed him and the guides, and he could not see his way to accept money.

I raised the ante. I whispered of a hundred francs, the eyes of the guides and the crowd upon me as I talked. "I'll slip it into your hand as I say good-by," I murmured. "No one will see me pass it."

He agreed. I ordered the chauffeur into the car, then shook hands with the cop, four thousand eyes on me. Deftly he took the folded piece of paper as our hands met, but the watchers made it impossible for him to look at it. *"En route!"* I cried, and we were off in the direction of Sousse.

"What did you give him?" asked the chauffeur when we had left the Holy City behind.

"The bill for our luncheon at the Hotel Splendide," I answered. "It would be wrong to corrupt him by giving him money." . . . .

At a village on the Niger I sat on the bank waiting for the *bac* to ferry the auto across the river. Within a stone's-throw of me a score of black ladies stood hip-deep in the water scrubbing themselves with great lumps of common soap. The lather they got up was tremendous; great islands of soapy froth slipped off their broad black backs and floated downstream. The nearness of my presence didn't interfere with them in the least. That was their particular bathing-spot.

My native chauffeur was bored by the delay of the ferryman. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, threw out his right arm toward the middle of the river and shouted "Caiman!" at the top of his lungs.

That drove of dusky Dianas making hot-foot for the shore was something to see. And it was a treat to hear their language when they discovered that the chauffeur had tricked them.

ON another similar occasion I brought down on my head the wrath of a British matron. At Segou in the Sudan I and the lady—whom I did not know—were awaiting a private automobile that was to take us to Bamako. We were, on account of our foreign appearance, the attraction of a number of women and girls rather scantily clad. They stood around and stared as if they expected the English lady to throw somersaults for their amusement.

I grew tired of the staring mob. In my pocket I had a handful of small coins, and with the intention of satisfying them with a scramble, I tossed the coins into the air. Fifty-nine females went into the dust of the road and they writhed and fought there in the most shameless manner. Half a dozen young women had their tattered skirts torn from them, and the anatomical display was so shocking to the lady that she turned her back on the group, and in no polite manner told me what she thought of my action.

"I did it to please you, madame," I said humbly. "I thought it was tiresome standing here with nothing to look at."

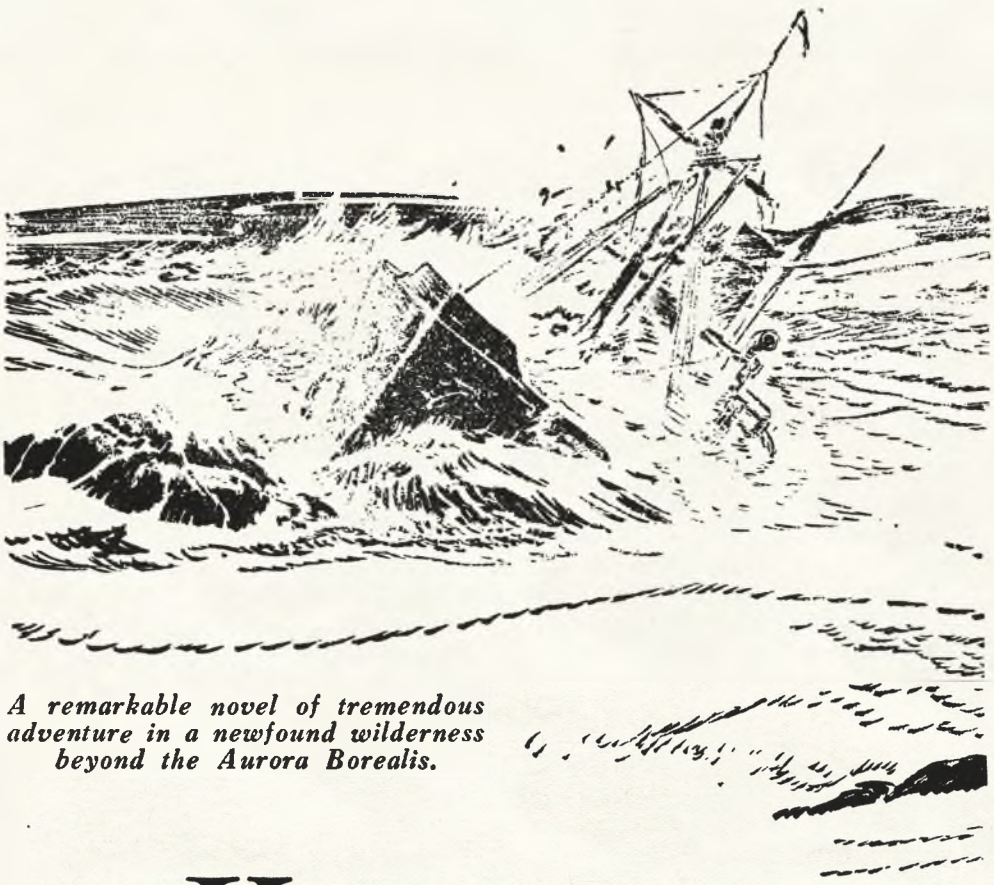
We didn't speak again during the long journey in the car. . . .

At Gao on the Niger, the hotelkeeper dined with a tame cheetah tied to the leg of his table; two baby cheetahs played on the dining-room floor; an ostrich walked about the yard.

The "dressy" natives are very particular about their clothes. Dress-lengths go out of fashion. In Senegal I made a collection of cotton stuffs specially manufactured for Africa: Patterns that showed gorgeous elephants, palm trees, baobab trees, ships, open books, et cetera. There was one design that I had seen on a dark lady. It showed a large lock with cross keys. I asked the Syrian merchant for a length of it. He said sadly: "It has gone out of fashion. The ladies didn't like it. The lock and key suggested slavery."

These cotton goods are probably made in Manchester for the African trade, but they are never shown in England. I found delight in them. It was nice to see a dark woman out shopping with a dozen large green and blue elephants crawling over her peignoir. . . .

At a little village between Mamou and Kan-Kan in Guinea I saw a tiny monkey that had been trained to look after a blind man. He was an animal with great self-control. Anything tossed to him he picked up and placed in the hands of the blind man. Even a nut or a banana for which his own mouth must have watered he gathered up and handed to his sightless master. I had a desire to take him off the chain and buy him a bushel of nuts and five dozen bananas as a reward for his fine quality of self-denial.



A remarkable novel of tremendous adventure in a newfound wilderness beyond the Aurora Borealis.

KIOGA of the

By WILLIAM

"STANLEY KIRK, so far as we're concerned, your life's not worth a nickel if you make the trip you're talking of. Try Lloyds. They'll insure anything. But it'll cost you doggone' high, my lad."

So spoke my friend and old insurance counselor, whose name I won't divulge for simple reasons. We sat at after-dinner coffee in the Promenade Café. Spray from the fountain beside Prometheus whisked cool upon us now and then. Spiring toward the evening sky, there rose the giant of the famous New York rendezvous which bears the name of Rockefeller Center. Out on Fifth Avenue gay throngs strolled up and down, or lingered above and around us, looking down upon the diners with the tireless curiosity of sightseers.

My friend took no notice of this. "You are asking us to underwrite a venture outside the field of insurable risks."

"Well, let it go, then," I said, with a trace of unwarranted resentment. "Your darned insurance companies have no imaginations anyhow."

"Be realistic," was the answer. "We don't deal in the imaginary. We deal in risks that show some likelihood of going right—not a voyage to an unknown land that is bound to end in disaster. We've carried you at reasonable rates while you were prowling in India and half the other countries on the globe. But those places are known, at least. This land you rant about—Nato'wa—it may exist, for all we know. But deliberately to take a ship into the ice-packs in the Arctic is suicide—and suicides are not insurable."

"Insurable or not," I answered, "Munro's lost up there somewhere, and I propose to find him. Hang the risks."

"Munro was an explorer and a scientist," my friend reminded me unnecessarily. "He'd know how to take care of

Unknown Land

CHESTER

himself. You ought to realize that. As manager of his Museum you've known him long enough."

We finished our coffee in silence, and parted with a perfunctory handshaking. He took a path paved with insurance figures and walled with interest-tables, the path of safe-and-saneness. My course began by leading up old Fifth Avenue and ended in tremendous adventure in a strange new land. My friend, I later learned, died victim of a motor accident; while I, brushed by death a hundred times, lived on to record these extraordinary events.

MAKE no mistake: I'm not its hero. I only tell a strange tale, much of which I saw, part of which I was. More often still I recount facts as they were later told to me, and frequently infer details which never have been told. When the story is finished, and a long-blank spot is filled in on the map, the newfound land of Nato'wa, discovered early in this century and known to white men less than a decade, will be a synonym for adventure on a last frontier.

The name of Lincoln Rand, a physician by strange fate turned discoverer, will rank with those of other greats whom death deprived of the high honors due to great achievements. For Rand it was who cleared an old riddle from the slate of science by proving Nato'wa to be the cradle of the red-skinned race called Indians.

Rand's diary first told of the timbered mountainous wilderness, of its fierce wild beasts and savage men; and of its climate, tempered by warm currents; and of his little son, called by the Indians Kioga the Snow Hawk, born to rove a wild hawk of the wilderness, indeed, an outcast with only shaggy forest denizens for company, until qualified by his fight-

ing sinews to become the greatest warrior in all the Shoni tribes.

Added to Rand's accounts will be the journal of James Munro, explorer-archeologist, who journeyed to Nato'wa on his own account to verify the natural wonders of which Rand's writings told. Far more than a dry array of scientific facts, this journal is a document whose pages overflow with strange adventure. It tells of Beth La Salle, the young American girl who dared to seek and be reunited with Kioga whom she loved; of Dan, her younger brother who sailed upon the *Narwhal* too, and of all the others of a fearless company.

Boldly they set forth, attained their goal, set up their fortress in the wilderness and met Kioga once again, only at the last to see the *Narwhal,* seized by a discontented few among the crew, putting out to sea.

Marooned, their fate might well have come to be another mystery of the North, but for the lucky chance which brought the *Narwhal* back into the ken of civilized men. The faithless crew aboard had long been dead when we found them on that frozen funeral ship. But before the *Narwhal* caught fire, burned and sank, James Munro's journal was recovered along with other papers, and with it undeveloped photographic films, exposed in far Nato'wa. And into my hands these records properly came, to become a part of the famous collection of New World historical objects housed in the Munro Museum in New York City, of which I exercise control in Munro's absence.

Until the night two years ago when I was swept into the rushing events of great adventure, I had not lost a single item of Munro's collection—of which perhaps most priceless were a map and chart found on the *Narwhal.*

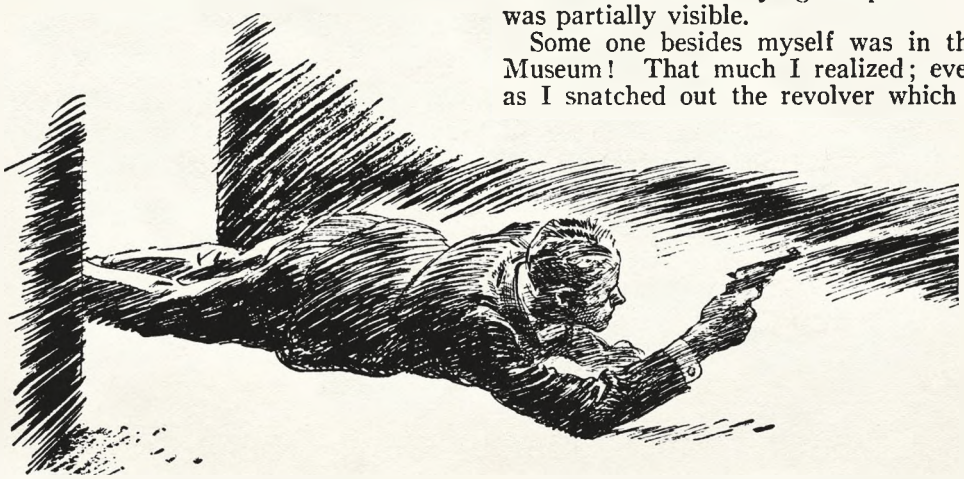
No ordinary map and chart were those two precious papers. The one pertained to new land in the Arctic called Nato'wa; the other to the ice-girt reefs and stormy seas which held the outer world at bay from that dark land until the present century. Upon that map and chart, survivals of Munro's ship *Narwhal,* were pinned my hopes of succoring my famous friend.

Another ship, the whaler *Bearcat,* and her skipper Captain Scott, were at my service—of that Scott's telegram had just informed me.

DAYS of feverish preparation were past; little remained but to close the Museum, set the burglar-alarms for which the building is intricately wired, and gather up the map and chart by which our expedition would be guided. These were in a vault below street-level, where I now went.

Entering the vault-room by the great oak door, I paused instinctively, conscious of something untoward. The vault yawned open, just as I had left it, but suddenly the answer came: Through the vault-room, usually dry and stuffy, there blew a breeze, cool and fresh with the tang of rainy damp. This draft came steadily from a place behind the open vault door. Swinging the door through a quarter-circle disclosed a little heap of broken masonry before a hole leading outward from the building—the unused inlet of a coal-chute to the bins which the vault had long ago displaced. The bars across the cemented opening had been sawn through with a hacksaw, attested by metallic granules lying near; and on the floor a drying footprint still was partially visible.

Some one besides myself was in the Museum! That much I realized; even as I snatched out the revolver which I



always carried when alone in the Museum, from behind me came a sound and then a heavy blow, glancing from my head to shoulder. I went down, stunned an instant, recovering sufficiently to see vaguely a form flit past, a cylinder of paper in one hand, not easily identified.

My own voice sounded, strained, unnatural:

"Stand where you are! Don't move!"

And then I fired, one quick blind shot.

I heard a muffled yell. Something flashed before my eyes and hit the wall behind me with a thud. Then came the slamming of the oaken door, the sound of running footsteps on the stair that led above. I followed, still in half a daze, yet cautiously. Wind blew through the upper hall. The outer door hung open, and a curtain of rain fell just beyond. I burst upon the rain-wet street, with its shadow-rows of anemic city trees.

From other avenues came the roar of elevated trains, the bray of auto horns out in a great city, as the after-theater crowds turned homeward. To give blind chase to the marauder of the evening were useless. Returning to the Museum, I saw traces of blood and found the vault in confusion.

A sum of cash and gold and silver ornaments were left behind. The marauder had been no common thief of works of art or historic value. But that on which I counted most was gone—the map of Nato'wa's eastern forest-land, and with it the chart of perilous reef-filled waters on its coast.

Who the marauder could be remained a mystery, never solved by police, hospitals or neighborhood doctors, whom I notified at once that a wounded man was wanted in connection with this burglary of the Munro Museum.

But of the midnight visitor, this much was certain: He was small of stature and slim, else he could not have wormed his way into the Museum via the coal-chute. He was resourceful, cool and cunning, as proved by his quick escape and self-effacement. He was not one to halt at violence—as witness the blow on my head and a thin, keen knife stuck in the jamb where I had stood. His wound was in the left hand. A dark print on the wall proved that. . . . Little did I dream under what circumstances I should encounter this unknown marauder again!

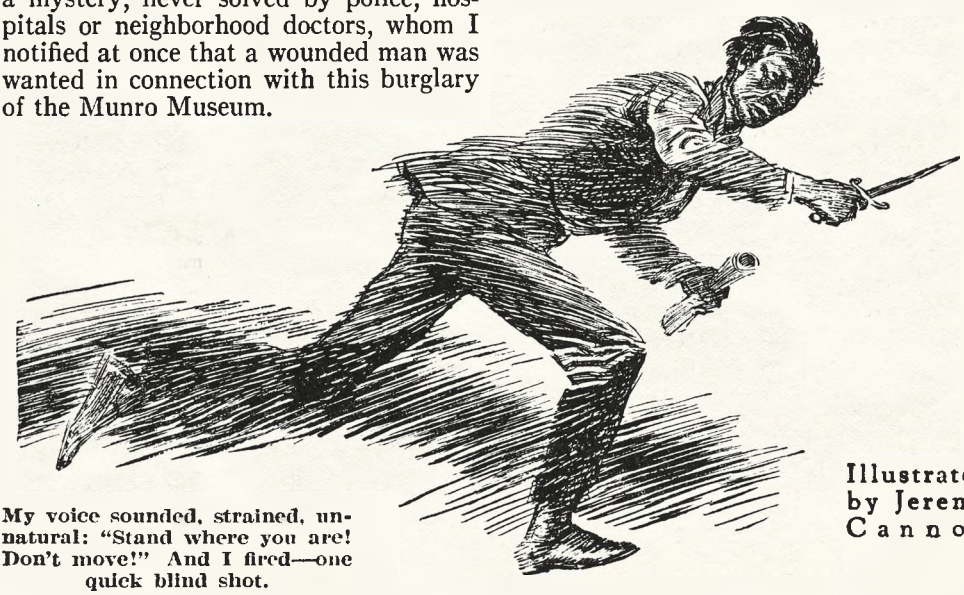
To lose the only extant map and chart of our new land was a dire blow, the first of many still to come against the rescue expedition. The question now resolved itself to this: Deprived of map and chart by which to sail and take his bearings, would Captain Scott stand by his original agreement to sail the *Bearcat* into the unknown?

To settle that, I set out for the Pacific coast at once.

CHAPTER II

"TIS unfortunate, aye, now it is, that the scalawag got the map and chart." The words were Captain Scott's, uttered in the cabin of the whaler *Bearcat,* straining her hawsers at a pier in Seattle seaport. They came from lean grizzled jaws, brick-red from many years at sea in chase of Moby Dick.

Scott was little changed since our last meeting. A little frostier on the leonine



My voice sounded, strained, unnatural: "Stand where you are! Don't move!" And I fired—one quick blind shot.

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon

head, a little more lined about the lips, but shoulders just as straight, the eyes as keenly bright and blue, the grip of hands, weathered red, just as unstinting in cordiality. Hard-bitten was Captain Scott, hard-bitten too the words with which he followed that remark to me:

"But map or no map, lad, we'll seek your unknown land. For if there's land up in the polar quadrants, as ye claim, the *Bearcat* is the ship to find it. And scrape my hull, I do believe in this Nato'wa place ye speak about! What's more, to set your mind at rest, my ship is at your service, and I am too. As for the crew—" Scott paused to suck reflectively at his grimy white clay pipe.

AS he paused, the third man in the cabin leaned across the table. Some forty-seven years of age, he was the opposite of Scott in every outward way. His hands were white, well-cared for. His skin was pale, his face new-shaven, his clothing of the latest style and cut. The corporate boards on which he sat as a director were many. In John Ford La Salle we both beheld a man of means and culture and refinement—but something more as well, which made us kin: a well-conditioned body, open, clear-eyed glance, and an inner consciousness of courage and great resourcefulness. To him, life had been prodigally kind, until the blow which fate had struck against him through his children, both of whom had been lost with James Munro. His voice, accustomed to command, now spoke in very different tones:

"This risk you've volunteered to take, Captain," he said to Scott, "is more than I dared to expect. If you find Beth and Dan for me, you'll never need to put to sea again."

"Belike ye speak of cash rewards," returned Scott, eying La Salle quizzically.

"If money will repay you, all I've got is yours," the other answered fervently.

"'Tis clear ye do not understand my nature, sir," Scott told him bluntly. "With all the gold of Crœsus in my hold, I would not quit the sea. I'll take my pay in satisfaction at seeing ye reunited with your kin. Reward—ah, bah! 'Tis not much longer I have got to sail these earthly seas. For fifty years I've chased the whale. Now comes a chanct at sixty-two to write my name in hist'ry. Stow all that talk of payment, sir. But if, God willin', we reach this unknown land, mayhap they'll put my name upon the map and call a bay or river after me."

La Salle spoke gruffly, as men oft do when deeply moved: "I'll shake your hand on that." And in the quiet of the *Bearcat's* cabin, they gripped and wrung, a bargain made whose outcome none of us could have imagined.

"But what about a crew?" La Salle asked anxiously.

"We'll put our cards right on the table," Scott said. "And let each man decide it for himself." He turned to me. "Ye'll have the movin' pictures, I suppose? Good. Set up your contraption. That piece of sail will do for screen. I'll call my men."

The crew were soon assembled and introduced to us; we shook hands all around. They were a quiet lot, not given much to talk, but with the sea's roll in their gait, horn on every palm.

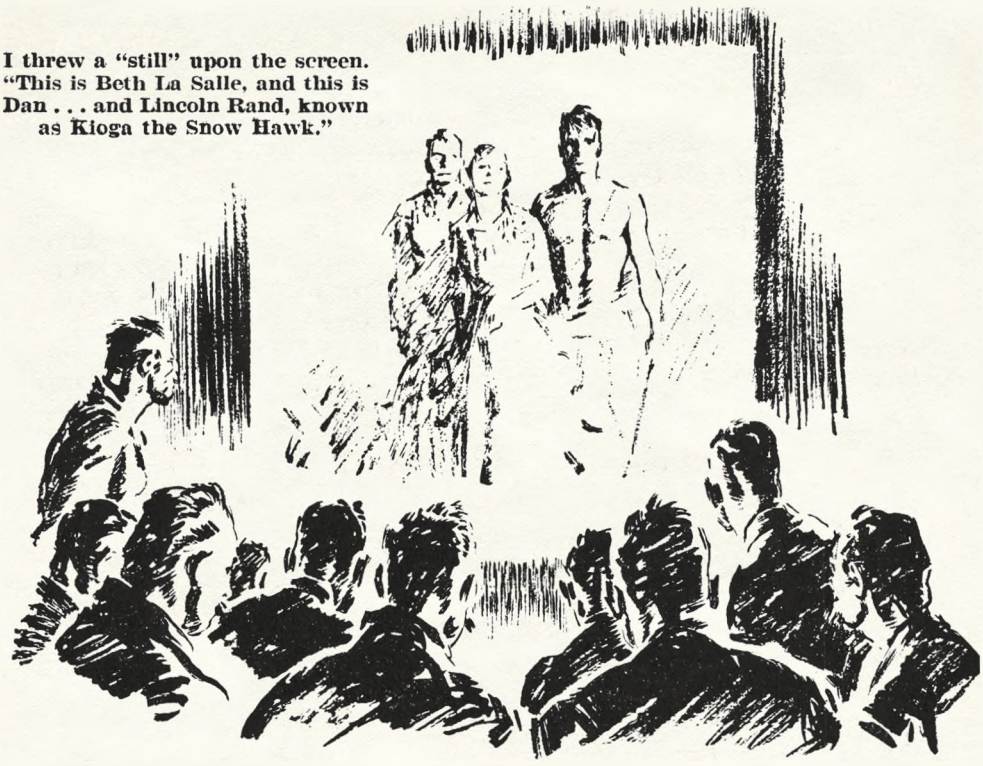
"Be seated, men," said Scott. "Ye've not forgot the *Narwhal* with her dead men's crew which we found some months ago off Alaska. Ye've also heard a lot of Nato'wa, a new land in the Arctic. That ship took Dr. James Munro to that new land. And with him went Miss Beth La Salle, and Dan her brother. Not one of them returned. Marooned, they are, in need of help, somewhere up in the north. I'm goin', with the *Bearcat*, on a search for them. But since 'twill be a risky business, ye've each and every man a right to know the facts before ye sign up for the voyage. Kirk, here, will tell ye anything ye want to know." Scott nodded, and I took the floor, and looked from man to man.

FINALLY one Tim Sullivan spoke up: "I do not fear so much the danger," he said, "or I would not love this trade of whalin'. I've been around the world, I have, from the Amazon to Zanzibar. But never have I heard of this Nato'wa, until here lately. Beggin' your pardon, but how d'you know it's not a wild-goose chase you're goin' on?"

"You've said it, Tim," another said. The remaining men nodded silently. "What's to prove this land is not a dream?"

Force of habit sent the question to Scott, who had his answer ready, gesturing toward me. "Kirk, now, will show the pictures made from films found on the death-ship *Narwhal.*"

Directing their attention to the sail-cloth screen, I dimmed the lights, pressed a switch which set the small projector humming. The screen came alive, with clear and perfect moving pictures.



I threw a "still" upon the screen. "This is Beth La Salle, and this is Dan . . . and Lincoln Rand, known as Kioga the Snow Hawk."

We saw a schooner, now moving through a sea of ice, now wrapped in spinning mist, while jagged reefs passed by on either side. Next came a scene which showed the vessel almost wrecked, at anchor in a landlocked harbor. Each scene bore a caption assigned when all the films had been assembled. Shots of a volcano, and steaming springs were titled: *"Heat from inner earth makes Nato'wa's climate temperate."*

Another caption: *"Birds and animals of Nato'wa."* We saw a long-haired tiger prowl through a jungle of evergreen scrub, weighted down with snow. Came next a rare scene—a puma striking down an elk doe.

You could have heard a pin fall in that cabin as the picture changed to an eagle striking down a great white swan amid a burst of silvery feathers; a moose splashing up a river-bank; a bear climbing in a tree-top.

Then followed river-scenes, showing canoes loaded with dusky paddlers, their backs gleaming as they labored. The caption here read: *"Wild forest tribesmen of Nato'wa, cousins of the American Indian."*

Then came a sudden blank. One film had reached its end. I turned the cabin light on, by its light to insert a second film. The faces of those men had changed, and bore expressions of absorbed interest, wonder—and lingering doubt. But to a man, their imagination had been set afire.

The film was quickly changed, th room all dark again.

And now the ropes and rigging of ship appeared in the near foregroun upon the screen. Beyond its rail a sea coast was passing by. Ashore a band o men stood near a cannon, which belche a ring of heavy smoke. So startling wa the realism of being on that ship an being fired on, that some of the men wh watched the scene dodged instinctively The picture-ship was shaken and th image blurred. A direct hit had bee registered by the distant gun.

Ashore a handsome young white wom an, garbed in buckskin, moved int focus, to stand beside a man of strikin proportions. Thus, on a bit of celluloid preserved for us of the outer world, wa a perfect group picture. I threw it enlarged "still" upon the screen, point ing out four figures: "This is Beth La Salle, and this is Dan."

"My son and daughter," came the elde La Salle's voice in explanation.

"Third from the right is James Munro the scientist, whom you all knew."

"Aye! Aye—it's him!" muttered Sul livan excitedly.

"And this," I continued, indicating th most imposing of the group, "is Lincol Rand, known among those tribesmen a Kioga, the Snow Hawk."

Rand's was a figure to command interest, envy and admiration: straight, tall, formed like a living bronze. His splendid torso was naked to the waist; in one hand was a hunting bow, and at his back a quiver full of arrows. Here was the ideal form of the hunter-warrior, combined with the features and expression of a well-browned civilized white man.

"That is the key man in our search," I emphasized. "Wherever Kioga is we'll find the others, modern pioneers on a new frontier, in danger of their lives and needing help."

THUS in vivid pictures were the *Bearcat's* crew acquainted with those we sought, and leaving the final "still" upon the screen I gave way to Captain Scott, who uttered then the longest speech we ever heard him make.

"Now, men, ye have the proofs ye asked for. I leave it up to you. Ye've hunted whales with me on both sides of the earth. But this will be no whale-hunt, mind ye. It's lives we hope to save —the lives of men and one white woman, who dared to follow her man into the North. 'Twill be a voyage more full of peril than any cruise ye ever took before.

"I'll not belittle the danger. First off we seek a land that we know nothing of except by these pictures and hearsay. The ice lies thick twixt us and this Nato'-wa. What may befall us when and if we find it, no man knows. 'Tis certain sure we'll meet with savage men—benighted devils who love the sight of white men's blood.

"And for reward—wait, wait! I have not done. To compensate ye for the toil, the old Grim Reaper will be waitin'. Of us now gathered here, 'tis certain sure some won't return. I may be one. Let that sink in."

There was a silence, unbroken save by the breathing of men within the *Bearcat's* cabin. Scott continued:

"But look ye, men! I would not press a mother's son to go with me against his will. Yet on the other side of the accounts is this: If 'tis God's will that we return with tidings of the lost and proof for other men that there is land beyond them barriers of ice, the world will carve our humble names in bronze. And men of futur' times will link them names with Peary, Stefansson and Roald Amundsen —Lord rest him in his unmarked grave!" Scott paused again to light his cold pipe and sucked noisily, the only sound now heard, except the hoot of a passing tramp, outbound on some more prosaic cruise into the Pacific.

La Salle sat drawn and pale, waiting on the verdict of these men. Scott's crew sat round the great hewn table, slow of thought and slower still of speech, impassive and expressionless. But every word had sunken in, and to them the grizzled old whaling-skipper added, on a harsh note ill-masking a deep emotion: "Now lads, this ship is mine. I own her keel to truck, and I've committed her from peak to sternpost. But who so does not wish to go along of us, let him speak straightly now.

"'Tis only fair to say that if ye do refuse, locatin' a new crew will force the voyage over for another year. The best of men are not found in an hour or a day."

Having delivered himself of that, Scott stood up. "Now, men, go out and talk it over with yourselves. Muster on the foredeck in an hour. Them as would rather not sign up, our ways part at this dock, and God bless every man, no matter what he does!"

The men filed out with little speech, for whaling men are seldom long on words. An hour passed. I made some notes. Scott filled the cabin with strong smoke and never spoke in all that time. La Salle paced nervously, suspense almost too much to bear, for one more year might mean the difference of life and death to those he loved, lost somewhere beyond the shoulder of the earth.

PUNCTUALLY on the striking of the bells, we three went forward, where the men had gathered.

Two of us held our breaths. Scott spoke succinctly to each man in turn.

"Now, Sullivan?"

"Sure, sir, an' did ye think I'd ever quit the *Bearcat?*"

Scott swallowed hard. "Pete Silver, engineer?"

"Them engynes would not turn for no one else, sir."

"Tom Codd, what do you say?"

"Who'd feed these bloomin' lubbers if I did not go?"

"Sven Svenson, I'll hear from you."

"Huh! Ay go, by yumpin' yiminy, fur the hell of it!"

"Macgregor, you speak up, man!"

"'Tis vurra cerrtain ye'll ha' need o' Scottish blood—savin' coal or cash or lives, Macgregors shine."

Scott's voice shook slightly as he spoke the name of Otto Stumpf.

The stoutish German wiped his shining brow.

"*Ja,* sure I shtay. You hadt to ask old Otto?"

Scott stood up stiffly, his blue eyes very bright, and one more name to call. "Washington Madison Grant, what say you, lad?"

A negro youth stood proudly up to his full height of five feet two, black as the ace of spades, his frizzled pate agleam like ebony.

"A cullud man stood nex' to Peary at de Pole, suh," he said, with swelling breast. "Ah aims to repasent mah race in dis a'venture—ya-as, *suh!*"

A moment Scott swept them with his bright blue gaze, then turned to John La Salle triumphantly and full of pride. "Of their free will—not one held back. I could have told ye."

Then John La Salle did that which made them all his friend. From one to another he went, and shook the hand of each in turn, without a word. And not one looked him in the eyes, for everyone could see that they were misted dim.

Scott's voice was heard. "All right, then, lads. . . . The tide is high. We're sheathed with double steel up in the bow, for buckin' ice. Stand by your posts! We sail within the hour."

Aboard the *Bearcat* the undercurrent of excitement was running high. The ship herself was of that spirit, tugging with impatience at her moorings. The men sent up a cheer, dispersing then each to his place of duty on the ship.

From up in the bow La Salle and I saw Scott mount the bridge and heard his voice call the command.

"All right. Cast off!"

Cast off! What pregnancy of things to come was in those simple words! Cast off—from land, from friends, from civilization itself, to voyage forth upon a quest upon which men may never go again, to succor life and find a new land on this earth. Risk all, share all, whether the reward was gold and glory and far-broadcast achievement—or sudden, unrecorded death.

NOW with a great splash her lines came in. The capstan pawls rang merrily in the rings. The whistle roared; the screw began to beat. Another shout rose, echoing here and there about the ship. The *Bearcat* had begun the noblest of her many sailings, a joust with sea and Arctic ice. A few souls on the shore beheld and heard. But none of them, in that hour long past, were gifted with a knowledge of her mission.

Farewell to Puget Sound—farewell America! The great Pacific swelled beneath our keel. Now Ketchikan, the Gulf of Alaska, Akutan Pass, the Isles of Shumagin, Indian Point in far Siberia —all fell behind. South Head, the black rock of East Cape and North Head too —one by one the far outposts of men dropped astern. Through stormy Bering Sea the *Bearcat* plowed, passing between the Straits into the Arctic Sea, beyond the Diomedes great and small.

All went well aboard the whaler, proceeding at reduced speed when heavy fog enveloped her.

CHAPTER III

"SCHOONER ahoy! Broad on the starboard quarter!"

The cry keened down from the crow's-nest, and Scott looked back toward the horizon, now all but cleared of fog, to scan the indicated vessel closely. "A trader, headin' for the Siberian country to dicker with the Deermen and the Chukchees," was his first opinion.

Whereas the *Bearcat* already stemmed the floes, which crowded her on every side, the schooner, by a lucky choice of water lanes, gained on us steadily. Several hours found her abeam, some miles distant; but to our signals she made no answer. Scott scowled at that, for by the courtesy of the sea, we were entitled to her recognition and reply, if nothing more. But presently conditions in the ice checked both ships; and once again a light haze drifted between us.

Eager to try my skill at maneuvering on the ice, I asked Scott's sanction for a visit to the stranger, which he at first refused on grounds of danger. But as the fields continually grew more solid, he finally gave way, on my suggestion that the other might be in some kind of distress—a curious soft spot in this hard-bitten man who more than once had saved life on the seas.

"Go, then, if ye're set on it. Tom Codd will go along. Do as he says—he knows the way of ice and how to get about on it. But do not let 'em see ye, on the stranger. I mistrust that ship. Honest men would be more friendly in the North. Go warily."

So, while the *Bearcat* stood a little off the ice to drop a boat, we armed ourselves, then oared across the patch of

open water, made fast our craft beside the ice-field, and took to the ice. Across its tumbled jagged waste we trudged, Scott's warning in our minds; and as we slowly neared the other ship, I left Tom Codd behind, armed with his rifle. Under cover of a crag which hid us from the ship and most of her from us, I then went on alone to find the stranger anchored just beyond it.

FROM my point of vantage up atop that mass of ice, I peered almost straight down upon her passengers and crew. A more villainous-looking lot had never walked. One little group stood watching a wrist-turning match between two sweating contestants, jeering or cheering the changing fortunes of the contest. Amidships several gamblers sat round about a cask, playing cards upon its end, and pausing now and then to fill tin mugs at its spigot. Some bore pistols; others wore knives at belts. All save one or two were dour, cold-faced, unshaven men, typical of North Country riffraff.

Voices rose in drunken argument, ending in savage curses and the smack of fists on flesh. Somewhere a woman laughed shrilly and soon appeared, a fading blonde; with her were two others not more attractive, familiars of that roistering gang.

The captain of this unprepossessing lot was gazing forward toward the gang whence came the sounds of shouting, laughter, the squeal of a cheap fiddle and raucous chords of an off-key accordion, sounds oddly out of place in this vast sea of wind-carved, wave-driven ice, emphasizing the littleness of man and all his acts.

Now a tall and burly man stood shakily upon a cask to drink a toast. At its shouted conclusion: "To the land of gold and Injins! May we find the first and exterminate the second!" a laugh rose, subsiding as he continued: "To the land where they aint no police or Mounties to interfere with honest men —may all its redskin squaws be beauties!"

Some one cheered lustily, but a rumble of congesting ice drowned out the others.

Then suddenly my eye was caught by one at whom I could not help but start, with an odd feeling as of recognition. Yet not exactly that, for to my knowledge never had I set eyes upon this individual before. Scanning him closely, I cudgeled memory for the clue to his identity, which remained elusive, until his left hand, bandaged heavily and carried in a sling, came suddenly into view.

That set the wheel of identification turning. Slim and snakelike in every movement, the man was little heavier than a boy, but keen and shifting eyes in a swart, flat Asiatic face, marked him for what he was—a deadly little *fer-de-lance* if looks meant anything at all. Here, I felt sure, stood my marauder of the Museum, thief of the map and chart by which this vessel sailed.

The thoughts I had begun to entertain were now confirmed: the goal of this wild mob was identical with our own! With this assorted gang of men the first wave of empire had begun. Nato'wa, a new frontier and the last of earth's pure wildernesses, was fated to be the brawling-ground of this tough hybrid pack. Wanted men, seal-poachers, desperadoes, dregs of the Alaskan and Canadian wilds, with their slattern women—here they were, a shipload of the wastrels who seek escape and profit on every new frontier, and come to reap where other men have sown. And in sheer force those aboard the ship outnumbered the *Bearcat's* crew almost five to one, every man armed.

Some joked and laughed. But the word most often heard was *gold*. It was this yellow lure, which enticed them from the comforts of more temperate climes into the deadly rigors of the North. Reluctantly would the scientific world accept the facts of a new land as genuine. How swiftly had these gold-seekers snapped up the merest rumor!

SAVE for the rowdy horde on deck, the schooner appeared to be ship-shape. Shifting to where I could command a better view of her forward decks, a gun could be discerned, covered by lashed canvas—relic, no doubt, of rum-running or smuggling days in other seas near other coasts. What arms she had below, and her resource in ammunition, could only be conjectured—presumably enough to make her formidable even to the larger *Bearcat* if it came to fighting.

My thoughts turned to the stolen map and chart, lacking which the *Bearcat* was already handicapped. Somewhere upon this ship were those useful papers. With knowledge of their hiding-place, it had been well worth the greatest risk to attempt regaining them. But to pass unseen among that crew of ruffians on deck was now impossible, and rumblings

The goal of this wild mob was identical with our own! A shipload of wastrels, come to reap where other men had sown.

of the ice close by forbade my lingering much longer.

My gaze returned to the little Asiatic; and suddenly, across the space, his eyes met mine. At once he yelled out shrilly, snatched up a rifle and fired point-blank.

Half-blinded by a burst of ice kicked up by his shot, I turned and ran, glad of my strength and great activity. And though there was no pursuit, Codd and I scrambled at top speed across that chaos of shifting ice—now surging heavily under heel, and cracking with the sound of bursting bombs. Long fissures fingered among the floes, and plates and slabs of ice up-ended in the path, agleam like shining armor. Staggering across that uncertain footing, we slowly neared the looming *Bearcat,* its ports aglow like oranges, a welcome, solid-looking stronghold, where eager hands made haste to help us to the decks.

Captain Scott heard my report, and nodded grimly, muttering: "I told ye she was up to nothing good. Ye acted wisely in comin' back without riskin' your hide against the odds aboard of her. They have the map and chart, which I would give my ears to have. But they'd not part with them without a fight. And fightin' might be costly—more so to us, who are outnumbered and outgunned. Ye have Munro's description of the reefs and landmarks, in his diary. 'Twill have to serve."

Another fog soon fell. Terrific rumbling in the ice began. When the air had cleared again, the schooner's masts had vanished. By now accustomed to her presence, the crew were startled. Scott explained her disappearance with a grim simplicity. "Change of wind and ice-pressure are quick finishers. I've seen the like before. The ice will crack a ship open like a walnut. Or maybe she caught a wind we did not feel and a lane we did not see, and slipped away."

It was not a pleasant thought to realize that while we lay in comparative safety, almost within view another ship with human souls aboard might have gone to the bottom. Scott would have put a rescue crew upon the ice, but now the floes were in upheaval once again. And from this day onward we were too much occupied with labors of our own to give much thought to others. . . .

Favored by wind and weather, we had thus far come well on our voyage. With similar luck another week would have seen the *Bearcat* in that unknown temperate sea which surrounds Nato'wa. But the tremendous hostility of the Arctic now became apparent. The elements showed their teeth. The ice closed in, dashing our hopes of a quick passage.

DAY after foggy day the stout ship rammed against the floes, quivering in every rivet with the endless impacts. Crash after crash shook her stem to stern, while sometimes we made but a few miles a day, or again logged a fair northing when open leads were found. Ramming, backing, ramming anew, forcing her prow high up on the floes and by sheer weight of hull crushing the ice beneath her—it was *Bearcat* against Arctic, and the stout old ship seemed to shudder with awareness of it.

The outcome was a gamble, an agony of uncertainty, ever under it the fear that we might be beset, locked in the ice, unable to reach Nato'wa before another year or two had passed—if ever. The precedent for such a fate was ample.

Nor dared we slacken our efforts; for in the Arctic, of all places, ships must hasten or be doomed. Behind, evidence of the whaler's struggle, a lane of brash extended back into the fog—small ice broken up by the ship as she bulled her forward way in a weary, endless monotony of struggle, amid a vastness of space, shut in and isolated by fog and ice, motes in a blind universe.

But not an idle hour, even at such times as we were becalmed or ice-girt. There was the language of the Nato'wan tribes to be learned from Munro's self-made dictionary. There was his diary to be studied, that we might work out some substitute for the stolen map and chart, by which to find our way on arrival in the new land.

THE ice began to triumph. The *Bearcat* made no headway. Heavy fogs froze on her, overlaying spars and decks with transparent cloth-of-silver—a beautiful dress which must be chopped and hewn away lest she grow heavy above and liable to capsizing. Two shining hummocks raised their peaks towering off her port bow. She listed some degrees, first one way, then another, as the ice-pressure shifted.

A frigid, stabbing wind blew moaning in from the southwest. This wind it was which had piled up the ice now threatening the ship, which had already yielded forward below the forecastle, admitting much water.

Weary and discouraged, we had but an hour of sleep that night. The *Bearcat* groaned in all her joints, and trembled as the ice made good its throat-hold on her stem. La Salle walked the cabin floor silently, his face a study in despair. He would be brooding on the nearness of the end, with Beth and Dan still unaccounted for, unaided.

Scott and his men were all alert, ready to abandon at a moment's notice. Already a store of provisions had been swung overside to be lowered at a signal.

Close to disaster though we were, I somehow dropped to sleep—and awoke on hands and knees against the wall, a crashing, roaring sound in my ear. The ship pitched sickeningly and rolled with awful heaviness. She must be going down!

La Salle and I rushed up on deck into the light of early dawn, ready for the worst. Instead—

Instead we saw the ship transformed. The ice was melting from her. The crew were cheering lustily—strange conduct from men aboard a foundering ship, until one saw the cause. The floes had broken up; their roar and thundering was what we took to be the *Bearcat* being crushed. And our *Bearcat* was a prisoner no more. Her roll had come from sudden release of icy grip upon her hull.

North and west stretched out the open sea, clear save for a few growler bergs on one of which a fur-seal swayed sinuously. Gone was the frigid southeast wind that snatched breath from the throat and pierced as with a blade of ice. From north and west there blew a steady breeze, still cold, yet cold without conviction, like the first breath of spring in milder climes.

Who could forget the glad music of water trickling from where ice had been, the crash of bits of ice to deck, and the promise of that welcome wind so wonderfully tonic, moderating by the hour, magically opening the way to the tired ship! And on its breath was the faintest trace of what we sought, a hint of growing things, of green-clad spaces on mountain heights—of *land!*

Born of contact between warm air and colder waters, great billowy banks of mist surrounded us. The breeze dispelled them, leaving only wisps above the sea. The northern sun rose very slowly upward, ember-red, coloring the mists with its own warmth. The growler on which the seal still perched apparently took fire. The seal, as if in fear, dived off, a purple arrow plunging into a sea of golden melting incandescence.

All on board gazed at the sun, rising like a beacon of hope after our long despair. But of a sudden one of the men glanced toward the southeast, exclaiming in astonishment: "The schooner!"

Emerging from the ice some miles behind, evidently under auxiliary power, was the ship we had sighted in the pack.

SCOTT scratched his grizzled jaw and eyed her, puzzled.

"Now will somebody tell me—how the devil did we miss seeing her? And how did she come all this way from land ag'in' such wind and ice? She's sure had better luck with the winds and the water lanes than we. Mostly, though, I calculate she's done it by following in our wake under power, taking advantage of the lane we've broken. She's up to no good, either."

"Good or no good," I said, "we can't prevent her. The seas are free. And don't forget—"

"She carries a gun forward, aye!" the Captain interrupted darkly. "For what, if not for trouble? Certain, not for shootin' seals!"

"If it comes to a fight, sor," offered Tom Codd eagerly, "we'll give it to 'em, that we will. We've got the whalin' gun, don't forget, sor, an' bomb-lances aplenty. What's good for whales'll do for them."

"It isn't fight they want," Scott barked irascibly, "not yet leastways. There may be further ice, for all they know. And while we're here to break a way for them, they would be fools to fight. Unless I miss my guess, we'll not see hide nor hair of 'em—not for a while at least."

His words proved true. Long before coming up with us, the stranger wore away; nor did she change position that day, so far as we were concerned. Next morning found her nearer, and sundown under the horizon out of view.

BUT she had a useful chart. We must reckon, from Munro's meager diary notes, Nato'wa's probable location and the only channel into land. We would meet with her again.

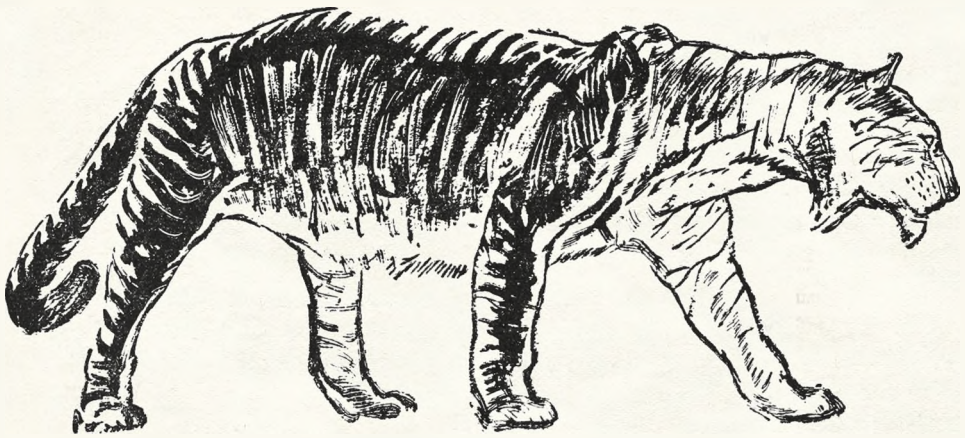
No land had been raised as yet, but the ice-belt was now behind, the outermost ring of Nato'wa's defenses stormed and carried. We were within those temperate seas which washed the coast of our goal, whose waters were so full of life the eye could scarce record it all.

Fur-seals and sea-lions swam past in countless herds. Wherever there was ice, walrus squatted amid their harems. Scott's eyes bulged at sight of schools of blue whale broaching fifty yards abeam. Had we been hunting oil, we might have killed a hundred.

The spars and masts were filled with black-backed and ivory gulls. Solemn puffins, with gaudy red and yellow beaks and feet, veered in flight or dived for fish. Clouds of murres flew past uttering the odd murmuring cries so like their name. And over all, fierce preyers hovered—sea-hawks and robber-ospreys, killing right above our decks.

The sun wheeled under on a glasslike sea. The *Bearcat* steamed full speed ahead. All hands breathed easier with the ice astern. The tension of dread had lifted. Forward, the bow-watch raised his voice in song.

Dawn revealed a derelict on the starboard beam, haven for a cloud of sea-



birds. Hulks multiplied as we neared Nato'wa's reefs. The sea was fairly sown with them. Many rode high up, remarkably preserved. A huge white owl perched on the topmost point of the foremast—fierce harbinger of the land we long had sought. The morrow found us steaming near the outer reefs, taking soundings constantly.

Then suddenly the loud cry *"Land! Land ho!"* came floating from the masthead. All hands rushed to the forward rail, and peered into the north. A momentary lifting of the fog gave us our first glimpse of a towering headland.

Who says that inanimate nature may not speak in a voice which man can understand—he has never stood as we did, silent, each man wrapped in his thoughts, while Nato'wa, the unknown, mysteriously strange and unaccountable, sent forth her silent threat.

Over all that distance the fascination of it reached out, gripping every man. It was as if some strange deep gift of prescience had been vouchsafed to all of us; for all who stood upon this solid iron deck had sensed that many would leave their bones forever upon that farthest loneliest land in all the world.

LACKING our chart, on which we earlier had placed such dependence, we had to use Munro's slim written description of the entrance to the channel in the reefs. Cross-bearings on two rocky spires convinced us we had found the place of entry. At less than two knots headway, the iron prow of the old whaler nosed between the outer rocks, groping forward into the labyrinth.

A fog blew off the land, obscuring all that lay ahead. Words scarce convey the perils to be run by any ship which seeks to brave the reefs, fogs, storms and tides which guard Nato'wa from approach by men of the outside world. Our passage through the polar ice-pack had been child's play, compared with threading these dread obstacles.

The fog grew heavier, and ropy twists of murky vapor serpentined about our decks, which soon were drenched with it. Sounds and men's voices were amplified peculiarly. Beyond the rails the sea was hardly visible, except in glimpses when the floating mists would part.

Now and again the cry, "Rocks dead ahead!" would sound, then Scott's voice shouting down the speaking-tube—bells were too slow in this emergency. It was a feat to navigate this iron ship through waters which had been dangerous to ships but half her size. Her weight, an asset in the ice-pack, was a drawback here, increasing as it did her draft.

There was no sleeping now. Scott kept his post, listening for the leadsman's calls. The screw beat slowly—*thrum-thrum-thrum* and once it rang upon the rocks, a deadly sound. The rudder creaked on its post; the endless workings of chains within decks were audible.

Then came the storm. Out of this northern cradle of evil weather, it rushed forth with a screaming wail, to strike almost unheralded—a fierce and freakish storm of wind and hail which careened the *Bearcat* with its first breath as if she were a little fishing smack.

Tall seas rose towering blackly up, and charged against the rocks like snorting bulls. Harsh gray waves bared foaming fangs and snarled along the rails. Their crests of churning foam snatched off by wind, stung our cheeks like scatter-shot. Both starboard boats were torn astern in half a minute.

Straws driven through solid planks—men speak of that when tornadoes strike.

This night we saw much worse. Small granite chips imbedded themselves in the hardwood of the *Bearcat's* mast—that near was she to shore. Poor old Tim Sullivan, forward in the line of duty, was cut down, mutilated as by machine-gun fire, by these hurtling shards, dead and riddled in a hundred places by that shrapnel-blast of jagged little stones.

TWO anchors out, a hawser by some miracle of seamanship got across a wedge of rock—but still the *Bearcat* dragged. Wind and tide and growing darkness, all combined to drive her on the razor fangs of rocks that waited, bared, to tear her bowels out. A loud report like cannon-fire was the hawser parting, snaking back in murderous recoil like some gigantic anaconda. Pete Silver, making fast an after hatch, was caught in its hempen toils and snapped a hundred feet into the churning sea.

Then the bow port anchor-chain let go, striking fat red sparks in angry showers from the windlass gypsyhead. One hook still held, but not for long. A sudden twisting lurch dragged out ringbolt and deck-beam bodily. No time to slip the cable, let alone make fast a finding buoy. The anchor was already gone, and with it twenty feet of decking, with salt sea rushing through the gap.

Then with a crushing jar the *Bearcat* piled up on a reef. Her hour was near —no man but knew that. Scott hurled an order back. A single word was heard —*"Whaleboat!"* and in a moment out it swung above the roaring sea.

There was one tense moment when it seemed that this boat, like the rest, must go to pieces on the *Bearcat's* hogging side. Then came a momentary lull; and we piled in, Scott last of all.

Snatched by a huge wave, the whaleboat fled the ship's side and hurtled shoreward, grounding in twenty minutes on a rocky beach, between two great rolling combers.

Pell-mell we all sprang out and grasped the gunwales with intent to draw her up on shore. But the second roller caught her, twisted—and stove her into matchwood on a rocky ledge.

Captain Scott gazed back upon the quaking corpse of his beloved *Bearcat*. She hung between two rugged spurs of rock, each one of which had bitten into her. Immense seas slammed heavily against her. Inch by inch and foot by foot the stout old ship gave way, her plates bending under weight of water and her own great tonnage. Each breaking wave struck with the sound of hollow drums. Then with a crash, down came her iron-fitted foremast, striking fire from a donkey engine as it fell.

And after that, as if her pride were broken, the *Bearcat* resisted little more.

"She's goin'!" cried Scott in a husky, choking voice. The ship hung trembling. A cumulative sea was roaring in, its force redoubled by the compression of two rocky walls. We heard it strike, an anvil-blow amplified a million times, a crash as of a thunderbolt. Then almost with a mortal sound there came the scream and screech of tearing steel—and the *Bearcat* was gone, her shroud the mists, her sepulcher the roaring reefs.

Upon the wash of that great destroying sea there was a spar, a length of mast; and when its undertow had sucked away, a life-ring with the name *Bearcat* on it floated out among the ridges, testimony one day, perhaps, to an outside world, that the *Bearcat* had met her end.

From somewhere near, beyond the towering cliffs behind, there came a muffled hollow roar. As one the little party turned to face the formidable challenge of Nato'wa. Deep anxiety clutched the boldest hearts among us. Nor could even experience on another planet have prepared us for the stupendous novelty of the events to come.

Somewhere near here, within the next few years, the Russians on the *Krassin* would prove to the world existence of warm currents in the Arctic. The *Sadko*, too, seeking land not seen since 1810, would radio of milder currents and signs of land unsighted hitherto. Russia, too, would break a northern passage for her fleet to win ready access to the East, across the shoulders of the earth. How long before men of the Soviet would come upon Nato'wa, as had we?

AS if the *Bearcat's* loss were not enough, now, bitterest draft of all, we saw that hated schooner coming through the reefs, and lying to behind a rock near by.

"She made it, sure enough," said Scott heavily. "Satan himself must have manned her wheel."

Storm-marked, and with canvas in hanging shreds, she otherwise was sound and whole. Where the greater *Bearcat* had gone down, this lesser ship of wood, by virtue of her shallower draft, had weathered through.

Feverish activity marked the dropping of her anchors. Two boats were quickly lowered. Into them men sprang to the point of overloading, burning to be ashore, apparently, and searching for the yellow lure that brought them here. But tragedy raised its head that early. One of the men, slipping on the ladder, lost footing and fell into the sea beside the ship. A swirl of water, a mottled shape rolling belly up, a long-drawn screaming cry choked off with dreadful suddenness; then the unlucky man was jerked under—by a shark? Less hastily thereafter, the disembarking continued.

"What is that name?" asked Scott, squinting at the ship's sharp prow.

"*Pirate,*" I answered.

"*Pirate,* hey? A fitting name, with them cutthroats aboard! But let's be movin'. We are not fit for fight like this."

Shouldering our salvaged few belongings, we turned along the cliffs, seeking to keep out of sight of those upon the *Pirate.* Until we had achieved perhaps a hundred feet of altitude along the slanting cliff-ledge, in this we were successful; then suddenly a chip of stone flew from a ledge above our heads, and there came a sharp report from down below.

SEVERAL times again they had our range. Otto Stumpf, red-faced and sweating with the steepness of the climb, gasped and clutched his arm. The shirt stained red with blood. A jeering cry rang out from down aboard the *Pirate.* First blood was shed, and more would follow.

Scott shook his hairy fist. A bullet whistled past his head. He joined the others in a more prudent course, crouching low and hastening along to where a broadening of the ledge enabled us to hug the wall beyond their rifle-range. . . .

Scaling the lofty coastal cliffs at last, we had our first glimpse of the forested interior—a wilderness without parallel on this present-day earth. Far to the north it stretched, a bold terrain, sloping down a mile or two from where we stood, then rising up in hills beyond, and finally, in mighty sweep, soaring swiftly toward a range of mountains in the distance. And everywhere the earth was clothed in splendid forest.

Somewhere, miles back in the interior, there flowed a river known as the Hiwasi, which took its rise in that distant range, flowed seaward, then after a mighty bend flowed parallel to the coast from east to west, and reached the sea far to the south of our landing-place. By striking due north, we should attain its banks.

The heavy thickets raised almost impassable barriers to our movements, and so we sought dry stream-beds leading downward from our rocky eminence, following along such pebbly courses until at last they led to flowing water, little higher than sea-level and flowing slowly toward the south.

What stream this was we *did not* know; but on its bank we made a camp —a raised stout barricade of fallen logs and pointed branches as a protection against the forest brutes whose footprints lined the mud and sandy margins.

Alternate sentries guarded the slumbers of the others all through that first night in Nato'wa, but naught occurred to give alarm. By firelight, with our one ax and patient labor, we fashioned a raft of logs, already fallen, lashed these together with stout vines and then cut pushing-poles wherewith to urge the clumsy craft along its way.

A great canoe had been far preferable, entailing but a fraction of the labor in propulsion, but time was of the essence, and anxiety to reach the River Hiwasi uppermost in mind. A good sound tree of proper size and shape was not easily found. Nor had we means whereby to gouge it out, excepting fire, which in our state of mind was much too slow. And so we made poor shift with the materials we had.

Our plan was now to push against the current of this lesser river in a north and easterly direction, hoping that its upper reaches paralleled the main stream of the Hiwasi, on opposite sides of the same divide or watershed. Hours of laborious upstream poling on the succeeding day brought us into broken water, not navigable farther.

FROM what I recalled of records lost, we here must cross the backbone of a minor mountain range, somewhere beyond which flowed the Hiwasi and the Acopi, its tributary. Armed with man's first weapon, a simple new-cut club, I climbed the nearest ridge, and from its eminence beheld the silver shimmer of a river far below. Nightfall found us at its bank. Scott suggested:

"Dig in right here. Set lines for fish. Make our headquarters fit to live in and worth defendin'. Then seek the trail of Munro and his people. But one step at a time."

It was good counsel, swiftly acted on. Of broken rock, laid solidly, and roofed above with thin poles interwoven with foliage, a rude blockhouse rose slowly, commanding views upstream and down.

Necessity mothered strange invention. On lines made of odd bits of string and unraveled clothing, Scott and his men set out the few fishhooks one of the men produced from a pocket case. Insects formed a bait which good-sized fish took eagerly. The wilderness, thus far, was kind to our cause.

ON the bank La Salle and I, with fire, ax and patient labor, fashioned a dug-out canoe, wherein to seek the secrets of the lower river.

"He goes swiftest who travels alone," Scott quoted, to agree with me. "Let Kirk attempt to find the trail, or clues to it, while we are workin' here, and so no time is lost. Moreover from studyin' the di'ry, he knows more of this land than any other, and so has better chance to find that fort, where likely they returned."

To this the rest agreed; and on the third day I set forth alone down-river, convinced by many signs, that this was truly the Hiwasi, somewhere below the Shoni village of Hopeka and the forest fort in which our friends had stood a siege.

Here was on every side, a most impressive forest. Great buttressed trees walled in the river, crowding to the very edge. Ofttimes, where creeks debouched into the main stream, they were thickly screened with giant roots, forming gloomy tunnels leading back one knew not whither. The river had carved the rocks and banks into a thousand kinds of caverns and lurking-places.

In midstream, islands large and small, all forested, cut off full view ahead. In many places a dense growth, rivaling the mangrove of other climes, clutched earth and rock in its grip, binding all together against the times of flood.

In density almost tropical; in all other ways a northern forest like the Siskiyou a hundred times perfected—such was this wilderness of Nato'wa. Throughout the forests there were well-trod trails, but not the kind that human animals tread—if they would live. In Nato'wa, men follow the river-routes, and thus I had my first glimpse of Fort Teskatuna, to call it by its Indian name.

Situated high up on a wooded river island, its northward wall alone was visible from below. Spanning the river from the cliffs opposite the island, an immense forest tree bridged the gorge. Where this had fallen, the wall had crumbled. Immense and rope-like vines had now begun the work of binding up the wound. Birds nested in the toppled giant's branches, which still sprouted green in places where the life-stream from the roots had not been broken. From embrasures in the north wall, black-mouthed cannon still protruded.

Concealing my canoe upon the island shore, I began the steep ascent through undergrowth and trees toward the hilltop island stronghold. Near and far, harsh-cawing ravens rustled through the branches in their heavy flight. At last the frowning south wall was in view. And as I stood beholding it, the gloom about me seemed to deepen. The trees near by assumed strange goblin shapes. At a light touch upon my shoulder I started, then relaxed. It was a twig, which fell to ground.

Skirting the base of the wall, gaze roving its lofty height for means of ingress, I came finally to its battered double gate, locked from within, defying every effort at entry here. Around the corner of the south wall, surmounted by its tower, a steep trail beside the west wall was the only path by which an enemy might hope to storm.

UP this path I clambered, clutching protruding roots and stumps, to surmount the west wall and look upon a raised work, strongly built to defend this vulnerable point. Then I scaled the bastion with some difficulty, and dragged myself atop of it, commanding then my first view of the fort's interior.

Directly below was a rock basin containing a water-supply. This trough stood at one end of an interior quadrangle, lined on three sides by a series of connecting rooms, built of heavy timbers and equipped with loopholes staring at the inner court. The thick roof of these rooms formed a broad platform directly behind the wall proper, which was pierced by embrasures for strange crude cannon. At every cannon stood a heap of iron balls. Watch-towers, at southwest and northeast corners, eyed the outer approaches narrowly through rifle-slits. Little more was visible due to the gloom elsewhere in the shadowy interior.

Utter silence met the ear, the silence of a dungeon or a tomb. But suddenly

the skin about my ears and scalp was tightening, a tingle quivering down my spine. One reacts thus, sometimes, without knowing why, prodded by something beyond himself, some ancient instinct whose operation helped his line survive down to himself, its end. No question—this was a warning. And as I stood waiting for I knew not what, a shrill and piercing shriek rang echoing within the walls, weird and blood-curdling—a human voice or a frightful mockery thereof.

I TOOK a further step, searching the shadows for sight of him who had awakened the silences. Seeing no one, hearing no further sound, I took yet one more forward step. Once more that shrieking voice rang wildly out.

"Stand back!" this time it cried, in a tone so full of warning that inadvertently I obeyed.

"Who's there?" I asked of the unseen, with simulated boldness. The answer was a curious muttering and cackling, as of laughter. The sound this time came from within the court; and cautiously climbing down to the platform, thence by a rough log stair into the darker quadrangle, "Who are you?" I repeated.

The answer was another burst of muttering from the nearest doorway, followed by *"Stand back!"*

Scarce knowing what to make of such a greeting, I sought to humor the speaker. "Look here—I won't harm you. Who's there?" And suddenly switching on my light, I played its beam about inside the nearest room.

A grisly scene met the eye within. Human bones lay all about the floor. My heart froze in me.

A single pistol hung upon the wall, near it a powder-horn and bags of ball and patches. Here was a weapon, like the cannon, fashioned within these very walls by ingenious men, to whom no obstacle had been insurmountable.

Taking down the arm I poured powder in the muzzle, pushed down a leather patch, dropped in a bullet, atop of this pressing another plug. Priming the pan and drawing back the hammer with its sharpened flint, I turned toward the door of the adjoining room, feeling much more secure thus armed. On opening this, a second door beyond slammed loudly. The unknown must have gone before, since he was not here, in what appeared to be the powder-room.

Passing into the third room, I heard a rustle as of garments, but this time no door closed. Advancing to its far door, I covered the loophole with my cap, so that whoever was beyond might not observe me seeking further arms. But in this—a workshop, apparently—not another gun did I see.

Turning back to the door, I laid hand upon its bar, and seeking to draw it open, stood back dumbstruck. The door was fastened by a heavy draw-bolt—bolted on *my own side!* Whoever had gone before me had either gone through solid four-inch planks of oak, or by way of the loophole in the door, through which I could hardly thrust my arm!

As if beholding my state of astonishment, from beyond came a burst of laughter. Some one seemed doubled up in paroxysms. Words followed, as incongruous as those which went before.

"Gold, by gum!" was what it sounded like to me, and then a child's voice calling, *"Here, Nugget! Here, Nugget!"* followed by a shrill whistle, as of some one calling to a dog.

But now such things made sense. Flashpan, eccentric miner, once the *Narwhal's* cook, and Tokala, the little Indian lad from America, were the sole occupants of the fort; for their voices had just spoken. But why the barred door and their reluctance to show themselves?

Drawing back the bolt, I flashed my light into a kind of living chamber. The room was empty.

Determined to end the farce, I passed successively through two other rooms, both unoccupied. In the third I heard again that rustle as of garments and drew back startled. A number of wide-winged bats rushed out into the court. The rustle seemed explained. But bewildered by the total absence of those whose voices I had heard, I made one last attempt to fathom the mystery.

"Flashpan," I cried out urgently, "if that is you, come out! Tell me what happened to the others."

A CHILD'S voice this time spoke from outside. If I was not mistaken, once again it said: *"Here, Nugget!"*

This was instantly followed by a guttural voice muttering a few rapid words which I could not at once distinguish, so low were they. Perhaps imagination suggested it, but in a flash it seemed to me the words were these, in native Shoni:

"Kill him! Kill him!"

Prepared for anything, I cut my light and pointed the pistol through the door I was then opening and peered beyond.

As quickly I slammed it shut, for finally I had seen something move. I threw the bolt and looked through the loophole, grateful for these ponderous walls.

A great tiger was entering the fort by way of the huge tree-bridge. Looking not to right nor left, the heavy animal prowled out of my view along the platform. Soundless on his cushion pads he passed above my head; yet the stout timbers trembled as he went. Just next the door of the adjoining room a stair led to the quadrangle. Down this creaking path the tiger came in one great step.

The others, whoever they were, might not have seen the beast approach. I raised a shout. "Tiger! Watch out!"

At sound of my voice, the great male checked. Neck fringe ruffed out, black lips retracted, the four great canines drawn apart, thus with a husky snarl grating from the glistening throat he stood a moment, taken aback by my strange light.

The pupils of his eyes contracted visibly in the light. I saw and recognized a man-killer. The fangs, though long, were worn, the cutting teeth quite black with age. And yet the huge brute was in full strength, and fat with good living—on human flesh? And I, lacking that rough-hewn barrier between us, had been his latest prey.

As if an answer to the shouted warning, there came once again that crazy repetitious yell: *"Stand back!"*

Ignoring this voice, the fierce beast thrust his muzzle against the loophole. His reek encompassed me; his fetid breath blew hot into my face. Then from his cavern of a chest he hurled a roar that struck me not like sound-laden breath, but more like something palpable, flinging me bodily back flat against the inner wall.

Fear? Yes, I knew fear, and shame is absent when I tell of it. I am no coward. Yet I stood twitching, utterly paralyzed by that thundering voice. Not only I—the very walls and ground shook too, objects rattled on the walls, bits of masonry dropped from the ceiling.

Hitherto I had known only the more silent tigers of the Far East, who challenge but infrequently. Tonight I heard the tiger of Nato'wa giving voice, forcing his awful tones from belly-deeps to jaws —not once or twice, half-heartedly, but time and time again for full five minutes, as even lions do not do, meeting echo with answer until the fort quaked to the thunder of it.

Shaken and quivering, at each successive roar I felt my flesh turn cold, despite the mighty barrier between that brute and me. Then I saw one giant paw intruded. The hooked claws fastened on the loophole's edge, scoring the hardwood like chisels in wax. Shaking the structure with mighty efforts, the great cat desisted, to pad back and forth.

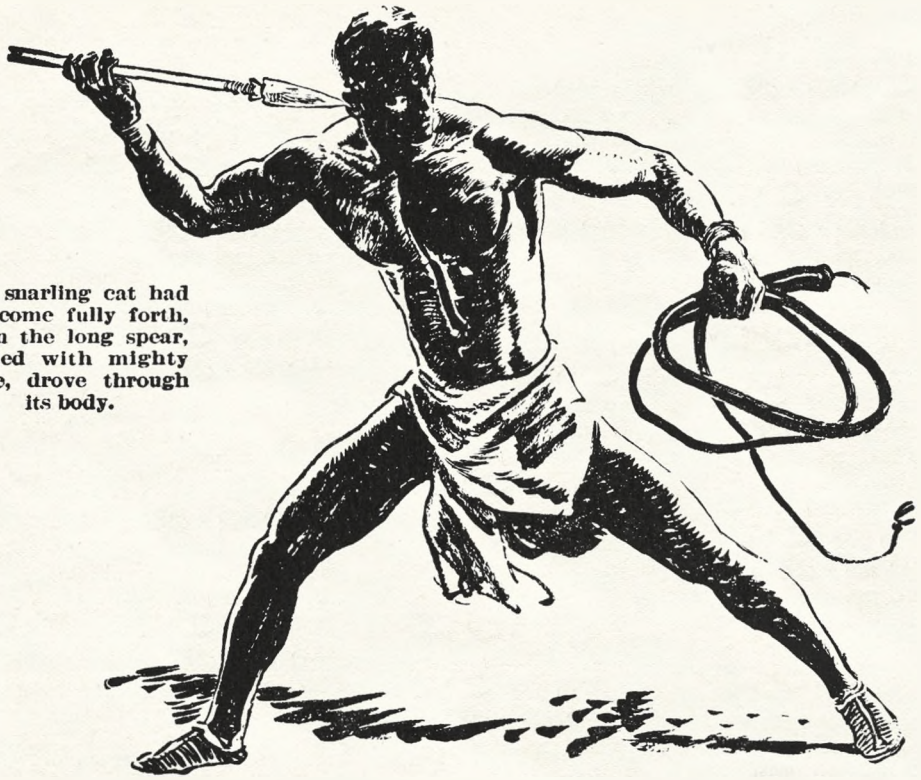
Watching its orange and black side-stripes pass, I thought at last of my pistol, and leveling it when the muscled shoulder came in view, fired. I heard the spark of flint, the *puff* of priming powder and a result like the burst of a roman-candle—but no report. The bullet had somewhere rolled out of the barrel and I had put aside my bag of bullets. The gun was useless to me.

FOR the moment the tiger was gone. But ten seconds later he clawed at the very door by which I had reëntered. The killer must have retraced my own prowlings, beginning at the open door of the arms-room. Baffled by the heavy bar, again it returned to the quadrangle, snarled through the port, crouched to lap water at the trough, and returned, roaring anew.

What had become of the others in the fort, whom I had heard but not once seen? Had the tiger come upon them?

And now I understood, with vast relief, the implications of those human bones scattered in the arms-room. My friends had not, after all, broken taboo. Instead, the fort was the den of this man-eater. Hither he brought his victims, to be devoured at leisure; and when he went out stalking others, the ravens cleaned the bones.

But what of the voices? All that night I sat hungry in the dark, chilled to the bone, with the man-eater roaring before my door, and only my thoughts for company. And troubled thoughts, not



The snarling cat had not come fully forth, when the long spear, hurled with mighty force, drove through its body.

knowing who occupied the fort with me, nor why its previous occupants had forsaken it, nor whither they had gone.

When the beast at last departed, I slept. But toward morning the mysterious voice spoke up again: *"Stand back! Stand back!"*

Looking from the loophole, I turned away, revolted. The tiger's prey lay there—or what was left of her: a Shoni woman.

Fearful of meeting the beast in the quadrangle, I passed through the several rooms, securing the doors as I went, and going warily. The beast was gone. I was free to seek a further clue to our missing friends.

In the quadrangle was a line of mounds, near the north wall. Memorials roughly burned into the logs told a story:

Ianko, Son of Tessaco,
Died in Action,
July 17.

Meliko, Mother of Sekowa,
Killed, by Stray Bullet,
July 23.

Other mounds showed the claw-marks of wolverines, baffled in their ghoulish digging by solid slabs of stone laid atop each body. There was evidence of the fort's long siege—broken arrows sticking from the walls, with here and there a bullet embedded, or flattened and lying on the ground.

What tragedy had befallen Munro and the rest? Capture by Indians? Death in the forest, such as I had only just evaded the previous night? Climbing to the platform, I sought some answer to the riddle there.

In the towers were no clues. Quartering the platform, I found nothing new. Pausing beside a cannon, I cudgeled my brain for a sane answer to the mystery of the speaking voices, when suddenly, almost at my elbow, there rang forth the first voice I had heard, repeating the identical cry.

Then from the cannon's mouth, as if in sudden fear, a raven darted, with a rustle as of garments, to flap heavily in air, alighting atop the wall near by. It regarded me boldly with the shrewd gaze of its cunning kind, its bright yellow eye glistening like a jewel. Its large beak opened; simultaneously I heard Flashpan's voice, muttering miser-like:

"Gold, gold, gold—"

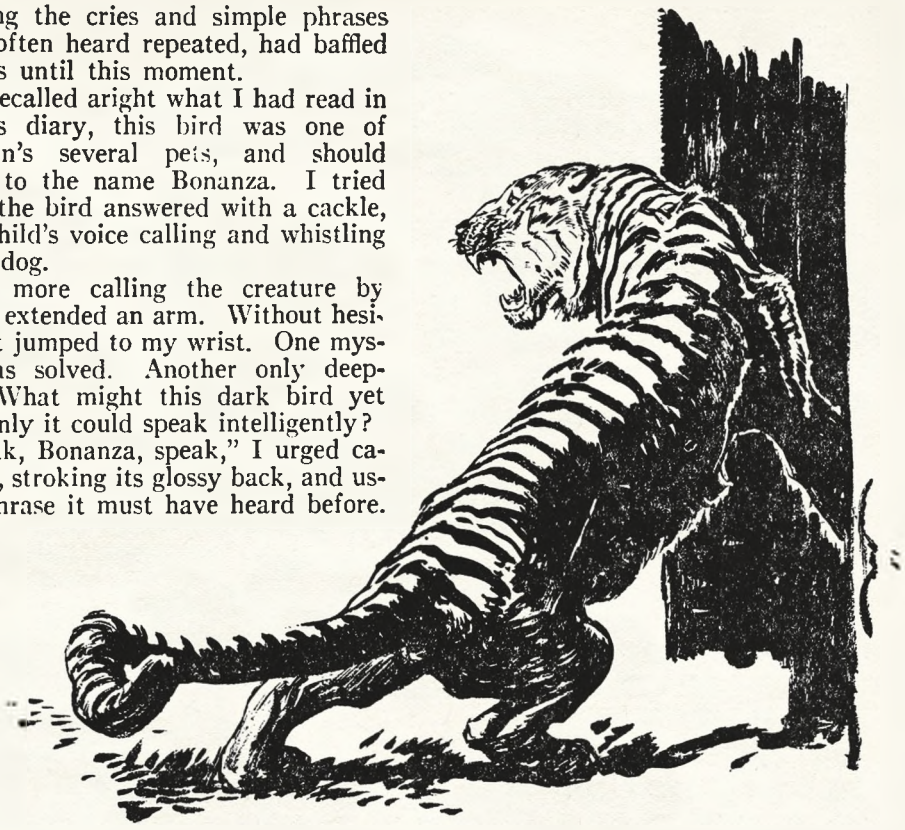
Staring at the raven, I had to force myself to accept the demonstrated fact. Then memory served me, and I knew the truth. It was this mimic-bird's voice which had spoken. The voice of a natural wild mocker, however indistinct,

parroting the cries and simple phrases it had often heard repeated, had baffled my wits until this moment.

If I recalled aright what I had read in Munro's diary, this bird was one of Flashpan's several pets, and should answer to the name Bonanza. I tried it, and the bird answered with a cackle, and a child's voice calling and whistling as to a dog.

Once more calling the creature by name, I extended an arm. Without hesitation it jumped to my wrist. One mystery was solved. Another only deepened. What might this dark bird yet tell if only it could speak intelligently?

"Speak, Bonanza, speak," I urged cajolingly, stroking its glossy back, and using a phrase it must have heard before.



"Spik, Bonanza!" mimicked the pet, then fell silent. I waited, hoping. The raven screeched, and scratched its head and preened.

Then, *"Hide it in the breech!"* the raven murmured indistinctly. Gibberish, I thought in near-despair, then suddenly stood inspired as the raven jumped from my arm to its cannon, entering as it had appeared, *in the breech.* That woke me up, gave me the needed clue.

Luring the raven forth anew, I perched him on the wall and explored the cannon's mouth. With regret I removed a rough nest of sticks, reaching in the full length of my arm and finding—nothing. But on directing my flash-lamp within, I saw what made my heart leap—some kind of skin-wrapped package, bound with leather thongs.

Notching a ramrod found close by, I hooked it in the thong, and drew forth that bundle. Carefully replacing the nest, I bore the package to the arms-room. Then throwing out the grisly human relics which cluttered this place, I unbound the package and turned the light upon the contents.

Here were maps, sketches of wild beasts, some nuggets of pure gold and various odds and ends—ornaments and other things, valuable no doubt. And then—a note, upon a page torn from a little copy-book. My search approached its end: the writing was in the round hand of Dr. James Munro. It read:

> *At last! Today the Indians brought another tusk, carved like the one long lost. Translation of the markings on its full length of nine feet, speak of a strange and mighty race of men, who call themselves the People of the Tusk, and dwell somewhere in Nato'wa, no one knows where. Perhaps soon we shall—*

That far I read, when suddenly my light died out, the batteries gone dead. The short Arctic day was near its close. Half-darkness invaded the room, although the quadrangle outside was light enough.

I paused, about to light, if I could, what seemed to be a home-made oil lamp that hung upon a wooden peg. Some inner warning bade me turn. I froze almost to stone at what I saw.

The door had just swung in, responding to a heavy outer pressure. Beyond, a feline giant, the hair singed from a black-and-orange-striped shoulder, was

dropping on all fours into a crouch, with indrawn breath and open-hanging jaws. The curved incisors gleamed like dark-stained ivory. Largest of the tiger-kind found anywhere on earth, met with in its own environment by one unarmed and taken by surprise, and having not a twentieth of its jungle strength—what chance had one mere man against this stalking creature of the night?

Now crouching low and watching me with eyes like burning greenish moons, it placed one broad round paw within the room, and from the bottom of its mighty chest unloosed a roar that jarred paralysis into my limbs anew.

A moment more and I had been poor carrion, like that other mutilated thing which I had seen. But as the striped tail jerked up in prelude to the killing spring, there came to ear a sharp loud *crack!* much like the explosion of a pistol. The brute turned fiercely round, snapped at the air, colliding with the doorpost as it spun, and half withdrew hindforemost to the quadrangle.

A YELL escaped me then, of fear and wonder mingled. For almost on the lashing tail a human form dropped from the upper platform—a figure unmistakable for any other.

Fine, clean-cut features on a dark and shapely head, a pair of green-blue eyes with fiery intrepid gaze, a torso bronzed as any Indian's. Wide-shouldered, lean of waist, long-limbed—with coil-like muscles indicating almost boundless strength and bottomless endurance. I knew him at a glance, the man we sought—Kioga, the great Snow Hawk, thick spear in one hand, coiled whip in the other.

The snarling cat had not come fully forth, when with a move too quick for eye to follow, the long spear, hurled with mighty force, drove through its body near the shoulders, point emerging red upon the other side.

Transfixed upon the shaft, the tiger reared, blood frothing from its nostrils. Before it rose erect, with a lightning spring its human foe clung closely locked upon its neck and shoulders, beyond the easy reach of clawing paws.

End over end the lean brute threshed in paroxysms, its flat hips thumping on the hard-packed earth—and still the man-form clung, linking it round with legs of steel.

My blood ran wildly at the sight of two fierce animals locked in struggle for the mastery, in such a scene as had not been witnessed since man first strode upon this ancient earth. Surely no other human being had ventured near that pain-crazed brute, a dozen times the more dangerous for the spear it carried.

Despite those cable thews, how long could human flesh and bone avail against that jungle juggernaut?

Now both upon the ground lay tangled. The great fanged jaws gaped wide, the pulsing human throat almost within their compass.

Belatedly I sought to aid the man who dared to stake his life that I might live; and rushing forth, struck at the savage head with clubbed gun—and missed the mark. Ere I could strike again the tiger's eyes went blank, the long form stretched out limp. . . . That well-shod spear had done its work.

But at its side, half under it, Kioga lay as silent as the lifeless tiger.

I took one great paw in my grip and sought to drag the carcass from Kioga. With all my strength I could not move that heavy body. The man lay still. Dead? What had death and that fine form in common? It could not be—and it was not.

Kioga stirred. Light came to his eyes. They saw me standing there. He spoke.

"Who are you?"

"Stanley Kirk," I told him, bending over. "A friend of James Munro. Are you badly hurt?"

He smiled, displaying white and even teeth, by way of answer writhing from below the heavy brute, and saying with a little laugh: "He was too old to do much harm."

Bending at its side, he withdrew his spear, set it aside, and laying hold upon the beast's hind-legs, half lifted it and dragged it quickly within the arms-room, its former den.

I had not even budged it with my utmost strength! Kioga shifted it as easily as the brute itself had dragged its human prey into the fort the night before. Blood welled from claw-wounds in his shoulder; but ignoring this, he turned to me.

"How came you here?"

HE listened to a brief account of the *Bearcat's* coming—but to my eager query as to Dan and Beth he made no answer.

"Your people, are they armed?" he demanded.

"Our weapons all sank with the *Bearcat,*" I admitted.

"That must be remedied. The Shoni tribes are at each other's throats. The fort was stripped of almost everything, as you can see. We can not remain. The Shoni warriors were on your trail, and can't be far away. Follow me, and later we can talk."

He turned, picked up his lash and bow, strode out into the quadrangle, and led the way along the upper platform to the north wall and the tree-bridge joining the island to the shore. From here the reasons for the fort's abandonment were visible—two wide and V-shaped cracks, already overlapping, which might at any moment expand and slip half of the structure into the river eddies in the chasm.

WHEN we were halfway across the rough-barked, toppled giant, the Hiwasi swirling far below, two graceful long canoes appeared in view, cruising obliquely up across the currents. Another also could be seen, bearing in tow the clumsy dugout I had hidden.

Lean-bodied muscular savages of copper hue propelled them with long paddles toward a sand-bar just below the bridge. . . . My first view of Nato'wa's native people, whose ferocious caliber so soon would show.

From the fort behind came a shrill, almost inhuman yell. Three feathered heads appeared above its wall and saw us almost out of reach and swiftly making good our escape.

Faintly came the twang of bows, more loud the shrill of arrows whistling past our ears. I felt a sudden stabbing impact in one thigh; and glancing down, beheld a shaft of wood protruding from the muscles, its flint point red with blood. Already, at this early stage, Nato'wa thus first marked me with a lifelong scar as of her own.

Glancing back, the Snow Hawk saw me slip, with one leg crumpling. He checked, returning instantly. Before I could protest or urge him to go on alone, he picked me up, as lightly as a child is carried, and passed beyond the bridge into the forest.

He went perhaps a hundred yards along the route of average men, the thicket-tangled lower forest. Then bidding me hold fast, he climbed among the ledges of a cliff and mounted rapidly where a chamois might have found foothold with difficulty. The first low branches of the forest trees here almost brushed the rock, and into them Kioga sprang, without visible preparation.

Now all was changed. The solid earth was well below, a bending, ever-shifting hand- and foothold beneath; yet never for an instant did he pause, nor seem to hesitate when choice of routes lay open. Up, through the forest, midway, above the higher terrace, then into the very topmost canopy he went, bearing me as if I were no extra weight. Then the trail broken for all pursuit, he transferred back among the rocky ledges once again. Not even he could climb into the sky.

A forest stretched before us toward a misted valley. In the crowns of several trees hawks had their nests; far in the blue great condors circled slowly. This was Kioga's favorite solitary realm, up where only hawks and eagles dwelt.

Deposited by him upon a shelf, my back against the cliff, Kioga examined carefully that arrow sticking through my thigh. With hands that were sinewy but wonderfully gentle, he cut the shaft with his knife and drew the two ends out. Gashing an outreaching limb from a certain tree near by, he waited for the sap to exude, then thickly smeared the wound with that.

SCANT thought and no attention for the cruel gouges on his own brown shoulder, but first thoughts for the hurts of another—that was Kioga as I knew him then and ever afterward, through the cruelest buffetings of strange fate that were to come.

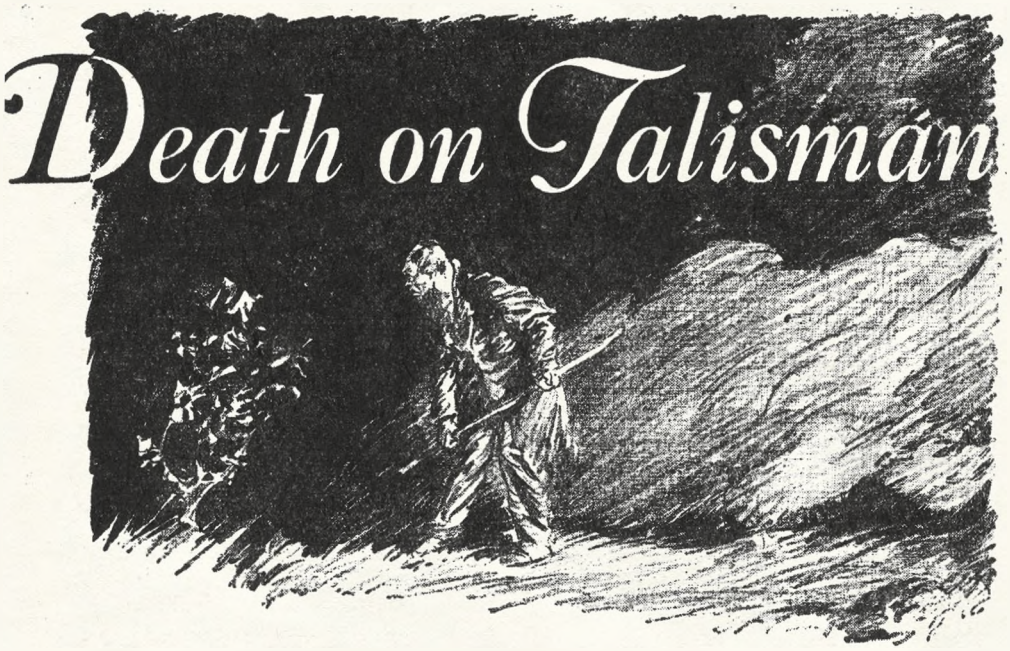
"Now we can talk," he said at last. "Tell me about your ship and how you came here."

"Gladly," I responded. "But first, what of Munro and the La Salles?"

"Beth and Munro are safe with some of my Indians. But Dan—Dan is missing. He is impetuous and sometimes rash; we were in need of meat, and he went out armed only with a rifle, to fetch some in. When I left, he had been gone too long to suit any of us. I came back for some weapons left behind, thinking to meet him on the way. We quit the fort when its spring dried up and the foundations began to crumble. In search of Dan, I saw the Shoni warriors pursuing some one more cautiously than usual. I came before them to your canoe, and trailed you—and found you at the fort."

The quest for the missing Dan La Salle leads Kioga and his party on a tremendous adventure among a hitherto unknown people beyond the rim of the world.

Death on Talisman



The gifted author of "The Devil Came to Our Valley" returns to the strange wild region of the Ramapo Hills for this deeply impressive story.

THE charred and blackened skull which was Talisman Mountain is covered with brown leaves now, and the tragic passing of that colony of strange unworldly people is a thing almost forgotten, and unrecorded even by history. Time's relentless pestle is pounding its ashes in the grim mortar of oblivion, and the flux shall be called legend.

Soon, indeed, the winter snows will lie gently upon the place where they once lived—a people unknown and unrevealed for nearly three centuries. They were as mold-spores upon a civilization which they themselves despised. Walling themselves in against humanity, they trembled in fear of their own God-concept, harsh and stern; but they walked into a martyrdom with singing. For all that they mattered in the Cosmic Scheme, they might never have lived. Their light burned very dim under its bushel. Two facts alone they achieved: to have lived, to have passed on. There is a pity in both.

The Ramapo Valley is teeming with legend. There is an unreality about the region that is just a little breathless even today; and back in the time when these things happened, some thirty years ago, the breathlessness was even more evident. Indian graves, the strange Jackson Whites, the disused mica-mines, whispers of buried treasure, faint glimmering of ancient lore, a lost handful of madmen referred to as the "Booraemites,"—all of these things rustle in the maple-leaves on the Torne, whisper in the broad shallow waters of the Ramapo River, flit like phantoms through the rich woodland and the green valley.

I came there as a missionary, although I detest the word in its general sense; and I earned the undeserved title of "the riding parson." Ride I did, but parson I was not; nor am I ordained to God's service by any beyond my own will and desire to serve. It was, of course, the Jackson Whites who interested me first—a queer childlike race of hill-people whose heritage is bad and whose plight in our so-called civilization worse. It may be, even, that I did some good among them within the limits of my own frailty. I doubt much if I brought them happiness.

But the Booraemites were another quality. They might, indeed, have been upon another planet. Their need—if I have understood it—was beyond my powers. They wanted nothing of me.

In those early days I could ride my nag around the massive base of the Talisman and stare up to where it plunged its bald pate into a cobalt sky a thousand feet above me. Brown-gray loam of terraced plowed land covered its crest and flank, as though some gigantic razor had shaved its poll clean of whiskery

By FULTON GRANT

maples and fir trees, leaving it naked and chilly. I could focus my binoculars upon a little clump of houses—many plainly unoccupied—which were huddled around a tottering church. I could distinguish a raised platform on a scaffolding—a vast thing some hundred feet or more square, whose significance and purpose were as obscure to me as to the rest of the Valley. I could, indeed, see a few bearded men in pantaloons, a few squat women in Dutch bonnets, or a handful of solemn urchins like flies crawling over the mountain head; or gaunt, half-starved oxen at work in the plowed parts. Such things I could and did see, but I could not comprehend. There was a wall—a high thing of tall driven stakes—that forbade entrance. An unwritten law, not unmixed with superstitious fear, kept the Valley people from scaling the wall. And never once, before the events of this history, did any member of that strange mountain colony venture down below to mix with men.

"DUTCHMEN, they are," said one farmer, replying to my early curiosity. "Crazy Dutchmen. Don't ye have no truck with 'em, Parson. There's bad things go on up there. Once there was a hangin'. . . . We all seen it, just as plain as day. And never no police, neither. A woman it was who was hung. Nobody never goes up there. Only folks that have dealin's with 'em is some city fellers who come out here and trade things for the linens they make. Sell 'em in the city stores, they do. But they don't get inside that wall. No siree! They do business through a hole. Don't you try preachin' up there, Parson. They'd kill ye, sure. They got religion too—all their own."

Not very satisfactory, that. Nor did I heed the sound advice. I rode up to the wall one day and found a massive gate built of logs, with a rope dangling from it, plainly a bell-rope.

I pulled the rope. A harsh bell sounded far away. Presently heavy boots clumped inside. A sort of window in the door was half opened, and the face of a madman stared through at me.

I said madman. He was big enough, though emaciated beyond human recognition. His long black straight hair lay back over his temples, mingling with an untrimmed beard. His eyes glared wildly at me, the pupils dilated in surprise and wonder. His nose was hooked, rather than aquiline. His shoulders—I could see no more of him than that—were clad in some black homespun material and crested with an enormous broad softish white collar tied together with a woolen ribbon, not altogether unlike the traditional portraits of the early settlers of the American colonies.

Seeing me, he gave a great hoarse cry. The language was foreign and strange to me. More boots came clumping. More bearded heads appeared. Then a chorus of them screamed—no other word for it—at me, violently motioning me away. One brandished a flat-bladed curved knife, almost a sickle—another, a club. And then the heavy logs of the window closed in my face before I had been able to say a word.

I went back down the mountain. I am a man of peace and not of fighting. Clearly there was menace in their manner and tone. Just as clearly they did not want me there.

A Patriarch of the Valley who hides deep humanitarian love of his fellowmen under a harsh, irascible exterior, is Doctor Erasmus Borsden, from over in Hohokus Borough by the Houvenkopf. It was he who was my next informant concerning these mountain recluses, the Booraemites, and he gave me the only historical note I have been able to find about them. It is not in textbooks nor in other annals of American civilization.

He said: "You don't look a fool, Greenlee; so don't be one. You missionaries can't go around lifting up rocks and revealing the grubs and worms. The Booraemites, eh? So you tried that? Let me tell you, Parson, there's dynamite up there on the Talisman. You'd better let well enough alone. Haven't you got enough to do with the Jackson Whites? Besides, the Booraemites are Christians—they don't need you."

I pursued the matter. He went on:

"Repressed humans are like gunpowder. Those Booraemites are an example of racial self-expression. Don't be their detonator."

"Who are they, then?" I urged.

"Ever hear of Jesse de Forest?"

"Vaguely," I admitted. "Something to do with the early colonial settlement, wasn't he?"

"He actually settled Manhattan—for the Dutch East India Company. That was back in 1623. He wasn't Dutch, though. He was a Belgian Walloon Huguenot. That's what those Booraemites are—Walloons."

"Go on," I urged.

"A madman named Booraem—Jan Booraem—brought half a dozen families over here with Cornelius May and De Forest. Booraem's been lost historically, though. He was a fanatical megalomaniac. Thought he bore a commission straight from God. He led his little flock out away from De Forest's settlement, and they came up here into the Ramapos. He made a gesture like Mahomet's—burned himself to death publicly—sort of a symbolic ascension into heaven on a pillar of fire. They believe that. They think the world will end soon now—1910, I think. They believe God is symbolized by fire. . . . Moses and the burning bush, you know. They imagine God will send down His cloud of fire to lift 'em all up to heaven, one of these days. Crazy mad fanatics, I suppose."

"But Christians?"

"Of course—in their own way. They hate all the rest of the world. They're 'Chosen People'—we're all infidels and unbelievers. That's why they never come out of their wall. They've never seen a newspaper or a postage stamp or a telephone. Much less anything newfangled like an automobile—or even a steam train. Incredible, eh?"

"How did you learn all this? Is it written?"

"No, they don't write. Don't believe in it. Writing is God's business, not man's. . . . Recording Angel, and all that. Their learning is handed down by word of mouth like the ancient Druids. But my father knew 'em. He got inside once—1868, I think. There was a bad epidemic up there—typhus. Seven hundred of them were buried. Only a handful left. But even then they tried to kill my father—might have done it, too, only they were so weakened. Only about ten families left now, just a handful. No, let 'em alone, Greenlee. Even the police have sense enough to do that. They don't need you, anyhow. Don't carry this missionary business too far."

That was about 1900. I yielded. Not so much to the good sense of this rough-and-ready humanitarian doctor as to the pressure of my other work. I found, as he had said, quite enough to do with my Jackson Whites, scattered over some forty miles of territory.

Years passed; a habit of *laissez-faire* grew upon me. The Booraemites became, to me as to the others of the Valley, merely a name, a vague legend-like idea. The wall around the Talisman remained uncrossed, the gate remained unopened. Little dots of men could be seen tilling their terraced lands. Lights glowed dim up there at night. The Booraemites went on, escaping history, eluding progress, ignoring and ignored.

It was a bright August night in 1909 that the thing happened. I had ridden far that day and was tired. Dinner over and my housekeeper gone, I lazed in my study with my lights out. Through the window I could see the vast mass of Talisman Mountain. A bonfire glowed on the summit, and I guessed, vaguely and in a half reverie, that some ceremony or festivity was going on up there. I must have fallen asleep in my chair.

SUDDENLY I awoke, conscious of what seemed to be a low moaning, as of some creature in pain. There was a solid thumping and scratching sound at my front door. It was a natural thing for me to get up and investigate; but you may believe me when I say that I was scarcely prepared for what I saw there.

On my little porch, lying supine at the edge with her hand extended as if in one last exhausted effort to reach the handle before she collapsed, was the figure of a woman. She seemed half naked, and her hair—wonderfully long and swathing her body—was blowing about in a little breeze. She was moaning faintly, and muttering words in an unintelligible language.

I managed to drag her through the door, albeit I was not a strong man, nor young, and got her somehow into my study, where I laid her on my mohair sofa. When I had lighted my kerosene lamp, its glow revealed a pitiful sight.

She was a mere girl, and rather pretty, from what I could see. But there was blood on her—her face, her hands, her body were smeared and running with it. Great welts covered her back, which was revealed through her torn bodice; and a deep gash at the base of her neck had torn the flesh from shoulder to breast. I was frightened and indignant. My lethargy of surprise gave way to a need for immediate action, and I ran out of my house across a little lawn and around the pond to the Van Dullen house, where a good farmer, I knew, maintained a telephone—a service not at all common in those days. I put in a call for Dr. Borsden, urging him to come at once.

"I can't explain now, Doctor," I said, "but it's a thing which may be life or death. Hurry."

He did hurry, but the rudimentary machines called automobiles in that early day were a far cry from the roaring motors of the present time. The Doctor's car was barely more than a buggy with a motor under the seat, steered by a sort of metallic tiller in front, and capable of no more than ten or fifteen miles an hour. And while I was waiting in an agony of impatience for his arrival, the girl recovered consciousness for a brief instant, quivered, started, struggled up, staring wildly at me, and cried out:

Marcienne

"Ki vos?"

I came to her with a cloth to wipe away the blood from her face, and I tried to reassure her in English, saying:

"Everything will be all right now. You mustn't talk. You're quite safe here, whatever has happened. The Doctor will come presently."

The terror went out of her face a little, but her surprise was enormous. As I wiped her face she said in stiff, quaint, decidedly foreign English:

"Goot—goot—vos—aire goot mans!"

Then she fainted again and fell back.

When Dr. Borsden came, he was not alone. It was with him that Svedin Wode enters this history.

INASMUCH as Svedin Wode, today, is a physician of repute and distinction, I have avoided using his exact name in this history, and yet this fictitious name is sufficiently like the real one to suggest his origin.

Svedin, son of Brawn Wode! Strange names of strange people. A mere boy then, Svedin was a child of the Jackson Whites, the wild, uncivilized, untamed, illiterate little people of the Ramapo Hills. Part Negro, some of them, although Svedin was not. Descended from Hessian mercenaries in the American Revolution, most of them, and from un-

fortunate street-women kidnaped from London slums, shanghaied and sold into a squalid white-slavery, the playthings of the British soldiery. A sad story, that. A sad race has descended from them. Mongrels, cross-blooded with the negro slaves, children of inbreeding and license, they have lived, somehow, in the fastnesses of the mountains, a race unassimilated, apart.

One of these was Svedin Wode.

BUT Svedin was more than that. As a child he had shown great promise in the little school maintained for the Jacks by a saintly woman called simply Judith, who was friendly with Dr. Borsden. Under the good Doctor's influence the boy attended high school at Hilburn, across the State border, and had done well. Borsden, the humanist, sent him away to a Midwestern college where the stigma of his heritage could not follow nor dampen his career, and he had only just returned then, a graduate physician, filled with gratitude for his benefactor: a quick, keen mind in a young giant's body, ready to join the aging Borsden in his work among his own people, the Jacks. A fine lad was Svedin, son of Brawn.

They burst together through my door, Svedin and Dr. Borsden. Together they examined the poor child, and I could see indignation well up in the younger man's eyes as he exclaimed at sight of her:

"Good God, Parson Greenlee, this girl has been flogged. Flogged, with a whip! Beaten nearly to death, and terribly burned, too. Who could have done such a thing?"

The older man crossed the room and stared out of my window toward Talisman Mountain. The fire still burned up there, and he pointed to it.

"I believe," he said, "that I once told you there was dynamite on the Talisman. This girl is a Booraemite. I could not venture to guess what fiendish thing has been done to her, nor why. But your answer is up there. Please, God, it comes no closer!"

Incredible, yet it seemed the only answer. Those two words in her strange language—"*Ki vos?*"—might have been, indeed, the Walloon dialect. Her "foreign" English, her crude, homespun skirt, her unusually long hair, her simple laced bodice—those things suggested, indeed, the Doctor's statement. Yet what thing could have occurred that a mere child like this should have been so cruelly wounded up in that walled settlement?

Burned. Her feet were one great blister. Her skirt's hem was singed black and crusted. Welts and weals on her wrists and ankles bore the marks of thongs or cords. And on her right temple was branded—seared with fire and still moist with the fresh burn—a tiny image of the Cross.

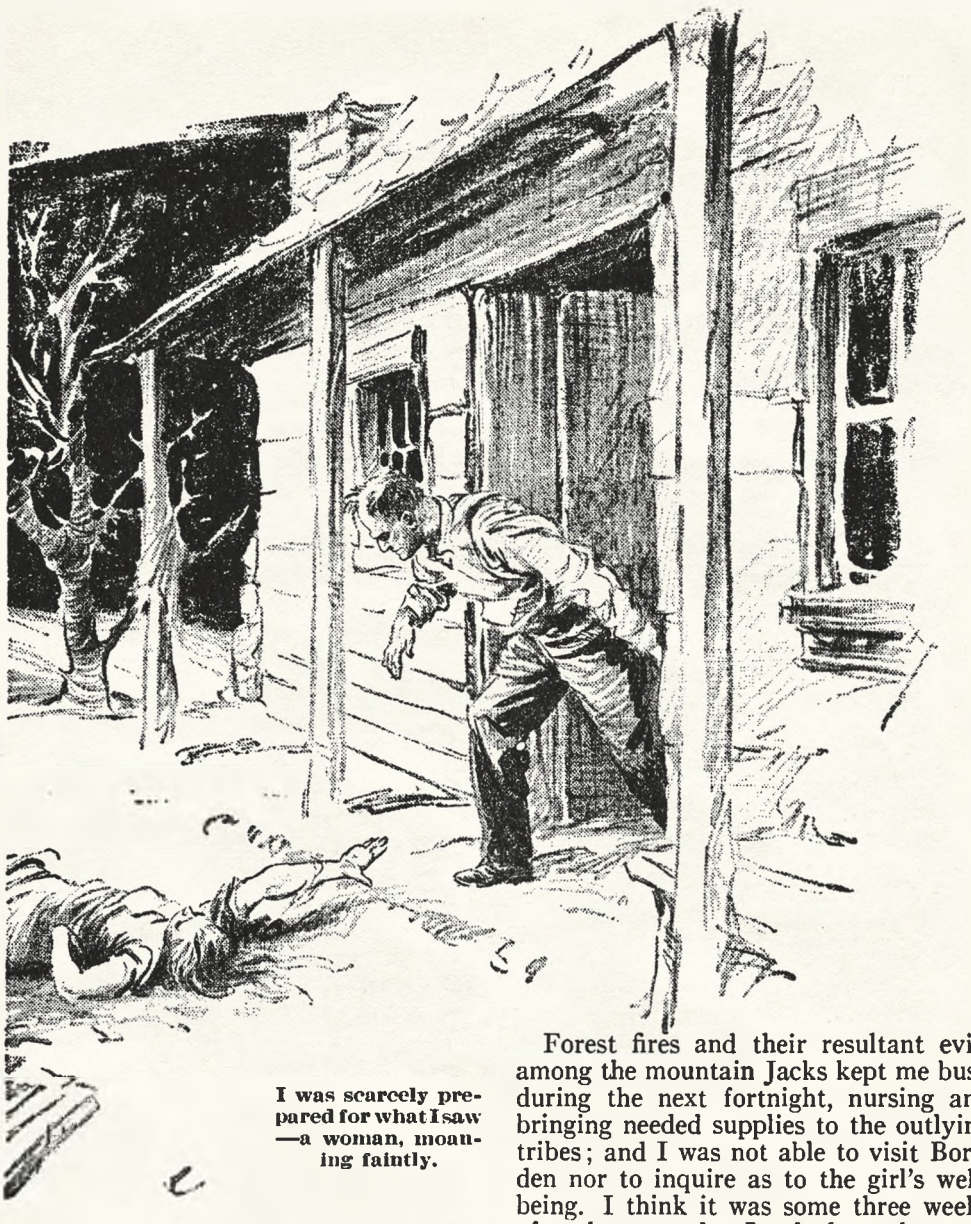
Fanaticism? Ritual? Some anachronistic sacrifice?

But there was no time for speculation.

"She should," I suggested, "be taken to a hospital at once."

Dr. Borsden shook his head gravely.

"She should, but she will not be. There would be too many questions, Greenlee. Those whiplash marks are too obvious. There has been malicious brutality here.



I was scarcely prepared for what I saw—a woman, moaning faintly.

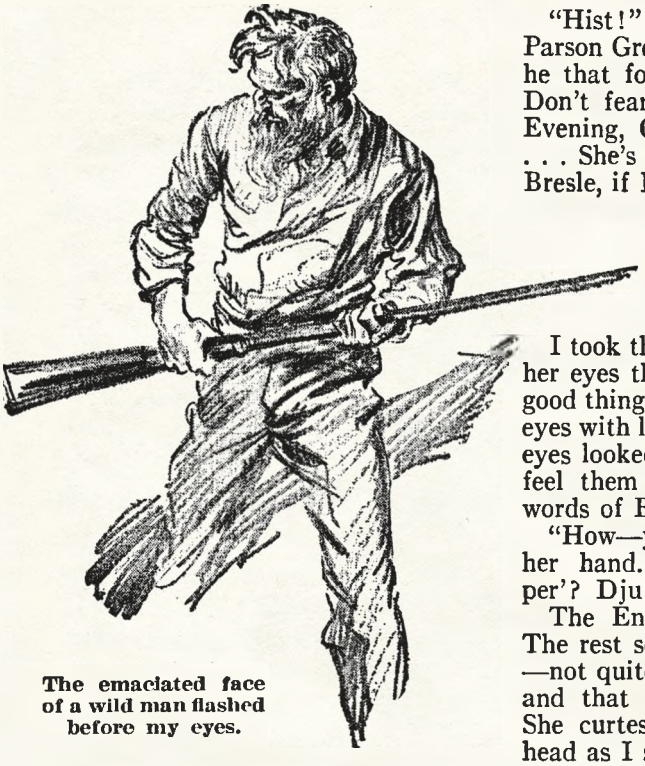
And I have an idea that the thing runs pretty deep—somewhere. It might be dangerous to bring the police into this—until we know what we face. No, I'll take the child home with me. Svedin will be glad to look after her, won't you, eh?"

And Svedin Wode, lost in the contemplation of the girl's remote, almost elfin beauty, nodded absently.

They left then, but I was not satisfied. The indignation of an old man is, perhaps, more violent than that of youth, although I cannot say why. It was hard for me to fight back my desire to ride straight up the Talisman and demand of the Booraemites some explanation of this inhuman act. But I had given my word to Borsden, and I would not break it.

Forest fires and their resultant evils among the mountain Jacks kept me busy during the next fortnight, nursing and bringing needed supplies to the outlying tribes; and I was not able to visit Borsden nor to inquire as to the girl's well-being. I think it was some three weeks after the event that I rode down that way one evening, crossing Bear Swamp Pond, and on to the valley of the Houvenkopf. From a considerable distance, that night, I could see that the old Borsden house was ablaze with lights—an unusual thing for the home of that rather unsocial bachelor not generally given to receiving visitors, and inclined to be economical.

AT his door the old woman Abigail Ness greeted me; there was a look of shock not unmixed with wonder in the good hag's eyes. The musical sound of laughter trickled out to me. The wheezing of a harmonium, playing songs certainly not written for the favorite instrument of the Salvation Army and the revivalists, crept through the open door.



The emaciated face of a wild man flashed before my eyes.

"The Doctor has company?" I said.

The Ness woman shook her head.

"Na, but it's worse nor that," she said. "It's the wench has bewitched them entirely." And she shuffled off, leading me into the great cube of a drawing-room, muttering to herself and shaking her grizzled head.

A queer sight, that! Dr. Borsden was in the act of dancing—perhaps "prancing" is better—at arm's-length, with a young creature of astounding appearance. She was wearing masculine overalls which were enormously too big for her, and a flannel shirt, and great carpet slippers which flopped gayly on her slender feet; and her abundant golden hair streamed down her back in two thick braids; and her face was a delight in smiling youthful gayety—until she saw me. I am not, I know, nor ever was, a handsome figure of a man. My beard, even then, was a sort of baffle under which to conceal a chin none of the strongest, and to lend a superficial dignity, an asset to a man consecrated to the service of the unwilling poor. Yet I was not prepared for the girl's terror.

She saw me; she stared; she screamed; she cowered.

Young Wode was playing the harmonium. He jumped from his bench and whirled upon me—then seeing and recognizing me, he grinned foolishly.

"Hist!" chided the Doctor. "It's but Parson Greenlee come to visit us. It was he that found you and called us, miss. Don't fear him at all, but thank him. Evening, Greenlee. Speak to the child. . . . She's called Marcienne—Marcienne Bresle, if I've got it straight."

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

I took the girl's hand. Fear went from her eyes then. She smiled, and it was a good thing to see. She had long, full blue eyes with little darts of fire in them. The eyes looked deeply into me, and I could feel them probing. She tried to form words of English, saying awkwardly:

"How—you—go?"—as she gave me her hand. "How—you—go mu—monper'? Dju creus vire 'nnatre?"

The English part I half-understood. The rest seemed like rather bad French—not quite clear. I told her I was well, and that I hoped she was recovering. She curtesied quaintly and bowed her head as I spoke. Then she retreated demurely into a corner, and was almost at once joined by young Svedin Wode.

Borsden led me out of the room on some excuse or other.

"She seems recovering," I ventured.

"Oh—that. Yes, she's doing nicely. But I'm worried."

"Why?"

"Two things: The girl was being made a part of a religious ceremony up there. She is the daughter of the head man—their *schout,* they call him—and she committed some sin such as refusing marriage with an old patriarch. The penalty for disobedience up there is death, Greenlee. They would have burned her to death on a pyre—after flogging. They almost did, too. But she escaped when the flames burned her bonds. Ran down the mountain—fell most of the way, I'll be bound—and got over the fence. Sounds absurd, but the thing is big up there. They'll come after her some day. I'm afraid of that—trouble. Then the other thing—Svedin Wode."

"Romance?" I guessed. "I thought I sensed something like that."

"Worse. Love-madness. Like two wild young things. They're mates—natural mates, Greenlee. We conventional humans never felt it, never saw anything like it."

"Well," I said, "what of it? He's a good boy. She seems pretty enough. The

language barriers will grow slowly thinner. Let them marry, if she will."

"She will—but—"

"But?"

"Have you been watching things up there? Have you seen what's going on on the Talisman?"

"No. I've been carrying supplies to my Jacks. What?"

"I don't quite know. Men drilling, I should say it was. The pace of their life has quickened. People are actually running about. Excitement. I've had my glasses on them for a week or more. Just what's brewing, I can't guess. It might be an attack—they're mad enough for anything. One thing I'm sure of: they'll come for her. Somehow, sometime."

I thought of the young giant Wode.

"Svedin looks capable of taking care of her," I said.

The Doctor nodded slowly, seriously.

"Yes. Too capable. I've lived among these hill people all my life, Greenlee. You only half know them. They're primitives. God knows what will come of it, if there's trouble about the girl. Svedin's a good boy, but the veneer of civilization on him is none too thick. Scratch a Jack, and you'll find a mountain lion, Greenlee. I don't like it."

I found it hard to credit, hard to understand his fears, then. This was, I reckoned, the Twentieth Century. It was impossible to conceive that any group of men—however remote, however isolated from modern culture, however backward and fanatical and blind to the world's development—should make a warlike attack upon a community like that of the Ramapo Valley. Absurd. Incredible!

Or so I felt.

MORE weeks went by. And as Dr. Borsden had foreseen, the love which had come to young Svedin Wode and the strange girl Marcienne Bresle bloomed and fruited and ripened into marriage. I was among the few chosen to dine with the good Doctor on the occasion of announcing their engagement. I came, and I found real pleasure in the feast. I found also a certain astonishment too—in that the girl Marcienne was already grasping the ways and language of our civilization with a surprising rapidity. It was as though the child had been held dormant for a lifetime; then, freed from some narcotic drug which had dulled her development, plunged herself headlong into the new, while she thrust the old from her like a cast-off garment. Her English was improving rapidly. Her laughter was grown full, as though laughing were a new experience, heady like a new wine, and she were a little drunk with the sheer joy of it. She was a thing released. Her love for young Wode was at once delicious and a little alarming to see. There was much of the animal in it, much of the primitive. She herself confessed that love, as we know it, did not exist in the bigoted, flint-hard social conceptions of her Booraemite colony.

"Mu papa!" she said. She clung quaintly to some of the ancient Walloon forms, and her accent was striking. "He iss no un'erstan' what you call the love, the marriage. For us, it iss no like this."

I questioned the girl rather closely, for my interest in sociology is such that I could not allow this opportunity for discovering the causes underlying the fierce backwardness of her people to escape me. I was not prepared for the grimness of the picture she painted.

IN the Twelfth Chapter of Ezekiel it is written:

> *"Son of Man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness."*

Strangely, and for some reason which I cannot conceive, this grim warning given by an ancient prophet had ruled the Booraemites. Out of it had grown a doctrine of fear and of hatred. The outer world, the world which stretched green and bright below them, was the world of Pharisees,—they called them *Pharishens,*—to be hated and feared and despised. Among them was no love as we understand it. There was only duty: Parental duty; that of a wife to a husband; and most especially, the duty of all to the strange, fierce code set down and established by the madman Jan Booraem, whose earthly body burned before them while his soul ascended on the Pillar of Fire to a privileged place at God's right hand. Laughter was forbidden as unwonted expression of base emotion; joy was sin; happiness was an admission of contentment with worldly things. This life was, in their warped concept, one of tribulation and of punishment, to be achieved through suffering and to be rewarded with the millennium which was soon to come. Jan Booraem had said: "Of all Earth's people, we alone are chosen. In fire shall He lift you up, and that same fire shall destroy the *Pharishen.* See to it that ye do

have no dealings with them who are to be destroyed."

More than one young girl had been publicly burned, hanged or beaten to death for a smile given to some young man up there. More than one man had righteously slain his wife for a "wicked" indulgence toward her little children. Marriage was a grim duty, to foster and prolong the race. Death was punishment for forgotten or unknown sin. They believed that all who were virtuous would live to witness the coming of the Judgment Day, and that those who did not live—even those who died naturally of old age—had been found unworthy by their grim, hard, loveless God.

THE girl Marcienne, it seemed, had sinned grievously. She had one day been found by her father, who was the elder or *schout*,—a descendant of that same Jan Booraem,—in the act of spying upon a gathering of the Valley. It was, I gathered, the Fourth of July, and there had been a band concert, the strains of music being carried faintly up Talisman Mountain. With her was a young lad of her people. Both were laughing and happy in the delight of this unfamiliar sound—music; and they had so far forgotten their training as to join hands while they shared the ancient spyglass which she had taken without permission from her father's house to use in this debasing manner.

The boy had been flogged to death; the girl had been imprisoned for a month, then whipped publicly. When required to confess her guilt and to humiliate herself in atonement, she had stubbornly refused through her tears. The whipping was repeated. Disobedience merited death up there. She had been lashed to a stake and a pile of fagots ignited under her. Only by the extreme suffering of her body, they said, could her sinning soul be reclaimed and sent heavenward. But the flames had burned too quickly, severing the thongs which fastened her feet; and she had been able to break loose from her death-pyre and throw herself, all flaming, to the ground. In the fanatical excitement of the assemblage she had somehow managed to conceal herself before they caught her, beating out her smoldering dress, and finally escaping over the wall into the Valley. It was pure accident, apparently, that she had fallen exhausted on my porch.

Incredible! An anachronism! The law must, I felt, take a hand up there. I determined then and there to report this thing to the authorities, and to move heaven and earth to have the colony opened up, its customs destroyed, its grim, brutal, sadistic code done away with, light and instruction brought to those blind people.

But once more the insistence of Dr. Borsden held me from this deed.

"It means bloodshed, Greenlee. Those people will not give up their beliefs. The only recourse the authorities would have would be violence. Don't do it. Let be, for now. We shall find some more peaceful way—later. In the meantime, the child is here, and will soon be Svedin's wife."

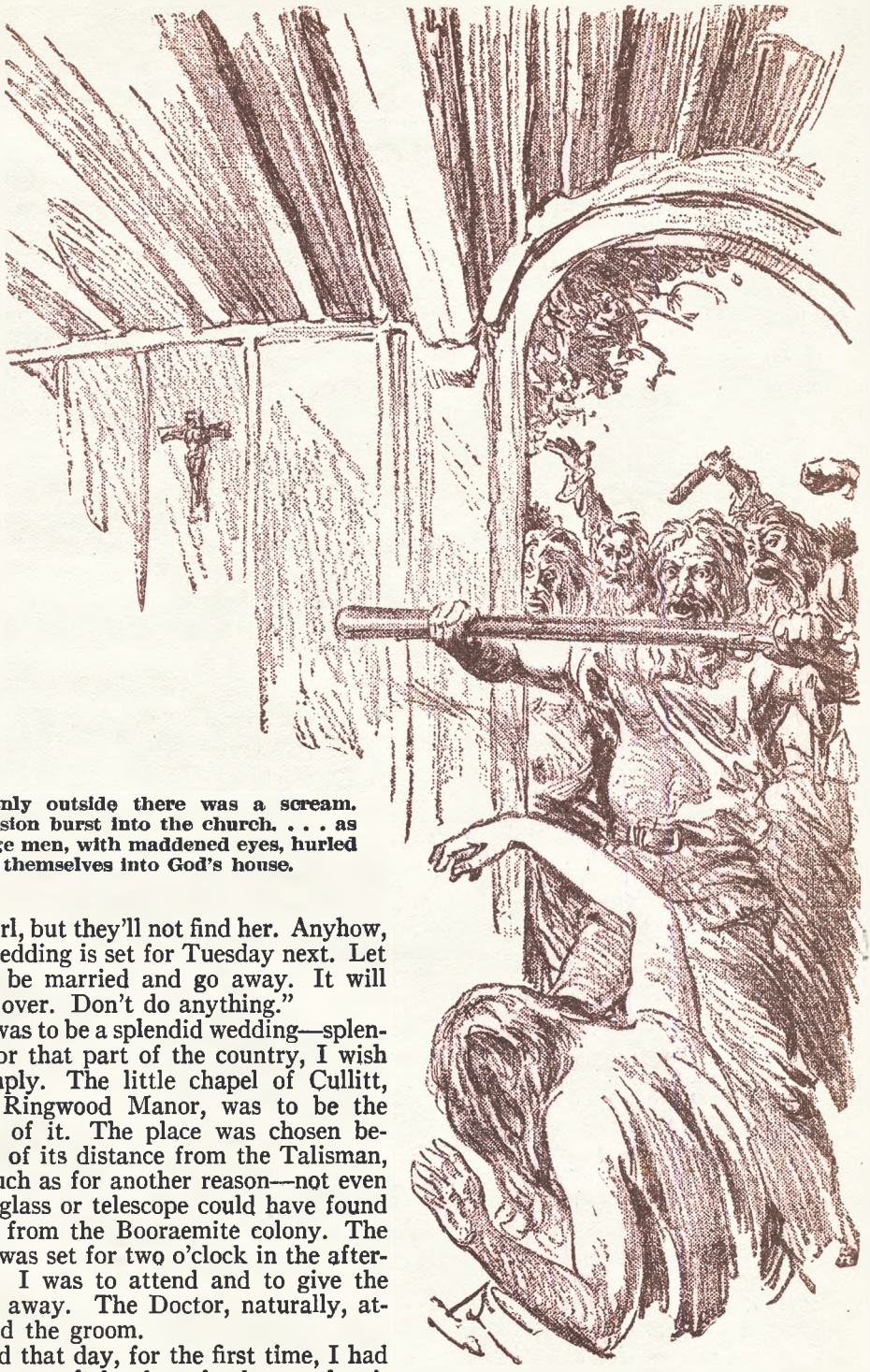
I acquiesced; I understood it was better to do so than to risk the lives of innocent people. And yet I knew that this untaught, and almost primitive savagery which was not of our time but which belonged to the Seventeenth Century, must somehow be uprooted and changed.

Strange things began happening now: . . . It was reported that mysterious "strangers" were seen hovering about the Valley towns. A woman, returning home on the highroad after dark, was accosted by three men who burst out of a thicket; a light shone in her face, then, after being somewhat roughly handled, she was released.

Schoolchildren playing in a haymow were frightened by the discovery of four men—wild-looking, unshaven and ferocious—lurking under the wooden covering of the mow. The men growled something in a foreign language and ran away; but the children scurried home, terrified, to report the happening.

RUMORS of ghosts and of "haunted houses," stories of the fantastic and incredible came one upon the heels of another. From Pompton to Hohokus Borough, from Hilburn to Wanaque, strange fantastic tales of sudden appearances and vanishings of phantomlike beings were cropping up. The police here and there were informed—and laughed, and did nothing. Horses were stolen. A cow was butchered. Dogs barked when no dog should have barked. Generally speaking, the blame was put upon the shoulders of the mountain people, the wild Jackson Whites, who in times past had often raided the farmers. But Doctor Borsden, young Wode and I knew it was not the Jacks nor yet supernatural appearances.

"It may pass," cautioned the Doctor. "Best do nothing. They're looking for



Suddenly outside there was a scream. Confusion burst into the church. . . . as strange men, with maddened eyes, hurled themselves into God's house.

the girl, but they'll not find her. Anyhow, the wedding is set for Tuesday next. Let them be married and go away. It will blow over. Don't do anything."

It was to be a splendid wedding—splendid for that part of the country, I wish to imply. The little chapel of Cullitt, near Ringwood Manor, was to be the scene of it. The place was chosen because of its distance from the Talisman, as much as for another reason—not even a spyglass or telescope could have found them from the Booraemite colony. The time was set for two o'clock in the afternoon. I was to attend and to give the bride away. The Doctor, naturally, attended the groom.

And that day, for the first time, I had a glimpse of the deep fundamental animal heritage which was Svedin Wode's; for Brawn, his father, came down from his mountain cabin and was there.

I have said that Svedin was a giant. Brawn was a Titan, though stricken with a paralysis which bent his great body and withered his limbs. The man, had he been able to stand erect, would have lifted his great shaggy head nearly six feet seven inches. No negroid features, his. Clearly his blood was a mixture of the early Hessian and the Tuscarora Indian which had joined the little colony of the Jacks nearly two centuries before,

when that pitiful straggling army of refugees settled in the Ramapos. There was a fierce nobility in the man, and a restlessness. Ignorant he may have been, benighted, backward, primitive. But he was a creature of the woodlands, possessed of a freedom and electric violence of a life which had been lost to our more "civilized" and softened people.

Svedin was proud of his father. His distant college education, his contact with the world and its snobbishness, had not destroyed the boy. He led the old man—almost carrying him, indeed—to the girl whose husband he was about to become. Brawn Wode looked into her eyes, as a simple, direct primitive might look, seeing clear and deep. He took the child's hand and said, in his quaint dialect:

"Ut iss a goot thing noo for mine poy, childie. I am glatt." And he touched the girl's chin with his great red fist, playfully. Even the farmer folk forgot their usual sneer for the Jackson Whites at that instant.

Then the thin, pale tones of the little church organ burst out, and the wedding party marched down the gravel walk into the chapel.

I had forgotten the girl's people, the Booraemites. The peace of God seemed to have come upon us all, and the haunting fear which had been in me was abated.

Suddenly outside there was a scream. Confusion burst into the church. A small army of men—strange men, with black homespun garments and awkward wooden shoes and glittering maddened eyes, hurled themselves into God's house, flinging men and women out of their way. There was the roar of some firearm. The emaciated face of a wild man flashed before my eyes. Then a blow felled me to the ground, and I was barely conscious of feet trampling me as I lay in the aisle. After that, nothing but a dull roar remains in my recollection. Then darkness.

WHEN I awoke, I was being held up by Dr. Borsden. Blood covered his face. Agony was in his eyes.

"I was wrong," he whispered to me. "We should have told of it. God knows what will happen now."

Four were dead—one a woman. Many were brutally beaten with clubs. The girl Marcienne had been snatched from the very altar, her bridegroom clubbed into unconsciousness, and the child herself carried off on horseback by a knot of twelve bearded madmen, into the forest.

The thing was unheard of, unbelievable. The few Valley people who had been there could not understand what had occurred. Dr. Borsden, at long last, telephoned to the police authorities. But what could he explain? How can one inform a straightforward, incredulous policeman that the ghost of an earlier century has risen to destroy and to snatch a life from a church, right in the open, in the year 1910?

But Brawn Wode, father of Svedin, needed no telling.

"Na fear, childie," he said to his son. "She'll be back soon." And he got upon his old sickly horse and rode away, his bent body looming above mere men, the light of savagery in his eyes.

ALL that afternoon Borsden and I were closeted with the county sheriff, endeavoring to make it clear just what had happened and just what the deep-rooted causes were. A plan was formed—a simple one. A detachment of State troopers would be called. The wall would be broken down. Law and order would step into the Booraemite colony. The Seventeenth Century would fall before the onslaught of modern civilization. The girl would be returned. Law would compel these throwbacks, these ghosts of the past, to a life which was not their own concept, but that of a more enlightened civilization. Yes, the authorities would act—tomorrow.

But Svedin Wode did not wait for tomorrow.

When Dr. Borsden and I returned to his house, the lad had gone. He had taken one of the Doctor's horses and had ridden up Houvenkopf Mountain to the little cluster of log cabins and lean-to shacks where his father and the Jacks dwelt. We did not follow. We could only pray that the worst could not happen.

By six o'clock, snow was falling, for it was already November. Yet the snow did not quite shut out the great column of black smoke which rose up from the Houvenkopf.

The good Doctor, seeing it, was frightened.

"Good God," he said, "that'll be old Wode calling the scattered tribes of the Jacks. That signal hasn't been seen in fifty years. God help us all, now!"

On foot and on ancient sickly horses, the Jacks crossed through the Valley and gathered under the Houvenkopf. They carried firearms—rifles, some of them, old muskets, even percussion-fire muzzle-

"O God," they chanted. "Thine is the Fire and the Word."

loaders. Some had good guns, for many earned a meager living by poaching game.

Would they attack openly? Would this be a small war? Would there be a savage slaughter which only a State militia could quell? No one knew. No one could guess. Vainly the local police forces attempted to march up the Houvenkopf and restrain old Brawn Wode and his band. But it was like chasing a will-o-the-wisp. They found smoldering fires, great trampled places where men had stood in numbers, but they found no one.

NIGHT fell. The villages were terrified; on Talisman Mountain behind that grim stockade, a great fire was lighted. Only Borsden and myself could guess what terrible thing that might mean. Where were the Jacks? There seemed to be no sign of them. Would the girl be beaten, or would they complete their ferocious punishment and burn her? Would the authorities finally act to stop them?

Then suddenly, toward nine o'clock, when our binoculars had been trained upon the Booraemite settlement in vain for hours, unable to discern any tangible thing, but seeing only a small crowd of persons assembled in the naked space between the houses up there, the thing began.

A circlet of flame sprang up around the mountain—consuming flame. The Jackson Whites had set fire to the stockade.

The remainder of this history I cannot tell from my own witnessing. I rely upon my memory of things as told to me by Svedin Wode, after the terrible holocaust, and when the grim tragedy of the Booraemites was past.

The Jackson tribes—clans or even families is perhaps a better word, albeit the Valley folk refer to them as divided into "tribes"—had gathered at Brawn Wode's call. The giant mountaineer was a patriarch, one of the oldest living men among them, and their tradition is one of respect and obedience to such as he. They amassed, first, in the rocks under the Houvenkopf; but when their sentries warned them of the approaching police and parties of farmers bent upon calming them and avoiding a blood-feud which might devastate the region, they crept into the deep forest on the mountain flank, made their plan unmolested, and set out for their mad work.

Wild beasts do not know the unstable human "laws" of fair play. To the primitive mind, war is war, fight is fight, and all which brings victory is right. Forming a thin line, carrying brushwood, carrying tins of kerosene stolen from the wicks which fired their own illicit stills of applejack, they slipped through the darkness and surrounded the Booraemite wall. They dumped their fuel; they ignited their fire; they wielded axes and cut huge breaches in the picket wall.

There was a slight exchange of shots, for the fanatic colony had its guards; but not even these served to turn the maddened Booraemites from the bloody work which they had in hand.

Svedin told me of the insane rage which had come upon him that night. How he and Brawn, his crippled father, pushed their way up the steeps and over the plowed terraces, how that shrieking straggling line of the mountain men followed them, how they could see, there in the clearing which formed a sort of small public square, a black, dense knot of people gathered around the high platform which had so puzzled me when first I studied the Talisman through my glasses.

There was fire on that platform. Its eerie light revealed a terrible spectacle —that of a young girl, Svedin's bride, bound and tied and strapped to a post. While the flames danced, two men with long whiplashes were cruelly beating the girl, and at each stroke the crowd was rumbling words which must have been a kind of prayer.

MARCIENNE's head, he told me, his own tear-stricken face an agony of remembrance, was dangling forward limply. Mercifully she had lost consciousness. The thing was like a mad litany. One man, who seemed some kind of a priest, would cry out some unintelligible thing in a loud voice. Then the lash would fall. Then the throng would lift their unison of response, as though this thing which they were doing were a holy thing and not a horror.

Svedin, shouting madly, charged them. Twenty or more of his mountain friends were with him. They burst into the crowd. They struck down the first resistance. Some were shot by antiquated old blunderbusses—Svedin retrieved one of them when the horror was over; and some were slashed with cruel knives. The Booraemite crowd seemed in a frenzy. As with a single impulse they overwhelmed the small handful of their attackers, screaming wildly. Svedin, a powerful man himself, was flung headlong by some insane power born in a bearded ghost half his own size. Bruised and hurt, he struggled up, charged into the very heart of the crowd, was struck again, heard the bull-roaring voice of his father as Brawn frantically hurled himself at the scaffolding of the platform where the cruel ceremony was being held. Even as he clambered over from the mounting-ladder to the logs of the floor, one of the floggers flung himself at him. They grappled. It was then that the fierce primitive rage which was seething in Svedin Wode broke all its bonds and outmatched even the fanatical madness of these Booraemites.

He nearly tore the man's head from his body.

"GOD forgive me," Svedin said, when, later, he tried to remember the things of that terrible night. "My hands were on the man's throat. I felt the swift flow of blood on them. I flung him aside then without looking."

But the boy's eyes were upon the tortured body of Marcienne, dangling limply at the stake, surrounded by flames. He struck at a shadowy form that loomed at him.

"I think," he said afterward, "that I killed the man with that single blow."

He shook off the other man as a bear shakes a dog-pack. He cut the girl loose and ran across the platform with her dangling body, screaming imprecations at the crowd.

Then the miracle happened.

All around them, the sky suddenly lighted up in a great flare. The fury of the new bursting fire dimmed, even, the lesser flames on the platform. A great hush fell for an instant. Svedin sensed, almost without conscious perception, that the homes of the people, their church, and their little mountain haystacks were lighted in a terrific blaze.

A voice cried:

"Quu l'Messiye est v'nou!"

Another answered:

"Lo jors attonement! Au fou, au fou!"

The sense of these strange cries was not clear, but days afterward the significance of this curious French-Germanic speech of the Walloons became evident: *"The Messiah is come!"* was the first cry, and the second: *"The Judgment Day! To the fire, to the fire!"*

A sort of holy frenzy swept over the crowd—a kind of holy joy-madness. A madman came running below with a flaming torch. He flung it under the platform, and almost at once tinder-dry straw and hay, stored there for untold years, burst like an explosion into flames.

"L'Messiye! Au fou, au fou!"

The effect upon the Booraemite throng was electric. Their battling ceased. Ignoring the crush of the Jacks, they moved solemnly toward the platform, lifting their fifty or more voices in a slow, measured, monotonous chanting. A kind of invisible flux swept over the scene,

gripping them all in its force, mad Booraemites and Jackson Whites alike.

And chanting, they moved slowly toward the flaming mass which was the platform, mounting it almost as in joy, fearlessly, almost happily, ignoring the seething flames.

O Deyo, a vos lo fou, lo verbe!
O Deyo, a vos lo fou, lo verbe!
Gloria in excelsis!
Mi dju leva mu tiesse e haut!
Mi dju leva mu tiesse e haut!
Gloria—

"O God," they chanted, "Thine is the Fire and the Word. *Gloria in excelsis.* I have lifted my head high—" It was a savage monody, filled with a fierce passion, a grim primitive awe of things not understandable, a compressed and crystallized expression of an incredible but sincere belief. There was a great dignity in it. Far down the mountainside in the Valley where hundreds assembled to watch the fearful spectacle, the sound of their chanting floated to us.

Svedin Wode leaped from the platform and hurled himself at the on-moving crowd. They ignored him. It was as though they walked through him, unseeing.

"O Deyo, a vos lo fou—"

Their faces were illuminated from within as much as from the white-hot flames. Years—almost three hundred years of blind superstition, of blind credulity, of sincere though wrong belief, of grim training, had brought about this moment.

This, Svedin Wode guessed even then, was their awaited Judgment Day. The world, they believed, was ending now. This the Fire. This the Word. This the moment when they, the chosen people, should rise heavenward to join their great prophet Jan Booraem, and to sit upon a fiery cloud in the rejoicing presence of their Maker.

Men, women, children, walked calmly, stoically, into those flames, scaled the scaffolding, climbed up on the platform, and stood there waiting. . . . Waiting and singing.

Consummation.

THEN the Jackson Whites ran. There was a terror on them.

And running, faltering, stumbling blindly, carrying the limp, almost lifeless body of Marcienne Bresle in his frantic arms, Svedin Wode ran with them.

Below in the valley I stood with an uncomprehending crowd. A posse of local police and some State troopers were running belatedly up the mountainside. In their greater terror, the Jackson Whites had no fear of them now. They screamed at the soldiery and ran. The fear of horror was on them. And when the police reached the crest, they stopped, they saw, and they too ran back.

Slowly the chanting died. Only a few quavering voices betrayed that there was still some life in that martyr-pyre. Lastly we heard only the weak but inspired voice of a boy. It ended in a terrified scream. Then silence. Then slowly the fire consumed itself, died down, smoldered, and went out.

In the morning there were only a few embers, still smoking, to tell of the awful passion of that mass-martyrhood.

Requiescat in pace!

IT was many days before Svedin Wode came from the hospital—many days more before the girl Marcienne Bresle was able to be taken from her bed of pain and transported to the home of Dr. Borsden. She never quite recovered from that night.

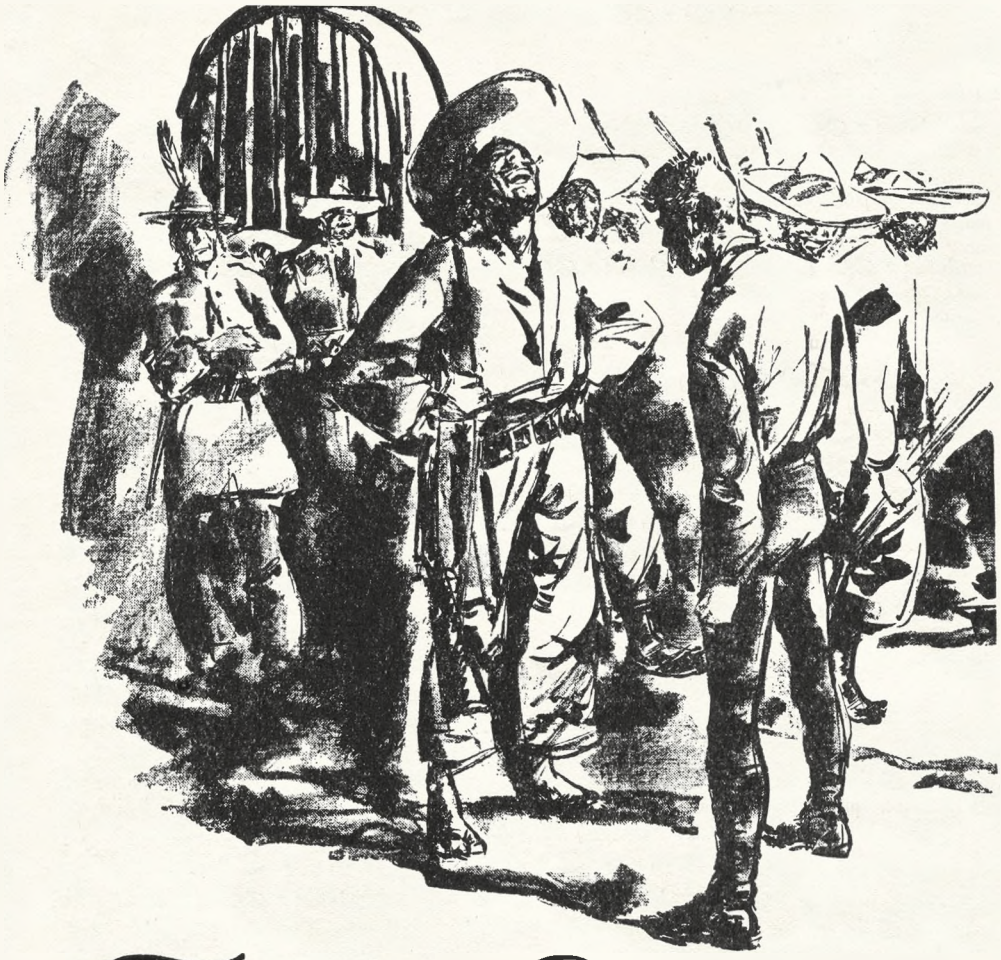
Months later, sitting in her cripple's chair, her lower body paralyzed, the interrupted church ceremony was completed —not only a wedding this time, but also a baptism. . . .

Svedin Wode is gone from the Ramapos now. Far away from the scene of that terrible night, he has earned himself the respect and the wonder of thousands, a great physician, a great humanitarian. His young wife could not live long. Her sweet soul passed on a few years later, and with her the last of a strange anachronism vanished from this earth. They came; they lived; their blindness was impenetrable. They left no trace. History has no page for them. Even the newspapers, in their too-hasty judgment, had not understood what occurred on Talisman Mountain that fatal night.

"Strange Hermit Colony in Ramapos Entirely Wiped Out by Flames," ran the general story. That was all. No probing, no comment. A superficial fact satisfies a superficial press. But was it a wrong? Did these people merit a place in history? I do not know.

Perhaps our God, which was their God also, has taken them to Himself. But how futile are the codes and formulæ of humankind!

Another unusual story by Fulton Grant will appear in an early issue.



Three Electric

COTTEREL was in one of his horrible moods of black despair. . . . Young, impulsive, ardent, he was the exact opposite of his cell-mate. He had much to learn, and long to learn it; he was a lifer now.

In all this place of doomed souls, Cotterel was the one person whose plea of "Not guilty" had been entirely true. For him, the outside world was gone forever; this fact of innocence made the horror of it all the worse. At times, the agony became insupportable, and he writhed in a torment past endurance. He had won the liking, the profound pity, the real friendship, of the older man.

Now, lifting tortured eyes, he addressed Manning.

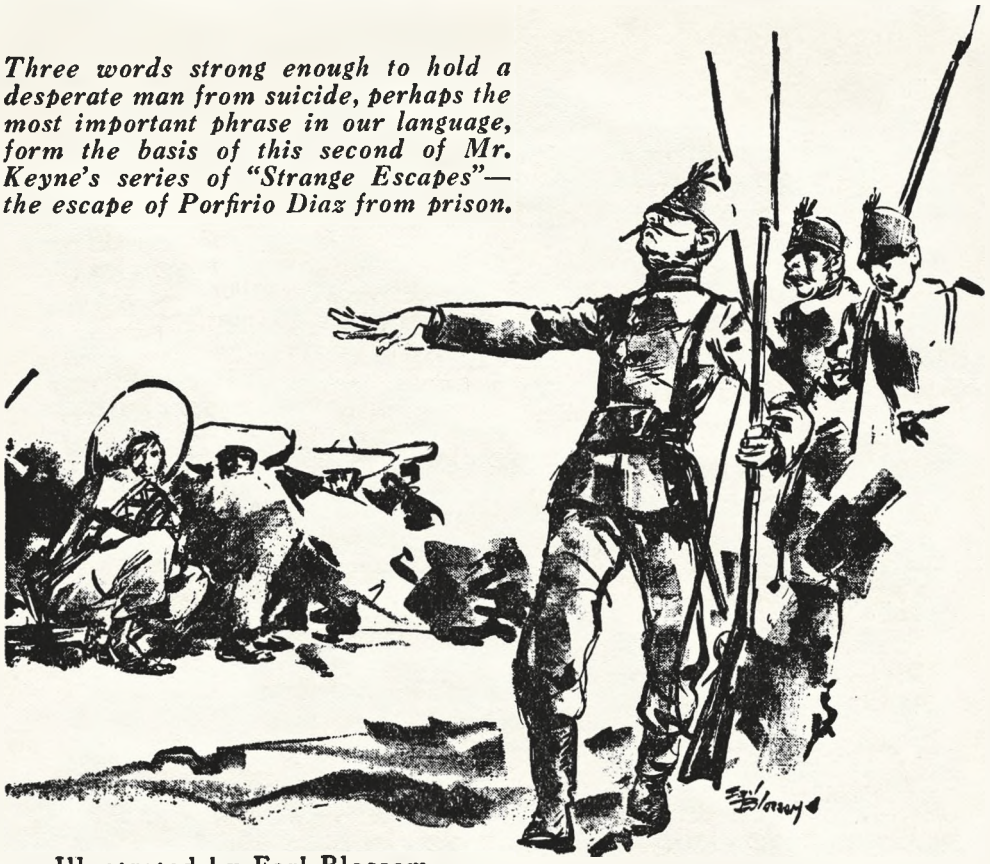
"D'you know I've been in this hell for seven months?" he said hoarsely. A deep breath, almost a groan, escaped him. "Seven months! It's been like seven years. And it's all hopeless, hopeless! I did think of escape. No use. I don't want to escape now. What's the use?" His words pointed the unuttered thought of his brain. Manning, from his experience, knew precisely what terrible thought lay there.

Manning regarded him with compassion, then picked up one of the brushes before him and dipped it. The movement, the action, caught Cotterel's attention.

The gray features of the older man were tired with ills and years, but his sunken old eyes were bright. He was intelligence personified. Manning knew everything, except what he had most needed to know. He was not in this prison unjustly.

He did not speak. He could not. He was dumb. A forger, yet an artist of su-

Three words strong enough to hold a desperate man from suicide, perhaps the most important phrase in our language, form the basis of this second of Mr. Keyne's series of "Strange Escapes"—the escape of Porfirio Diaz from prison.



Illustrated by Earl Blossom

Words

By GORDON KEYNE

preme talent, during these long months he had taught Cotterel the language of the fingers. It was not such a bad place, this prison. They had many liberties. Manning could make his sketches and drawings; they could talk if they so desired; yet it was prison.

Leaning forward, Manning used his brush to write two words. With a pen, he would have written them exactly as the owner of the name would have signed it. Even with the brush, so delicate was his skill that any official of a past generation acquainted with the signature, would have pronounced it genuine. It was the signature of Porfirio Diaz.

He contemplated it for a moment, then passed it to the younger man.

Cotterel stared at it, and lifted puzzled eyes to the older man.

"The old dictator of Mexico? What do you mean by that?"

Manning hesitated slightly. If Cotterel wanted to be free of this prison, it would be easy enough; the guards would shoot to kill. Cotterel was at the point where suicide beckoned him. Manning knew the symptoms.

"Escape hopeless," said Manning on his fingers. "Life hopeless."

"That's it," Cotterel said harshly. "Even if I escape, what good? My life would be empty, shadowed, a living terror. I've nothing to live for."

"No," said Manning's hand. "As long as you think only of yourself, that's true. Look, now. Here's a man. I knew him well."

Swiftly his brush dipped again, and he began a quick sketch. He had the interest of Cotterel, which was what he most desired. He too knew the awful beat of that suicide impulse. He knew how it hammered at the brain until—

clang! The decision was formed, the act was taken. He must prevent Cotterel from reaching that point.

The sketch grew under his hand. The figure of a man in a prison cell, looking from a barred window. Below were roofs; the man was in a high cell, somewhere. Just a mere suggestion of a picture. The face of the man was the one striking thing; Vigorous, hardy, balanced in its strength and resolution; iron features, giving the lie to vacillation and despair. Eyes with drooping heavy lids of shrewdness.

WITH a gesture, Manning passed the sketch to Cotterel, who studied it frowningly.

"Diaz? You knew him?"

Manning nodded: "Porfirio Diaz." His nimble fingers began to fly. "He too had been just seven months in prison; a real prison, not a summer resort like this. Diaz, at thirty-five a general of division, the one leader on whom all Mexican patriots depended—now defeated, broken, captured, ruined, lost; at any moment, perhaps, facing a firing-squad—kept seven months like a caged bird. The French and Austrians were supreme over all Mexico. Their emperor, Maximilian, held the country in his grip. The scattered forces of the patriots had been smashed. No wonder the thought of suicide came over the mind of Diaz in flooding waves. Do you know what happened? What the background of this situation was?"

Cotterel shook his head, gloomily. Diaz be damned! His own plight was what absorbed him right now. Yet—

"What did happen?" he asked, with a spark of curiosity.

"Nothing happened until Diaz stopped thinking about himself, depending on himself, grieving for his own fate. It's only when a man is so beaten to his knees that he realizes himself utterly futile, that forces are started in motion, somehow. You may call it psychology or you may call it God. Sometimes the man goes on to suicide, and sometimes he rises above that point."

A queer statement to come from a convict! It jerked at Cotterel and caught his attention.

His eyes fastened upon the slim, deft fingers of Manning. A certain concentration was necessary to translate the movements of those fingers into words; and these words, again, into the scenes and action and thought they described.

Here was a cruel, grim and bloody story, said the fingers, and an amazing one in its results. Look at the sketch again. Get the feel of the man gazing out through the bars of his Puebla prison, high in Fort Guadeloupe with the city outspread below. The man who had risen so high, who had fallen so far! Before the barred grating of his cell door was a soldier in Austrian uniform, to typify the foreign grip that had fastened upon Mexico.

No wonder suicide beat with insidious reiteration at the brain of Diaz as he stood there, lost in the contemplation of his own hopeless misery.

His evening meal arrived. A dumpy brown woman came trudging with the tray; a native woman, half Indian, singing to herself a monotonous lilt of dreary song as she came, her flat face vacuous and empty. To the Austrian guard she was a picturesque and ugly creature; to his ears, her mumbling song meant nothing at all. But Diaz, hearing the words, fully conversant with the patois to which he had been born, clenched his hands suddenly and turned. The words hit him like a blow.

"The eagle must fly, the eagle must fly! He must hold the snake in his claws. He must look in the bottom tortilla. Soon he will fly, if he looks in the bottom tortilla. Look carefully. Tomorrow evening be ready. I will come again with word."

The Austrian unlocked the cell door. The brown woman trudged in. She shot Diaz one lightning glance, caught his gaze, and looked at him no more. She knew the words had been understood. She set down the tray, took that from his noon meal, and trudged away again, with her mumbling song. This time, the words meant nothing at all.

Diaz sat down. He had a cot, a chair, a small table—nothing else. On the tray was a meal by no means sumptuous: a plate of tortillas or baked corn-cakes, a pitcher of coffee, and a bowl of chili con carne. It was the usual fare.

DUSK was falling, gathering about the hill city of Puebla, bluing the roofs. Bugles shrilled in and about the fortress. Another Austrian appeared; he came into the cell while the guard watched, saluted Diaz, and lighted the table lamp. Already, he observed, Diaz was attacking his meal avidly.

The two Austrians stood outside, talking and laughing together; for the mo-

ment he was free of observation. Deftly he slid out the tortilla that was on the bottom of the pile, cut it open with the wooden knife allowed him, saw a slip of paper.

This he quickly removed; transferred it to a pocket. Then he went on with his meal. The sentry at the door was idly watching him again.

His heart pounded. So he was not forgotten! That Indian woman was in the kitchens of the fort, was employed here, was returning tomorrow night. Be ready then—why? No matter. Emotion shook him, but his stolid mien gave no hint of it. The reaction from his mood of utter despair—a mood of only a few moments before—was terrific.

He dared not try to read the message just yet. While treated with respect, he was watched with rigorous care; he was the outstanding patriot general, the one man who was able to meet the French in the field on equal terms. Not even Marshal Bazaine had managed to beat Diaz, but rank treachery. They had offered him parole, and he had refused it; hence they watched him the more carefully.

IT was a war of blood, of slaughter, of extermination in some provinces. The United States, engaged in its own life-or-death struggle, protested against a European yoke being fastened on Mexico, but could not intervene. There was talk of an entire province,—all Sonora—with its mineral wealth, being ceded to France. Mexican blood in general accepted the Austrian rule, but Indian blood fought savagely for freedom. Diaz had just enough Indian blood to give him fierce independence of spirit.

All that night he lay helpless to read the message, his blood pounding, his brain in turmoil. Then, when morning came, when sunrise gave him the chance to read it surreptitiously, his pulses leaped again. Nothing about himself there, nothing about his own plight, except by inference; just a few lines of tiny writing, enough to show that some intelligence was at work:

The Confederate States have surrendered. Juarez is obtaining a loan of thirty millions in New York. We need you.

Thirty millions! The war in the north at an end—money and men coming to help freedom in the south! Juarez, president of the phantom Mexican republic, still fighting!

"I shall give that promise when the last foreigner has left the soil of Mexico."

The surge of exultation, of astounded hope, that filled the soul of Diaz was beyond description. In a moment, everything had changed. No longer was it a question of himself, of his own petty fate; during these months of enforced solitude, things had happened in the world. Now destiny was beckoning.

All this and more was summed up in the three electric words:

We need you!

Somehow the hot day dragged past. As he read the few old books allowed him, as he paced up and down in the blistering courtyard of the fortress at his exercise, as he counted the long hours, Diaz thought of only one thing. Escape! Not for himself now. He had been futile, helpless to aid himself, dragged down by his own existence. Now his horizon broadened. His own puny destiny mattered no whit; but others needed him. The thought wakened everything latent in him, broke out unsuspected energy, spurred his brain into sudden life. He was, literally, a new man.

The Austrians and French drilling down below; the Mexican levies, the guards, the cannon—and against these, the words of a brown woman. The eagle with the snake in his claws; old Aztec symbol of this very land, this people. The eagle must fly; but how?

His cell was in a corner of the upper building that rose in a tower. His window afforded no hope, even could he remove the bars, for the wall below fell away sheer to the ground. His inner door of wood, open during the day for

He came back dragging something heavy. . . . "Here, señor. You must put on this uniform and cap."

coolth, was closed at night and barred; the outer iron grating was also closed and locked.

Diaz himself could dispose of all these obstacles. His nostrils quivered as he considered them, and thought of the eagle with the snake in his claws. Beyond the door lay the corridor and the stairs that went down to the courtyard. Soldiers here, practically at all hours; the officers' quarters were here, the barracks of the French lay just beyond. Those of the Austrians and Mexican troops were on farther, barring any approach to the fortress gates; those gates, too, were closed with darkness.

AS he paced the courtyard that afternoon, Diaz saw a group of Mexican soldiers pass. They looked at him and laughed, and paused to gibe at him. One of them, a strapping young fellow, approached him with a jeer.

"So this is the great Diaz, eh? Good afternoon, señor! Our hacienda and all it contains is yours, even to the knives at our belts!"

The Austrian guards promptly assembled and drove off the Mexican soldiers. Diaz was used to insults from his own people who were of the imperial party; he shrugged and went on. Nothing mattered now. He was counting the hours, the very minutes. What would happen? How could he escape? He had not the least idea. . . .

When his exercise-time was up, an officer and a file of guards took him in charge. Instead of returning to his cell, he was led before the commanding officer. It was all very polite, quite merciless and efficient. Orders concerning him had arrived. His word not to serve against the imperialists, and he was free. Otherwise, more rigorous confinement and a move.

"A convoy is departing tomorrow for Mexico City," said the officer. "Unless you wish to be taken with it, give me your parole."

Diaz gave no hint of his inner torture. It was intolerable that this should happen now, at the very instant when hope beckoned him! More rigorous confinement, perhaps a new trial, a firing-squad. He looked impassively at the officer.

"I shall very gladly give that promise," he said, "when the last foreigner has left the soil of Mexico."

The other shrugged and ordered him taken to his cell.

Once there, he stripped off his sweat-wet uniform coat and waited, impassive and outwardly with no emotion whatever. Inwardly, he was on fire. It was to-

night or never. If they took him to Mexico City and plunged him into some of those old Spanish dungeons, he could abandon all hope.

His unknown friends who were working here to free him, could not know of these changes, of this threat. Could he reach them, get word through that old Indian woman? Uncertainty and suspense tore at him. Then, as he lay, he suddenly quivered. He could hear her trudging step outside, her monotonous voice singing a native song. Tensed, he listened and caught the words.

"You saw my son. It was he who taunted you in the patio. He will come when the first guard is changed. Be ready."

Diaz sank back in relief. This night or never, then!

THE woman came in, gave him a glance, then ignored him. She retired, and the guard locked the iron grating anew.

When the first guard was changed? That would be eight o'clock, when his inner door was locked for the night. So that man had deliberately drawn his attention in the courtyard? Clever fellow. Would he be one of the guards? No; only Austrians were posted here, or French. Another hour to wait.

The prisoner ate and drank by the light of his lamp. He composed himself, forced himself to betray no signs of excitement. He thought back to the previous day, to his temptation to suicide, with incredulous horror; what a difference now! What a difference in himself, in his whole attitude of mind! Win or lose, this night would end it all; and he would win, he must win. Not for himself, but for those who needed him. This was war. And when it came to war, Porfirio Diaz could be as relentless as any Frenchman.

The guard was changed. His doors were closed and locked for the night, his lamp was removed, he was alone in the darkness. From his window, he looked out and could see no stars. The sky had hazed over. Good!

He waited, more tensely than ever, and at last he heard a sound. The key was being turned in the iron grating. After a moment, the bars of the inner door were very quietly removed. The door opened to show an oblong of very dim light—outside, lanterns hung at the corners of the corridor or gallery, which overlooked the courtyard.

Against this oblong of light, showed the dim, vague figure of a man.

"Señor?" came a low voice. Diaz replied softly.

"I am here. Who are you?"

"Simon Montemayor, señor. I was sergeant in your Nuevo Leon regiment. You do not remember me. Wait!"

The shape of the man disappeared. Presently he came back, dragging something heavy, something he set down inside the doorway. He fell to work over this object.

"Here, señor," came the voice again. "You must put on this uniform and cap."

Diaz was not the man to shrink from wearing those garments. He took them, stripped in the darkness, and put them on. As he took the cap, Montemayor rose, caught at the wall, and stifled a grunt.

"What's the matter?" demanded Diaz.

"I was clumsy, señor. His bayonet got me in the hip."

"Come here."

Montemayor obeyed. All in the darkness, Diaz examined the wound, found it to be a nasty gash, and managed to bandage it with the shirt of the dead Austrian.

And as he worked, Montemayor talked with him in low-breathed words.

Alone? Yes, except for his mother. There was only one possible chance; this was to stroll forth openly, like two soldiers of the garrison. To leave by the gates was out of the question. It must be by the ramparts. Montemayor had ropes hidden there, but they might run into danger. Seeking the cool night air, many of the men sometimes roamed the ramparts or even slept there. This must be risked.

"Ready, then," said Diaz, his tunic buttoned, his belt in place. For weapon, he had the Austrian's bayonet; safest to leave the man's rifle here. "Will your mother be in danger tomorrow, when this is discovered?"

MONTEMAYOR laughed. "She's not known to be my mother, señor. Even if she were, it would not matter. What we do, is for liberty."

Diaz repressed a grunt. Not for him, but for liberty; nothing personal in all this business. For months, this man had been preparing against such a moment, enlisting in the imperialist regiment stationed here, biding his time, making his plans. Now the moment had come—not for Diaz, but for liberty.

"Did you write that news your mother delivered?"

"Yes, señor. I can read and write."

"Good. If we get out of here alive, you shall be Colonel Montemayor. Let's go."

They were off on the instant, walking openly down the corridor toward the stairs, passing the lantern there and coming face to face with the next sentry. Montemayor made some remark in halting German, and the sentry laughed. Then Diaz was past the lantern and on the stairs.

WHEN they turned into the courtyard, he noticed that his guide was limping slightly. He could not marvel sufficiently at this man, who had been sent by nobody to do this work. The fellow had written that message, too; a clever thing. Strange, how such a man could take upon himself such a task, for the sake of liberty!

The courtyard, at this hour, held passing officers, groups of men, French or Austrian. Hence it was far safer for the two than it would have been later, when the sentries would be more inclined to notice everyone who passed. Diaz led the way, with the other at his elbow. No one paid them the least attention.

It was when they had passed on toward the gates of the fort, that the first bad break came. A Mexican officer, puffing at his *cigarillo,* was sauntering along when his eye fell on Montemayor. He turned toward them with a bark.

"You, Montemayor! What are you doing here? I refused to give you leave tonight."

At this, Diaz comprehended what risks the man had taken. He stepped forward and saluted the officer, and spoke in his own fluent Spanish.

"Señor Capitan, orders from headquarters. I was directed to find one of your men who could speak some German. The responsibility is mine."

The Mexican officer grunted with astonishment at hearing such fluent speech from an Austrian, but waved his *cigarillo* and passed on, appeased.

"The captain of my company," Montemayor breathed; and Diaz laughed.

"So I gathered. Lead the way to the ramparts. Must we go far?"

"Unfortunately, yes. To the side away from Loreto."

They went on. The two forts of Guadeloupe and Loreto were close together; quite obviously, the walls must be scaled at the safest possible point. When they reached the steps that mounted to the ramparts, Montemayor came to an abrupt halt.

"Señor, it is difficult to walk. I can tell you where the ropes are hidden. The road is only a few hundred yards away. Men with mules are waiting there; they can be trusted. If you go on—"

"Be quiet," ordered Diaz curtly. "We go together. Here, give me your arm."

They gained the ramparts above. Groups of men were in sight, but none were close at hand. Montemayor rested for a moment, and renewed his plea that Diaz go on without him.

"You are the one who matters," he said simply. "For you, Mexico waits; not for me. I have only one ambition, which I shall never attain. It is different with you, señor. If anything happens to you, our country is lost."

"Save your breath," Diaz rejoined. Montemayor shrugged, then uttered a laugh.

"Let's hope I don't need it to whistle with," he said, but gave no explanation of his words.

They went on. Occasional sentries, occasional groups of men smoking and talking; here in the fortress, discipline was not too strict.

THEY came to a bastion built out over the sharp hillside, and here, with a low word, Montemayor halted and leaned against the parapet in sharp dejection. No need of talk. Diaz understood instantly, upon learning that the rope was hidden beneath the second cannon whose dim shape rose before them.

Beside that cannon lounged two men, their pipes alight, their guttural German showing them to be Austrians. But, in the corner not twenty feet away, a group of vociferous French soldiers had placed a lantern and were gathered about it playing cards under shelter of the parapet. To get at the rope, the two Austrians must be removed. This might be done at a pinch—but not with those French so close at hand.

"The devil!" muttered Diaz. "We shall have to wait."

"Impossible, señor," said the other at his ear. "Your escape may be discovered at any moment. If we wait, we're lost. Well, no one ever made a broom without making a handle! Now we shall have to get my mother to help. She promised to be waiting down there if we needed her."

He sent a low, musical whistle down at the darkness.

The Frenchmen heard it and looked up from their game. The two Austrians turned. For a moment nothing at all happened. Montemayor broke into a few words of his very unfluent German, which appeased the curiosity of those beyond. And then, with startling abruptness, a shrill voice lifted from down below. It was such a voice as only a Mexican woman torn by passionate emotion can upraise—a wild, furious gabble of words. From Montemayor came an excited exclamation, half in laughter.

"The French are quartered there—trust her to pick the right place!"

LOUDER, more shrill and high, lifted that voice in accusation and alarm. Diaz, perfectly comprehending the torrent of speech, remembering what that brown woman looked like, could not repress a chuckle of amusement. For she was complaining of assault and outrage, complaining to high heaven!

A French voice chimed in with no less frantic protest; the voices of other Frenchmen arose. Obviously, she had accused some passing soldier of insulting her, and now there was the very devil to pay.

"Ha! Listen to that, comrades!"

One of the soldiers by the lantern leaped up. From below, the frenzied babble of voices became wilder, all dominated by the steady flow of emotional speech from the woman. That torrent of words never ceased. It lifted above every other sound. As the voices of Frenchmen tried to drown it out and failed, the group of soldiers around the lantern abandoned their game. With bursts of laughter they went scurrying away to join in the fun and the scandal.

"Quick, señor—before they return we must be gone!" said Montemayor. "My knife—your bayonet!"

The two Austrians had not budged. Probably they did not understand either French or Spanish; they still lolled over the gun, puffing at their pipes. There was only one thing for it; the job must be done while that shrill squabble was still rising to drown out any sound of conflict here.

Diaz had his bayonet bared, as Montemayor limped forward.

It was over quickly; a scuffle of feet, a cry, a broken pipe on the stones. A swift and grim business, grimly done, swiftly finished. Then the coils of rope were snaked out from beneath the gun-carriage. The end was made fast, the coils were flung over the parapet. Already the noise below was quieting.

Montemayor wiped his knife, tucked it away, and hauled himself over the edge of the parapet.

Diaz stood waiting.

As he waited, he looked back to where things were quieting down now. The utter strangeness of it all struck upon his mind; his own destiny, the fate of Mexico, perhaps the star of an emperor—all hinging upon the voluble outcry of a woman accusing a soldier of insult! It was one of those queerly fantastic things which happen in actual life—

A shake of the rope came to his hands, and wakened him. He edged himself over the stones, gripped the rope desperately, and was on his way. There was no great distance to go; a scant forty feet. Yet it seemed a long time until he heard the encouraging voice of Montemayor. Then the ground, sharply falling away into the darkness, strewn with brush and cactus.

They did not need to make swift progress now; they could not, for the blackness was intense. Presently Montemayor ventured a low whistle; it was answered from somewhere beyond, and the two men relaxed. The mules were waiting. There was no alarm from the fort above. They were safe.

"Tell me," said Diaz as they rested a moment. "You spoke of an ambition, my friend. What is that ambition which you can never hope to fulfil?"

The other uttered a soft laugh.

"A dream, señor; the dream of more than one man who stakes his life for this country of ours, for liberty. The dream that some day it may be my hand which leads that accursed Austrian, Maximilian, to the wall, and puts a bullet through him!"

PORFIRIO DIAZ' strong hand tightened on the arm of the man who had saved him.

"Very well, Colonel Montemayor," he said, and his voice echoed the savage softness that had come from the other man's lips. "Very well. I promise it. Your ambition shall one day come to pass. There are the mules—come!"

They melted into the darkness and were gone. And it was less than two years later, on a June day in 1867, when Emperor Maximilian faced the firing-

squad commanded by Simon Montemayor. Diaz never forgot a promise. . . .

The flying fingers of the old forger ceased to move, and fell listless. His bright eyes were on the face of Cotterel, who sat still spellbound by the story he had just watched on those fingers. He looked up at Manning and drew a deep breath.

"I get what you're driving at," he said slowly, reflectively. "We're pretty good friends, Manning. You're trying to drum into me the idea that I've got to quit feeling sorry for myself, play a man's game, and all that. Well, you're wrong! There isn't a living soul on the outside, to give a damn about me—you know what that means? Can you realize it? I've no family. I'm alone."

Manning's hand jerked up. "So am I," his fingers replied.

"Then you can realize all of it." Cotterel shook his head. "No. Rise above any thought of suicide, you say? Easily said, Manning. This man Diaz had a country, a cause. I haven't. He had some one to say those three electric words, as you called them: *We need you!* Well, I haven't. That's what makes this place an intolerable hell."

Manning leaned forward and looked at him intently. The deft fingers rose. They hesitated for an instant, then they began to signal earnest words, as earnest as the intent look in Manning's face.

"Perhaps you're wrong about that, my friend. Perhaps you, like Diaz, think that because this voice has never come to you, there is no voice."

The younger man laughed again, harshly, bitterly.

"I ought to know! If there was anyone in the world—well, it'd make a difference, of course. But there's not."

"There is," said the fingers of Manning. Frowning, Cotterel looked into those bright, intent eyes.

"What? How the devil do you know so much?"

"Perhaps," said Manning,—and so earnest was his look that he almost seemed to be speaking the words,—"perhaps I should know better than anyone else. I'm the one who needs you."

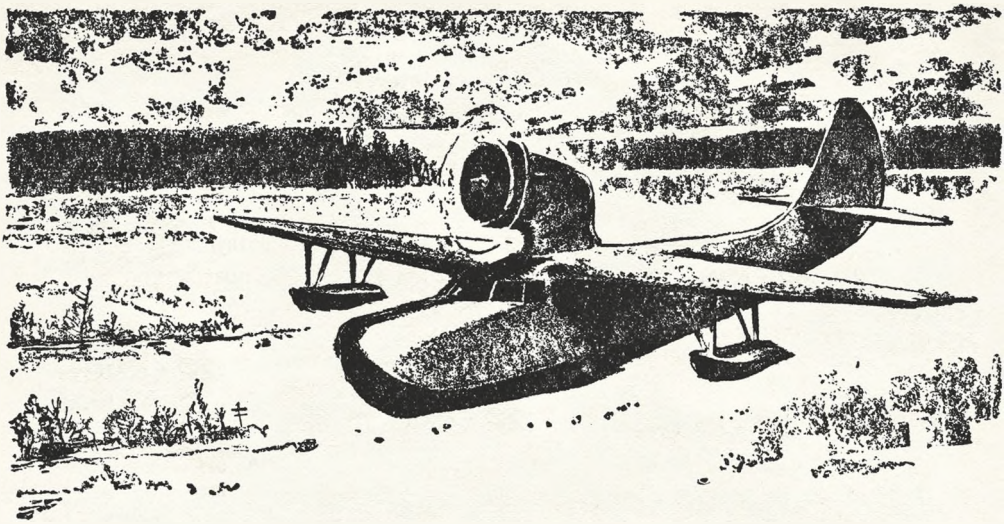
Cotterel caught his breath; and then stared into Manning's face, his eyes suddenly widening with comprehension.

Again a mood of desperation comes over the innocent convict Cotterel; and once more the old forger tells the story of a strange escape—a story of exceptional power. In the next, the April, issue.

You will long remember this story of flight and flood, by a writer who has himself flown to the relief of the stricken.

AT three o'clock in the morning the *Midnighter,* Pilot Sam Hinton and Co-pilot Terry Watts, out of Newark for the Coast, was pushing her nose steadily westward at twelve thousand feet. The blue-black sky was empty but for doming stars, and the fat crescent of a setting moon whose anemic light transformed the haze level into an eerie sea that stretched away, without ripple or wave, to ghostly infinity in every direction—an ocean more than two miles deep, under which the airways beacons and even the largest cities were lost.

The weather ahead was doubtful; and Terry Watts, ear-phones clamped tightly over his cap, sat hunched in his seat and listened to the incoming reports. New on the line, he was on probation—on trial; this was his second run. He was an angular, bony-framed boy with a shock of yellow hair and blue-gray eyes spaced wide beneath bushy, overhanging eyebrows. His greatest ambition in life was to be an air-line pilot, and for four years he had worked toward this job with a tenacious eagerness. But just now, on the threshold of achieving it, he



FLOTSAM

By LELAND JAMIESON

Illustrated by Grattan Condon

felt unnerved. Last night, going into Newark under a three-hundred-foot ceiling, he had become excited and nearly caused Hinton to pile up this plane.

The voice of a radio operator in Chicago leaped into his ears now, and he thumbed the transmitter switch over his head, said quickly into his microphone, "Go ahead, Chicago," and waited, leaning forward tensely, feeling excitement drumming up in a wave on his pulse as new weather information came through. . . . "Okay," he acknowledged hastily, and leaned over to Hinton across the cockpit aisle.

"Chicago's fogging in bad!" he exclaimed. "Ground fog two hundred feet deep! Visibility a quarter of a mile!" Hinton would go back now, he thought.

Sam Hinton nodded. He was "riding the beam" with a calm, sphinx-like assurance. With his knees he held the control-wheel; he fumbled at a crumpled pack of cigarettes and stabbed one between his lips. "Gimme a match," he said. His profile in the yellow glare was hawkish, his face the color of weathered mahogany. Fifteen years of steady flying had toughened his nerve until he was afraid of nothing. Or perhaps, Terry Watts thought enviously, he had been born that way.

"The moon's setting," Hinton said casually. "We'll see plenty lights up through that stuff. We'll get in."

"But if we don't—" Terry began nervously.

"Go somewhere else, then." Hinton grinned like a cat, his cap tilted rakishly. "Indianapolis is clear. The fog's in a belt stretching west. Nothing to worry about." He eased the control-wheel forward slightly, and the plane nosed down to begin its long descent.

Remembering last night, Terry Watts had to fight at the nervousness which made his pulse hammer. Impulsively he exclaimed: "But it would be just as quick to turn around now, as to have to go to—"

Hinton's face sharpened. His squinted eyes swung in a searching scrutiny.

"Turn around?" he burst out. Then, "'Tend to your job—your right carburetor's getting nozzle ice."

Terry Watts turned to his engine instruments. The lower mixture-analyzer needle was fluctuating to the rich side of

the quadrant, an indication of ice. He put on carburetor heat until the throat temperature went to sixty degrees, and then backed the heat valve to forty. His movements were jerky.

WATCHING him narrowly, Hinton barked: "What's the matter with you? I'm not going to hurt you. I'm up here too. I've been doing this kind of stuff for twelve thousand hours."

Terry blurted: "I just thought, if Chicago went to zero-zero—" He caught himself with an effort, and sat there, swearing bitterly, staring up at the stars that were dimming now as the plane plunged deeper into the haze. "Fog . . . fog!" The word drummed through his brain. Since last night, he had felt his nerve disintegrating like an ice jam after a dynamite blast.

"You worry too much," Hinton said.

"I can't help it!" The boy's voice was desperate.

"You better get hold of yourself." Hinton's tone was reproachful but not unkindly. "You can't expect to go on a night run in winter without getting into what looks like a bad spot once in a while. You've got to learn to sit in a bad spot and not blow up. Last night," —his big-knuckled fingers curled over the throttles and pulled them back until the manifold-pressures dropped off an inch,—"another time like last night, and—" His voice fell away darkly.

The boy said in abject humiliation: "I must have gone nuts last night."

"You got rattled. You grabbed the flap-valve instead of the landing-gear. It's all right to get scared, but you've got to keep right on functioning."

"If you'll let me have time to work out of this—if you won't report that—"

Hinton snorted. "Report it? I'm not going to report it!"

They were making nearly two hundred miles an hour now, and the roar of the wind past the cockpit windows was like the sound of surf in a hurricane. The beam was a slowly swelling screech as Hinton followed the on-course signal, going straight across Lake Michigan to save distance and time. From here there were no lights visible on the earth, and the moon's last weird chalky dimness was slipping from sight.

"I can work out of it," Terry said, desperately earnest. "I never used to be this way. A ship caught fire with me once, in the Army, and I got it down. But now I've—I've lost my nerve."

Chicago materialized suddenly ahead, its glow like the aura from a vast bed of coals. They hurtled across it, losing altitude rapidly as Hinton held his course for the field.

When they crossed the field and swung into a circle, Terry could see the outline of the runways under the fog, each light like a white-hot rivet that cooled and reddened and dulled as the plane took distance from it. The obstruction-markers were linked rubies on an invisible thread to the east and south. The wind tee, a green-stubbed crucifix cross, was pointing westward, although the last report gave no wind. Hinton made two circles, surveying the problem, and then swung west, far out over the black prairie, before turning back.

"Tell 'em to give us all floodlights," he said. "I'm going to land west. . . . Down gear!"

Now the top of the fog lay just under the wheels, and down there the lights were beginning to dim as the plane slid toward the stuff. . . . The nose slopped under, like an egg-beater slicing into whipped cream. There were no lights to be seen anywhere.

Tension—the terrible strain of waiting thus, when he knew the ground was close and they were rushing at it headlong, utterly blind—threw Terry Watts into a frenzy. He heard Hinton's voice, steady, deliberate, say, "One-third flaps," and he pushed the flap-valve down, hardly knowing he had touched the lever. The groan of the pumps filled the cockpit, mingling with the erratic popping of the exhausts and the silken sigh of the wind.

SUDDENLY, on the right, a boundary light slapped past at an unknown distance below. Hinton reached up and flicked on his landing-lights. The fog seemed to explode back through the windshield with an incredibly blinding incandescence. Yet through that opaque glare, Terry caught sight of the ground—and he could see that Hinton was going to dive in.

"Look *out!*" he screamed.

Then, violating every rule of his job, but unable to stop himself, he reached up with both hands and hauled the control-wheel back. He couldn't let Hinton crash.

The ship jerked upward, and the lights lost the runway.

Hinton was shouting something, cursing. The props snarled in answer to

Hinton's voice was savage: "Get back in the baggage-compartment, where you can't mess up my next landing. Move, damn you!" Terry got up.

wide-open guns. Fog flowed past like soft gray wool as they climbed. They emerged on top: Hinton pulled the throttles back slightly, "bled" the flaps up, and retracted the landing-gear as he began a circle back to the west of the field. When he had done that, he jerked his attention to Terry, and his voice was sneering and savage:

"We were still thirty feet from the ground! Get up out of that seat. Get back in the baggage-compartment, where you can't mess up my next landing."

"I—"

"Move, damn you!"

Terry got up. He stepped through the aisle and into the baggage-compartment. "Crazy!" he moaned. "Crazy!" He heard the engines lag back, and his heart leaped. He could see nothing, from here. But he could hear the softening shrill of the wind. They were going back down into that fog. His fingers tightened against the door grille. Just then he felt the wheels make gentle contact with the ground.

He came out, then, and sat down in his seat. Hinton, taxying up to the ramp through the fog, did not look at him. The plane stopped in the white glare.

"Well," Hinton said quietly, all anger gone; "well, Watts, I guess—"

"You don't have to tell me; I'm washed up. I—" His voice broke pathetically. Tears welled in his eyes as he stood for a moment, throat working. Then he stumbled into the cabin, down the long aisle, and out into the fog.

JANE DAVIS, secretary to the division superintendent of Morrisey Air Lines, opened the door and thrust her head inside. "Mr. Barrett," she said, "that young Mr. Watts is back, asking about a position."

Alan Barrett's thin lips pursed thoughtfully. "Oh, yes." He riffled through some letters on his desk, found one, flicked it with the backs of his fingers. "Drackburn, of Inter-ocean, writes me Watts got excited in tight spots a couple of times and nearly wrecked the ship. No need to talk to him. Nobody can use a man like that. Tell him I'm sorry." . . .

Wild Jack Lynn, of the old gang that used to fly air mail for the Post Office Department, and now operations-manager for Continental and Northern, spread his hands wide and looked embarrassed.

"Of course, Watts, when I talked with you the first time, I thought you'd do. You understand, I suppose, that we check every new man from every possible angle —every air line does that, and we exchange information. This is a tough game. I'm told you blew up a couple of times with Inter-ocean, when the going got tough. Is that right?"

"I suppose you could call it blowing up," Terry Watts said hopelessly. "It was a new job, and I—"

"If I hired you, how do I know you wouldn't do it again?"

"You couldn't know, until you gave me a trial. If you'd—"

"We can't take chances in this business. Sorry, old man."

THE train stopped at the flag station where the track curved around the end of a low range of hills. Terry Watts got off, feeling the damp caress of heavy, wet snow on his cheeks. He stood, bag in hand, while the train chuffed laboriously around the curve. Then, with a heartsick resolution, he set off along the twisting, rutted road, his shoes plowing the snow with a faint whispering that was scarcely louder than silence.

It was black dark, and he had not come this way for years. The road pitched down until at last it leveled to minor grades through a rolling valley of farms. The snow ceased fitfully for a very brief interval, and off in the distant north the lights of Louisville glowed like a forge against the dirty low scum of the clouds.

He followed this road for four miles, past the mill, past the gravel pit where he had worked as a boy, over the little river that divided his father's and his brothers' farms. Then he turned up a side road for a short distance, still going away from the hills. All this valley was blanketed in snow. He was within a hundred yards of his father's house before he saw mellow light from kerosene lamps shafting through the unshaded windows into rectangular patterns on the white ground. He pushed the door open and stamped his shoes clean, and went in.

"Terry! Terry, child!"

His mother, a little grayer, a little more stooped than he remembered her, left her chair and skittered across the room into his arms. He hugged her, kissed her wrinkled cheek, patted her shoulder. "Hello, Mom," he said.

The others slid out of their chairs and surrounded him: his father, looking just the same, not a day older—the same heavy, wide mustache, the same massive bulk to his body that made his movements seem ponderous and slow though they really were not. He gripped Terry's hand with iron fingers . . . . Clyde, tall and yellow-haired like Terry himself, although nine years older, quietly pleased to see him again. . . . Lloyd, dark and handsome in a sultry, restless sort of way, with a sardonic quirk to his lips.

His mother was holding his arm as if she could not bear to let go of him for one instant. "I was afraid something had happened to you, child!" she exclaimed. "Here, you're wet. Set yourself by the fire and dry."

"Afraid something had happened?" Terry said blankly.

Clyde explained, settling himself. "That radio you sent us for Christmas—Mom's been listenin' to the planes with it."

"It's just wonderful!" Mrs. Watts burst out. "I could even recognize your voice. It gave me a turn, when I quit hearing you. The papers never said anything about any accidents, though." She hugged his shoulder. "And all the time you were on a vacation!"

"Well, sort of a vacation," Terry said, feeling uncomfortable.

It had been two years since he had seen them. They crowded around, wanting to know all about flying. He leaned back, stretching his legs toward the fire. It would have been much better, he thought, to have told them the brutal truth in the first breath—that he was an outcast in aviation, as unwanted as an alley cat. But he couldn't. Stamped into his mind painfully was the memory of the years they had worked to send him through school, because his mother had insisted so militantly that "one Watts is going to amount to something!"

HIS father went out to the kitchen and came back with a yellow jug. "A good pull on this will warm you up, son," and then stood, his arm around his wife, looking down at Terry with more pride and affection than his youngest son had ever seen him show. "Well, Ma, I reckon it was worth it, after all."

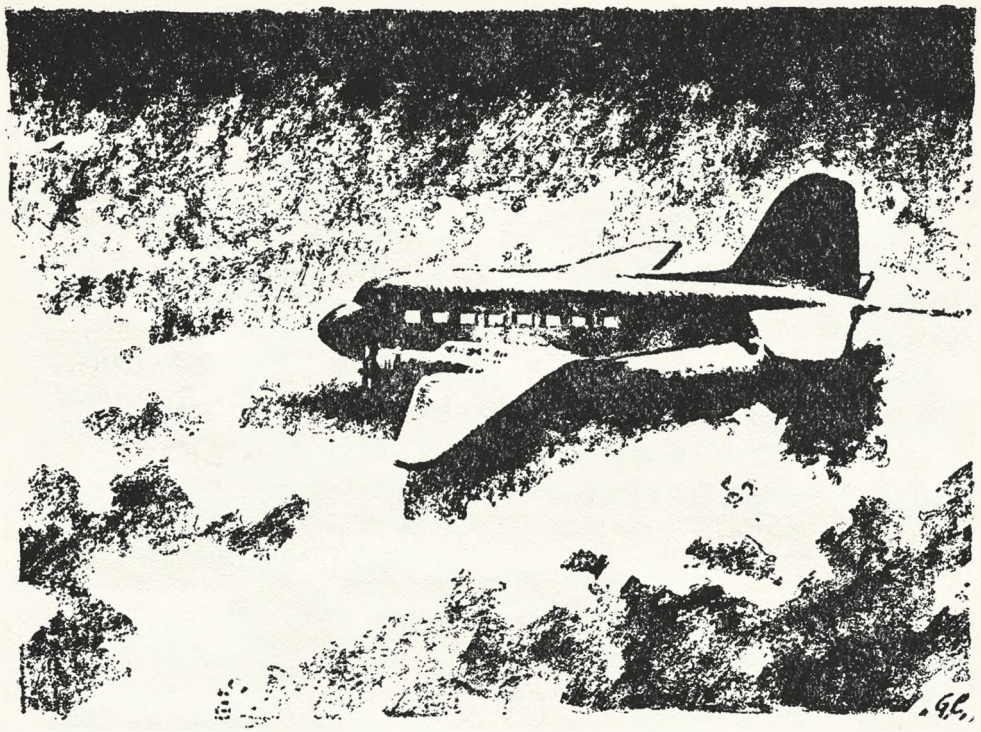
"We're mighty chesty about you, Terry," Clyde said, sounding awkward and very sincere. "A college education. And now I expect you're really important in the aviation business, too."

"Not very," Terry said miserably.

Lloyd chided proudly, "You sure got folks fooled, if you aint! Why, down at the bank yesterday, old Banker Shivers was braggin' about you. And you ought to hear Mom, when she gets to gratifyin' about how at least one of her boys amounts to somethin'. I guess you're mighty lucky. Even if you aint a big man in aviation yet, some day you will be. And you got off the damn' farm!"

"Sure," Terry said, hating himself.

There was a vast admiration and a gentle envy in Clyde's quiet tone. "I'd like mightily to be in your shoes. But I guess I aint got the stuff to be a flyer. I aint got the courage, or the—"



The top of the fog lay just under the wheels. . . . They were going down into it.

"Stop it!" Terry burst out wildly. "Stop it, can't you? I can't stand it! I'm not a flyer any more. I got fired from my job. I'm afraid to fly—*afraid!*" His voice leaped up hysterically. "You can't understand that, can you? You don't believe it. It's true, I tell you. I had to come home because I couldn't get another job. I—" His voice broke, and he buried his face in his hands, sobbing, while his mother's hands went over his shoulders, infinitely caressing, and the low croon of her voice in comfort beat back the shocked silence of the room.

FOR two days he stayed at home, feeling the affection of his family bittering to reprehension, but powerless to stop that ugly transformation. For he did not understand his own change clearly, and it was too painful to talk about—no one but his mother seemed to want to listen to it, anyhow. During those two days, he tried to re-fit himself into the almost-forgotten routine of the farm. But he could feel too keenly that he wasn't wanted; he could feel the biting acid of his family's silent scorn.

The second afternoon he went abruptly to the house and packed his clothes. "I'm leaving," he told his mother bluntly. "I can't stand it. Silence—silence—this place has turned into a morgue."

His mother studied him a moment. Even she had changed, he thought.

"Don't blame them too much, Terry," she said gently. "They gave so much. They feel that your loss is not so great as theirs, for—"

"My loss is *me,* that's all!" he exclaimed desperately. "I have to go on living with myself!"

He found a job in a filling-station in Louisville, and buried himself in an unthinking repetition of poisonous monotony: "How many, sir? Check your oil and water, sir? Just a second, while I get that windshield—" He was on the night trick, working with a mouselike little man whose only name was Joe. It was a busy station, and working, sometimes he could forget. Because he knew his mother might be worried, he sent her a postal card with an almost curt confession of his job.

He had been here a week, now, and it had snowed or rained every day. There were few cars tonight, and Terry stood by the fire, warming his back to dry his clothes, while Joe tuned the radio full-blast on a swing band. He didn't hear the music consciously; the rhythm seeped into his brain with stupefying warmth. He didn't notice when the music stopped and an announcer's voice came on. But he came to attention as Joe turned the

Terry knew that no matter how afraid he was, he had to land.

volume down and said, "Hey, chum, you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"The river's up! Cincinnati's goin' to have a flood. They're callin' for volunteer workers a'ready."

Terry hadn't seen a paper for a week, nor anyone he knew but Joe. Working a night trick, he slept most of every day. But he had heard motorists comment on the rising water; he was not surprised.

"Won't amount to anything," he said.

"Just the same, friend," Joe warned, "if Cincinnati's got a flood, it won't be long before we git one here."

"We're on high ground. It won't hurt anything but the river-front."

Joe came down with a feverish cold the next day, and for five nights following Terry handled everything alone. He was too busy to listen to the radio, too tired to read a paper when he got off duty. He flopped into his bed, and slept in a kind of deathlike exhaustion until dark, and then got up and went to work again. As far as he cared, the flood might have been five thousand miles away.

But suddenly it wasn't far away; it was right here. People in cars and on foot, loaded down with their belongings, went filing past in the stunned silence of despair, leaving low ground for the relief camps which the water could not reach. Only a block down the street the yellow tide was pushing inexorably at storefronts, creeping up the slanted pavement inch by inch. And beyond, silhouetted momentarily by restless, probing searchlights, boats were working, taking people out. For two nights the radio blatted out its story of calamity and death—and then fell silent when the power failed. Pumping gas by hand to the sputtering of lanterns in the rain, Terry wondered what had happened to his family. There was no possible way he could find out.

Through those long night vigils the rain came intermittently, sluicing down through the icy air with a rawness that gnawed to the marrow of his bones. The snow was almost gone, its remnants lying like scars across the roofs when searchlights from the boats penciled overhead. And now the only information Terry had was hearsay. Motorists jamming in for gas, their cars plastered with gray mud, brought most of it: "Six hundred dead in Cincinnati. . . . Martial law here tomorrow, to stop looting. . . . Hurry up there, man!"

The fifth night shortly before daylight, a truck piled high with household goods, like a gypsy's freight wagon, groaned up to a pump. Buttoning his slicker, Terry lurched wearily outside. "How many? Regular or—"

A haggard voice, rasping with a brittle urgency, came through the half-lowered, muddy side window. "Hey, buddy, I'm looking for a man named Terry Watts. Works in a filling-station. We got to find him quick. You—"

Terry ripped the door open as recognition hit him like a blow between the eyes. Clyde, his clothes covered with mud, his face a mess of beard and dirt, sat at the wheel. Beside him was his mother, and on the other side was Lloyd. Lloyd was asleep.

"What's happened? Where's Pa?" He reached out and shook Clyde roughly. "I'm Terry, can't you see?"

Clyde rubbed his eyes. "Well!" he croaked stupidly. He shook his head, the corners of his mouth slack with exhaustion. "Water drove us out. Water's backed up in the valley thirty-forty miles. We just did make it."

"Where's Pa?"

"He stayed in to try to save the stock. He didn't think the water would go high. He—"

"He's in there now?"

"He wouldn't come out," Mrs. Watts said in a high, cracked voice. "You know your pa." She looked white with strain, as if she might collapse. "Child, I thought we'd never find you."

"We been two days gettin' out," Clyde said hollowly.

"How high's the water?"

"They say it's past the second story, now. They say the crest won't come until tomorrow or the next day—but it's gettin' higher fast." He paused, and wiped his hand across his mouth, leaving a smear of mud on his lips. "Look, Terry, you got to get Pa out of there. The water's apt to go above the roof tonight. We're played out completely. Ma's got fever bad, and Lloyd's sick. I got to get them to one of these here emergency stations—"

Anxiety tightened Terry's voice. "You bring the truck back and I'll go in for Pa. Then you take care of Mom!"

"I don't know what—" Clyde's head flopped forward on his chest, and suddenly bounced back like a rubber ball, while incoherent mumbling issued from his lips. Then he said: "What was I talkin' about? Guess I went to sleep. . . . Oh—you got to hurry, Terry—you got to get in there before the water gets up to where Pa's hangin' on to the roof."

IT had stopped raining at last, and shafts of milky sunlight were bursting down through fractures in the clouds. Terry drove along the highway southward. In the back of the truck now was a flat-bottomed rowboat that banged and thumped with every bump.

There was no traffic. Water, almost level with the crown of the road, filmed away on both sides to the hills. Terry passed a dead cow floating in a ditch, passed a car that had been overturned, only its wheels protruding now, the front ones turning very slowly in the current. Then, suddenly, the road dived under; and far ahead the water-tank of Shepardsville was like a buoy to mark the spot where Shepardsville had been.

It was impossible to continue farther in the truck. "I could row it in the boat," Terry thought; then he shook his head. "Too far. I wouldn't get there before dark, if then." The need for haste was knotting his stomach. Even while he had been stopped here, the water had come up a little on the road.

For half an hour he backed the truck, infinitely careful not to slide off into a ditch. Finally he turned around, drove pell-mell back to the edge of Louisville, and then swung east by south along another highway which would take him in a more circuitous route back to the valley he was trying to reach.

HE passed the airport, and was surprised to see four shining Douglases lined up before the ramp. It brought a pang to his heart to see them, to see the uniformed pilots climbing in to take off across that muddy field. He read the insigne of four major air lines at a glance; there was an Inter-ocean flag. Louisville wasn't on an Inter-ocean route, so this must be a special plane. Then he tried to forget Inter-ocean, and drove on, hurrying. A seaplane might possibly get back into that valley and land safely, but a ship with wheels was useless. There were no seaplanes, no amphibians available. The only way to do this was to row that boat. He turned off the road presently and threaded through the hills.

It was surprising, he found, how quickly he had forgotten details that had been so clear when he was younger. He didn't remember this road very well—or they had changed it. The day was passing quickly; already it was after noon. He followed the road, passing no cars, no people. He saw a house set in the trees above him on the hill, and stopped and inquired where this road led. But the old woman who lived there didn't know. "Aint never walked to the end of it," she said, and cackled.

He ran back to the truck. The need for haste was painful, now. He could imagine his father perched on the roof, numbed by icy winds. The temperature every night was almost freezing. How long could a man stand that sort of thing, with no food, no warmth, before he lost his strength and slid into the water?

Then, abruptly, the road turned downhill. Eagerly, hopefully, Terry churned mud around a bend and caught sight of the sweep of water in the valley. He searched for landmarks. There was a headland of hills near his father's farm.

But there was no headland here—only that sheet of yellow stretching in a deathlike silence from ridge to ridge, with houses and barns puncturing it desolately here and there, and not another sign of human life.

This wasn't the valley—this wasn't the place! The sudden frantic realization that he was lost left Terry shaking.

He retraced his trail, trying on his backtrack to see where he had made an error. The railroad went along here somewhere, and if he could find it, he meant to run the truck along the ties until he reached that flag stop where a road would guide him to within three miles of home. Then he could row the boat and reach the house—if it wasn't under water by this time.

But he couldn't find the railroad. In the years since he had been here brush had grown up, camouflaging the appearance of everything. His brain kept saying, "Hurry! Hurry!" but he couldn't hurry. Only time was hurrying. It was after three o'clock, now, and the low, heavy clouds were growing darker in the east. The realization burst upon him torturingly that he should have left the truck and tried to row the boat past Shepardsville. It was too late to try that, now. He had to find the railroad, where it pierced these hills. Retracing his path, he suddenly discovered that he was almost back in Louisville. The airport lay ahead, with two planes circling to land.

He glanced at the sky, figuring time, and then whipped the truck into the driveway to the field. Darkness was not far away, and he had to get help down there tonight. He had two life-preservers in his boat. If he could find a length of rope, maybe he could drop them close enough for his father to fish out of the water. It was a desperate hope. He had to find a pilot with a plane to take him down there, quickly.

THE field was bedlam. People milled in never-ceasing agitation through the administration building, crowding at the ticket counters, trying to buy seats in the planes that were shuttling between Louisville and Chicago, Louisville and Nashville. Terry pushed through, looking for Flannigan, the airport manager and the operator of the flying school where Terry learned to fly before he went into the Army. He had to fight his way upstairs, into a room filled to overflowing. "Mr. Flannigan—have you seen Mr. Flannigan?" And then he saw him, a tall, red-faced man, talking with a group of pilots.

The next person he saw, as he joined the group, was Sam Hinton—Hinton, bleary-eyed from loss of sleep, his uniform soiled and rumpled. Hinton didn't see him; Hinton had Flannigan by the arm, and he was saying, "If I could go, I would—but I have to fly fifteen people to Chicago. But somebody's got to go! This is a man's life, dammit! He's perched on that roof, and he's been there a long time—I saw him when I went over on the way to Nashville and I saw him coming back. The poor devil went half crazy both times, trying to make me see him. Unless Millburn goes down there, this guy hasn't got a chance. Water all round for three or four miles—deep water. No boats working in that area at all."

The pale-faced, plumpish man he indicated said in an uncomfortable voice, "You air-line pilots don't have to consider equipment like I do. I came down here to do flood-relief work, but I'm not going to wreck my airplane. I might hit a floating log or something, landing. It'll be dark before I get there. If I piled up, I'd be in the water, man, not sitting on a roof!"

"You've got an amphibian?" Terry exclaimed excitedly.

Nobody noticed him. "How far is this place?" Flannigan asked Hinton. "We ought to do something, if we can."

"About thirty miles. Here—it's right here on the map, where this little row of hills comes out and makes a kind of headland in the valley. You can't miss it, once you get there. For God's sake, Millburn, this is life or death for that poor devil! The water's getting higher all the time. By morning—"

Terry was clawing his way through, his heart beating wildly in his throat. His words rushed out, shrill and imperative: "Mr. Flannigan, I've spent all day trying to get into that valley. That's my father on that roof! I didn't know there was an amphibian here. I can fly that ship." He turned to Hinton, and his tone was desperate. "You're not going to stop me, either! I've got to have that plane!"

He saw Hinton's dark face change slowly to a look of doubt. "Hello, Watts." And then, "Millburn doesn't think it's safe, although that's a matter of variable opinion. But it's his plane. If I were you, I wouldn't try to do it."

Flannigan, eying Terry in surprise, said, "I thought you'd gone with Interocean Air Lines, kid. It's—"

"I was with them." He swung to Millburn. "If you won't go, let me have that plane. *Now*—before it gets too dark!"

"Going down there's a good way to kill yourself," Millburn snapped.

"I wouldn't care!" Terry groaned. "That's my father down there, can't you understand? A plane's the only way to save his life!"

"You could have it, if I were sure you'd get it back. But I don't think you would."

In black despair, Terry dropped his arms heavily against his sides.

And then Flannigan was speaking. "Listen," he was saying to Millburn, "I gave this kid a few hours of instruction before he went into the Army. I know his father. If this kid wrecks your plane, I'll guarantee the damage, see?"

IT seemed strange to be in a cockpit again, with the ground sliding past to the changing roar of the exhaust. Terry banked cautiously south, and set his course toward Shepardsville.

Darkness lay to the east, and the west was bathed in a chalky reddish glow. From the air, he could see this flood. The valleys south of Louisville were filled with water, like fingers extended from the palm which was a bend of the Ohio.

As he flew, he examined the cockpit, the equipment of the plane. He had never flown one similar to this, a little monoplane with the engine on a cowled-in mount above the wing. The landing gear pumped up so that the wheels nestled into recesses on each side of the hull; and when the wheels were up, the plane became in actuality a flying boat. There were flares for emergency, and lights for the instrument-board. The only thing he lacked was landing-lights.

And the need for them was going to be acute, he knew, when he probed between those hills and tried to land. The very thought of trying to do it made him shiver, for he realized all the dangers of this mission. Yet the thing he feared most now was not the prospect of what he meant to do, but his own will, his own response to a dreaded thing he had to overcome. What would he do, when it was time to land? Would he blow up in a panic, or would he go on down and do the job? He wasn't sure. But here, tonight, he felt, he might learn more about himself than he had ever known before.

Thinking about that, all weariness dropped from him. He should have felt exhausted, after being up all night; but he wasn't tired any more, he was only hungry, and that was but a vague discomfort in his stomach and a feeling of acid stickiness inside his mouth.

Darkness caught him just as he entered the valley which was his objective. It came down like a curtain drawn together in the west, leaving a weird gloom that seemed to be partially absorbed by the water below, so that there was still the outline of the flooded area, with the hills utterly black where they thrust up against the clouds.

He saw the shadow of the little headland before he found the house. The house was practically submerged, but he could see an oblong patch of black that marked the gable line. He could not tell whether his father was still there, and circling and seeing nothing, his heart felt heavy with fear that he was too late.

Now that he was here, he wasn't sure he could get down; and the thought of failure engulfed him with a kind of prickly heat. The ceiling was six hundred feet or even less. He turned back and forth, seeing the navigation-lights whip through the lower tendrils of the mist, exploding into momentary glows of red and green. The hills on every side were almost in the clouds, if not already in them. The thought of losing his sense of orientation and flying into a gaunt slope made his scalp tingle with a tension that kept mounting.

Suddenly, almost below, he saw a flare of light as from a match ignited, a mere pin-point of flame, like a bright star that peeps through a hole in scudding clouds and then is gone. He knew then, positively, that his father was alive. He knew that no matter how afraid he was, he had to land. He *had* to. He swung to the west and banked back sharply, feeling all his reflexes speeding up. But in spite of fright, he cut the gun and started down.

With dilated, straining eyes he tried to see the surface of the water. Depth perception was a tricky thing, and he couldn't judge his altitude. He realized that he might fly in too hard, and split the hull wide open and sink before he could climb through the hatch. He realized that he might strike something in the water, and nose over and be trapped. But still he eased the ship down, holding his breath, bursting the gun with short blasts to keep his speed.

The altimeter needle crawled around the dial until feet, instead of hundreds of feet, separated him from contact—but still he couldn't gauge his distance. The house was somewhere up there, and he snatched a glance to find it so he wouldn't smash into it, landing. And in that glance he saw the black silhouette of the hills so close that he could almost reach out and touch them with his hands as they leaped back to slap him in the face.

He slammed the throttle open, praying that the engine would lift him out of here. He climbed, making a dangerous stall-turn to get away.

SOMEHOW, he missed the hills. But in that turn he lost the position of the house, and it was darker now, and for some time he circled, circled, wheeling with his upper wing stuck almost into the clouds.

He knew one thing, now: He would never get down safely, trying such a landing as that first one. It was entirely hopeless. He would keep on trying until, in a split-second of error, he would crash.

The light down there winked suddenly again—winked and went out like a candle being snuffed. And seeing it, Terry had a sudden idea of something that might work.

He had not dropped a flare in the beginning because of his low altitude, and because, although the flare would burn in water, it would not help him judge his altitude in landing very much—and it would blind him, so that if he missed on that attempt, he would be sitting in the air unable to see anything at all. But now, knowing it was the last chance, knowing that if he failed he probably would crack up anyhow in other efforts, he turned over toward the little range of hills, trying to judge his timing and his distance. He must do this just right.

Then he swung away, flying west again, and flew just below the clouds to a position where he thought the house to be. Tensely, at the proper moment, he jerked the flare release—went on for five counted seconds and jerked it once more to dump the other one.

Almost instantly the inky night was dispelled by a flood of greenish light as the two flares burst to life. At full throttle, hurrying, Terry went on, taking distance and then banking frantically to head into the glare. The flares were sinking rapidly. When they hit the water, he would have no more than thirty seconds in which to put this airplane down.

In the light, as he turned, he could see the roof-top, with the figure of his father clinging pitifully to the chimney for support. Then he gave attention to the finish of the turn. He was nosed toward the flares, lining up his plane with them, when they plunged into the water.

They seemed to explode to twice their former brilliance for a space of seconds, the magnesium candles leaping and skittering wildly in a froth of boiling water. Yet even in that light, it was impossible to judge his height above the flat, calm yellow surface. He had nothing to judge by. So he lined the flares up, and when the far light was merging with the near one, he eased the wheel back, gunning to half power. The plane "mushed" on, the hull hissing gently as it slowed. Suddenly the flares burned out, and blackness leaped in to fill the void.

For five minutes Terry sat there, waiting for his straining eyes to dilate. His heart was beating without acceleration, and he did not feel excited, even, only relieved. Taxying with infinite caution, he proceeded at a dragging pace. When his eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, he could see the silhouette of the hills ahead quite plainly—enough, he thought, to take off, once he got lined up. Then he saw the glimmer of a match, almost level with the water. A moment later the nose bumped on the incline of the roof. He cut the switches and clambered out and made a line fast to the chimney.

"Pa!" he cried. "Pa, I got here! This is Terry!"

THE elder Watts clung to his son, exhausted. He was so hoarse his words came in a whisper. "Son, you're just in time. I'd about give up. I was most ready to let go."

Getting his father into the plane, Terry thought about that statement. He had been about to give up, too, until today, tonight. But he was all right, now. He knew he could get into a cockpit with Sam Hinton or anybody else, and no matter what happened he could function properly. Tonight had taught him to do that. And he could get a job and hold it now, too; if not his old one, then another one. . . .

He laughed, feeling good; then he started the engine and taxied out to take off toward the hills.

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

From an etching by Yngve Soderberg.

A Girl Like a Sword

One of the most dramatic of all this "Ships and Men" series.

By H. BEDFORD-JONES and CAPTAIN L. B. WILLIAMS

SOMEBODY had tried to put something over on Inspector Rosch, and he was really angry. You would not have thought that a gentle, spectacled, gray-haired Customs official who had the smile of a benignant cherub could make the fur fly; but Inspector Rosch made it fly all over Port Huron and parts of Michigan adjacent.

Then he returned to his interrupted talk with me.

"Where was I?" he demanded. "Oh, yes! Pirates, lateen rig, history—the funny thing about history is that it hasn't a darned bit of interest unless you get the human side of it. Right?"

"Dead right, Inspector," I assented. "I wish I had your knowledge of ships,

too. But you mentioned the lateen rig and its origin."

"Yes." He rubbed his chin and looked across the river at the Canadian shore, and the new bridge that had done away with the old ferry. "Yes. That got its start with a chap who was in a bad jam. One of the knights of St. John, who held Rhodes and made it their business to fight the Moslem pirates."

"Hold on," I said cautiously. "The lateen rig started away back before then. And those knights of St. John used galleys entirely. No sails at all. Just oars."

HE chuckled. "Your story is where human interest lies, isn't it? A man may invent a thing, and a lot of folks use it, and nothing comes of it until some one comes along and grabs the works and introduces it in a big way. True?"

"Sometimes," I admitted, still cautiously; it doesn't pay to be too cocksure with any government man. "But let's keep the record straight. Those knights were swell fighters and left a big mark on history; still, they were vowed to celibacy. Where's your human interest in that?"

"Right there, maybe," said he. "Boy, when a monk falls in love, you've got one hell of a human-interest story to follow up!"

"These knights weren't monks," I objected; and he nodded.

"They were vowed to celibacy, though. They were drawn from the eight chief nations of Christendom at the time; they all came of great families. Each nation had its own college or home at Rhodes, but they usually worked together for the Order, regardless."

"Where'd you learn so much about it?" I asked curiously. "And what has it to do with the lateen rig? The Arabs really took over that rig from the Egyptians."

"Sure; but the fighting ships of the Mediterranean were galleys just the same," he rejoined. "You know, my folks used to be French. The name was St. Roche originally, until one of them came over with Lafayette and settled here. He fetched along a lot of old family papers and such truck, and I've dug some queer things out of those documents. One was about the lateen rig, and that old ancestor of mine was in one bad fix, by the looks of it. I can't stand here gabbing all day, so if you'd like to look the yarn over, I'll send it along. You can use it if you want."

I told Inspector Rosch I'd be tickled pink to get his ancestor's yarn, and went my way. He sent it to me, all right. And when I dipped into it, so help me, I thought at first he had gypped me. Story? Human interest? Celibacy? Lateen rig? Where was it all? Nothing here but a storm-lashed islet in a driving sea.

The picture of it grew upon me. A steep, rocky islet, so sharply jutting out of the water that a goat could not climb it. A man could; men had, for atop the rock was a thick-walled castle of reddish stone. Hence the name of Castelrosso. Below was an excellently protected little harbor in which two naked galleys were rocking. On the storm-wrecked horizon lay the mountains of Asia Minor. On the rocky shores of the islet, wreckage was strewn. A ship had struck and gone to smash there. But on the whole islet, not a living soul was visible—at first.

THEN a figure grew, coming from a postern gate of that castle apparently deserted. This was a man who wore no armor; a belt closed the mantle of the Order, black with a white cross, showing he was one of the knights. Alone, he came down to the rocky wreckage-strewn shore and stared at the tossing débris there. He was a young man, but his face was haggard and curiously drawn.

A faint, gasping voice reached him. He stirred, started into life, and suddenly plunged down thigh-deep in the water below. A tossing mass of spars and timbers drove in at him; amid it was a human figure, hand outstretched. The man seized the hand; in two minutes he had drawn to safety the sole survivor of this wreck: a woman, shivering and spent, wearing a scarlet silken robe that clung to her body—a young woman, with rich masses of black-blue hair that fell in wet ringlets about her waist and knees.

"Courage! Not hurt? Climb, then!" He supported her with stout arm and cheering words, and helped her up the steep rock. Occasional glimpses showed that no other living thing had come ashore. Twice she nearly collapsed, but they made the little entrance and went on into the castle.

A deathly place, a ghastly place, with nothing alive in the walls, yet with evidences of abundant life all around. They passed through the courtyard, up a stairs, and the knight led her to a room.

"Rest," he said. "Dry clothes are here in plenty. I'll bring you food and wine. Do you understand?"

She gave him a wanly flashing smile and replied in his own French.

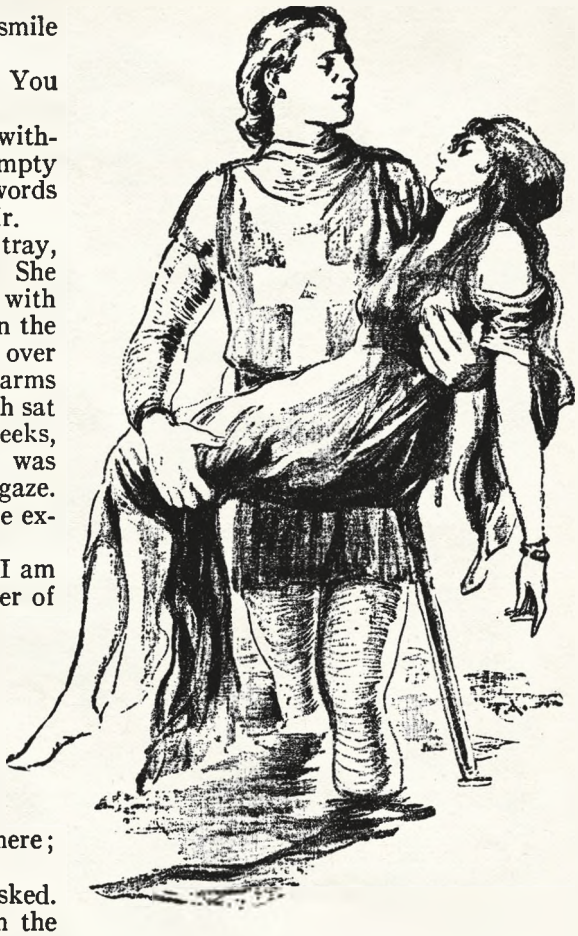
"Certainly. You are very good. You are not alone here?"

"I am alone," said the knight, and withdrew. His voice echoed from the empty walls with mournful cadence; the words seemed to linger and hang in the air.

After a time he came back with a tray, knocked, and entered at her word. She was lying on the bed, heaped over with blankets; her scarlet robe lay wet on the floor. Her black hair was spread out over the pillows like a cloud, her extended arms were bare to the shoulder, but a laugh sat in her eyes and warm color in her cheeks, and Pierre St. Roche saw that she was beautiful and had a straight, firm gaze.

"You're a knight of St. John!" she exclaimed. "What place is this?"

"Castelrosso Island," he replied. "I am Pierre St. Roche, Knight Commander of



He plunged thigh-deep into the water, and in two minutes had drawn to safety the sole survivor of the wreck.

the Order. I command the garrison here; the island belongs to Rhodes."

"Where is your [illegible]?" she asked.

"Dead," he repl[illegible] set down the tray. "I'll leave [illegible]!"

"No; don't go. [illegible]ant to sleep. I'm quite all righ[illegible]d. "A little wine is all I need. [illegible]che! Weren't you at Cyprus last y[illegible]ith the Grand Master?"

"Yes." He poured wine and held it to her lips, smiling a little as she drank. Never, he thought, had he seen so lovely a thing as this girl; she was no more than a girl. "And your name, lady?"

As she met his gaze, a tide of color came into her cheeks.

"Eleanor," she said in a low voice. "More than this, I do not wish to tell you; nor do I wish to lie to you, Sir Pierre. Will you be satisfied with the one word?"

"While it bears a smile, yes,"—and laughing, he sat beside her. "There's nothing I can do for you, really?"

"Nothing, thanks; I'll get up and dress presently. It's afternoon. Did you say all your garrison is dead?"

"All," he assented. "Forty knights, retainers, slaves—all. I buried the last a week ago. A Pisan galley stopped for water, and left us the plague in exchange. When a galley from Rhodes will arrive, I do not know. Luckily, we have no lack of anything here."

He wondered how she would take it. The plague—dread word! The plague had swept the whole world, these last fifty years. Death in the sea might have been easier. For an instant her cheeks blanched; then she smiled, and put her hand in his, and her voice was steady and unafraid.

"Good! You have a recruit. I think you yourself are in bitter need of rest; go and sleep. I'll watch, and waken you at sunset."

He saw that she meant her words. And in his fine, strong features she read relief. She comprehended that he had been on watch night and day, lest either friend or enemy show up.

"Eleanor! That is a queen's name," said he, and kissed her fingers. "At sunset." He went out, stumbling with utter exhaustion.

A FEW hours sleep made vast difference. He was himself again, alert, ten years younger; his body, hardened to bear the weight of armor, was a ripple of

Messer Mocenigo, the Venetian.

corded sinew. And he found her, for lack of any woman's gear in the place, garbed in the surcoat and doublet of one of the dead knights; but these garments could not hide the lovely warm lines of her body, and her face was like a flower. The straight, true eyes of her kindled a flame in him which he could not and would not conceal.

What was more to the point, he found a cooked meal ready; and this, after a week and more of moldy cheese and bread, was no less than a miracle. . . .

Thus began what, for Pierre St. Roche, was the most joyous time of all his life. Not because he was alone with a beautiful girl in a place of death; but because this girl had within her a spirit that was a blazing force, and because she loved him. Of this he was sure all too soon, and of himself as well.

That she was no vagrant demoiselle he knew at once. Things slipped out; besides, she had authority, and there was the fine high goodness of her. A girl like a sword, to be reverenced and kept from all stain and held in knightly honor; so he held her, indeed. They were alone in the company of the dead, and love ripened fast between them.

She talked much of herself, not at all of her life or station. She showed him a wide girdle that had been under her robe when she came ashore. It had many little pockets, and each held precious stones of great price, all manner of them, so that Roche stood aghast.

"It is a fortune!" he said in awe, and she laughed at his expression, and swept up the stones carelessly.

"No doubt. What is that to a knight vowed to a simple life and celibacy?"

But not to chastity. Simplicity, celibacy, warfare against the infidel, poverty, yes; yet they were not monks, these knights of the white cross. Roche put the thought sternly away from him. Still, they were alone within the wide compass of sea and sky, and love grew upon them.

And there was the eternal peril to quicken emotion. Any Moorish, Egyptian or Turkish corsair that dared take a chance would find them and the castle at its mercy. Indeed, on the fourth day of her presence here, a sail broke the horizon. Roche dashed off for his armor, and when he regained the walls found a new person there. Leather coat and chain-mail, black hair sheared short by sword-edge, dark sun-browned face no more tell-tale than the blurred figure. He stared.

"I'd not dream you were the most beautiful woman in the world—or a woman at all!"

"Safer so, perhaps," said she. "I'll keep the costume. And the ship?"

He squinted at the sea. "Veering off. A Moor, by her sail; she'll not tempt our galleys, after all. Little she knows! Safer so, you say; afraid of me, are you?"

"Afraid of you?" She came close to him and looked into his face, her dark eyes more lovely and eloquent than any words. "No, my dear, not of you!"

ROCHE trembled, and touched her hand. Su[illegible] he took her in his arms and kiss[illegible] the lips, and she did not say no [illegible]en he loosed her.

"I'll not [illegible]in," said he, but did it; then a[illegible], drew away from her again.

"By God, I w[illegible]ot," he said, and did not. However, there was no hurt in speaking of love, and this they did very frankly and tenderly, looking out upon the sky and sea. Each of them joyed in the other, and their hands clasped and their bodies drew close, but before their lips met, Roche stood up.

"An oath is an oath, and though I love you with all my heart, I will not kiss you again, my dear. Perhaps, indeed, because I do love you."

She agreed with him, though no doubt sorely against her will, and they came to speak of other matters. Roche talked of Rhodes, of the knights there, of his cruises against the Moors. And looking down at the empty naked galleys in the little harbor below, he shook his head, frowning.

"Look at them! Oars alone, with slaves rowing them; and the corsairs, who had both sails and oars, ever hold the advantage of us. Here, come with me. I want to show you something."

The horizon was clear now, the ship gone. He caught her hand and led her down into a room below. Here, upon a small block of wood, was mounted a tiny arrangement of mast, sails and ropes.

"Do you know anything about ships, Eleanor?"

"A little." Her dark eyes danced. "All my life has been lived with them."

"Good! As you know, the galleys of the Order use oars alone, no sails; so do all war-galleys. But Moorish and Egyptian corsairs use sails as well. They have the speed of us, and often they escape us, with their big lateen sails. Now it is in my mind that if we had a fighting galley with canvas, as well as oars, we'd be able to smite the infidel hip and thigh."

"Obviously. The galleys of Venice use sails, however."

Roche grimaced. "Yes; square sails, like the old Roman ships. Clumsy, unhandy; the lateen holds a better wind and is quicker in stays. A corsair can sail rings around any Venetian. Now, here's a rig I've worked out for use with our galleys—"

He showed her the working of the miniature rig, how the lines ran, how the high lateen would catch light winds, could swing now here, now there, how the imaginary galley could outsail heavier craft, portly cogs or dromonds with their great square sails.

"It's absurd that this rig should be left to heathen infidels to use," he concluded frowningly.

The girl's eyes flashed.

"Right! Why should it be, then? Why not make use of it?"

"The Grand Master orders, we obey. He is a very gentle knight, but elderly. What, says he, make use of sails when we have Moorish slaves to handle oars? Never been heard of and never will be in his time. And that's the answer."

"Poor Pierre!" she said softly, and her fingers found his. "Never mind, my dear; there will come a day, I promise you! Is this thing the desire of your heart?"

"It's one of two, and you're the other," he said. "And there's no hope of either."

"You might be absolved of your vows and leave the order."

"How support a wife, then? Besides, it could only be done at the request of a king or a great man, or of the Grand Master; I've no influence. No, my heart; I must love you all my life. And if as I think you are some noble lady of Cyprus, so much the worse for us. The king and others of the Lusignan family, who own all that island, are very jealous and proud, and would never consent that one of their great ladies should marry a poor and humble knight."

"That is true," she said, and her face was troubled. Then it cleared. "But if we love each other, my dear, does it matter if we ever marry?"

"To be honest about it, yes. It matters a good deal," Roche said.

She laughed and pressed his arm.

"Good! I agree with you. We may find a way; now let's see about supper."

Another day descended upon them, and another; the sea was empty, and the blue mountains of Armenia hung upon the horizon, and they were alone.

A BITTER man was Pierre St. Roche in these days. A happy man in the moment, yet bitter at thought of the long years ahead, and the hopeless future. He had no powerful friends in the Order. His command of this islet fortress was by way of punishment, because he had cried out against the luxury and small regard for their vows which possessed so many of the knights at Rhodes. And now, as though by ironic fate, love had come into his life and a wild desire to escape from those vows; but he could not.

Yet he, and Eleanor who loved him, were too high of soul and too knightly bred to seek any way out that might besmirch love and honor.

Then, abruptly, came the end. A sail broke the horizon, and another vessel; a galley of the Order escorting some merchant here to Castelrosso. Roche shouted aloud and ran for his armor. When he came forth, all in mail from head to foot, he met with Eleanor and stared again at her. She had found nondescript garments and some stain to darken her face yet more. She did not seem a woman at all.

"You must not tell them my name, or that I am a woman," she exclaimed.

"I cannot lie," he said simply.

"No need. Listen! I was being sent by my family to marry a lord whom I had never seen." She spoke rapidly, breathlessly. "Now let the ship be accounted lost and all in her; let my family think me dead. You see? You don't know who I am, Pierre; you've only my word for it. Excellent! I tell you that I'm Jean Guiri, a merchant of Cyprus; and that ends it. I have jewels and therefore am wealthy—"

"But good God, girl!" cried Roche, looking at her from tormented eyes.

"Where will you go? It means that we must part."

"Yes," she said, with tears springing to her cheeks. "Trust in God, my dear."

THE two ships came in. One was a ship of the Order, with forty knights aboard, and the other was a Venetian galley bound to Crete. This great and wealthy island was owned by Venice and was her richest possession.

The Venetian was anxious to be on her way, and readily gave passage to Jean Guiri. So well had the girl disguised her figure, that her sex was not suspected. Roche parted from her with a handclasp and kept the torture of his heart secret. When he came back to his own room, he found his block of wood and the model of his rigging vanished entirely; he guessed she might have taken it as a memento of him, but cared not. Nothing mattered to him now.

Worse was to come. The galley landed what knights and slaves it could spare, and sped back for Rhodes to send other ships with a new garrison. Roche, talking that night with the knights who remained to help keep the fortress, heard them discussing the wreck of the ship from Cyprus. Jean Guiri had given the name of that ship.

"This will be sore news for the Lusignan family," said one. "On board that ship was the king's daughter. She was going to the Morea, to be married to the Count of Modica. And now she is lost, and her wealth with her."

"What was her name?" asked another.

"The Lady Eleanor," the first replied. "I met her in Cyprus a year or so ago, and she was the flower of all that family, and the loveliest of women."

Pierre St. Roche knew then with whom he had been dealing, and choked down a groan. Now, even had other things been equal, she was more removed from him than ever. And she was gone into the world, and lost to him.

He fell into a brooding melancholy from which nothing could stir him. This passed into a fever; and when the ships came with the new garrison, he was taken back to Rhodes for treatment, a very sick man.

Here, after some weeks, he began a slow recovery, but there was no joy in him. The general opinion was that he was oppressed by thought of all those gentlemen who had died at Castelrosso, he alone surviving; but the matter was much worse. Upon Roche had settled the conviction that he was marked out by destiny for misfortune, that he was accursed, that whatever he touched would turn to grief and loss and death. So firmly did this notion lay hold upon him that it became a fixed idea in his mind, and he had no interest in anything, and talked of entering some religious order. . . .

One day a Venetian trading-ship came into the harbor. Her master, who was a supple Greek seaman, sought an audience with the Grand Master and obtained it readily.

"I hear in the town," said he, "that Sir Pierre St. Roche is grievously ill. Once I owed my life and freedom to this noble knight; two years ago he captured a Moorish corsair in which I was a slave at the oars. Now I may repay his kindness. I am bound for Acre to trade with the Arabs there, and we have aboard a skilled physician of great fame. Let this knight, I pray you, go with us that our physician may heal him."

"Willingly would I grant him leave," said the Grand Master, "and though his illness is more of mind than body, the voyage might benefit him. However, this is for Sir Pierre himself to say."

HE summoned Roche, who looked at the Greek, and said he did not know the man. What he did, however, was all one to him; he accepted leave, indifferently, and sent for his armor, and with evening went aboard the Venetian. When the anchor was up and the galley standing out of the harbor, the Greek took him to one of the cabins.

"The physician will see you, Lord," said he.

"Indeed?" Roche shrugged. "I saw cannon on the deck, and your crew have the look of soldiers rather than seamen."

"They are soldiers, Lord," said the Greek. "Twenty Catalan crossbowmen and thirty seamen who are trained men at arms. And we have fifty slaves for the oars."

"But these sails, this rigging?" In the gathering dusk, Roche frowned up at the spars and canvas. "By heavens, where did you outfit this ship? If this is not my own rigging, the sails and ropes that I planned myself—hah! Answer me!"

"The ship is owned by this same physician, Lord." The Greek threw open the cabin door. "He is awaiting you."

Roche went into the cabin. A man rose to greet him; a man who uttered a low choked cry and clung suddenly to

Roche bore into the fray; that broad blade of his sheared through chain-mail and turban. Behind him the Catalans fought like devils.

him, a man whose soft rich voice pierced into his soul, whose eyes brought comprehension to him, whose embrace set him to trembling. No man indeed, but the maid Eleanor! Roche sank down beside her and gripped her hands.

"Oh, this is madness, my dear, madness!" he said, and groaned. "I know who you are; Dame Eleanor of Cyprus is accounted dead. You have let your family think—"

"Plague take my family!" she exclaimed. "I've little to love them for; I've everything to love you for, Pierre. If they knew I was alive, they'd sell me off to some noble in wedlock. You've been ill, I hear—ah, my dear one, I'll make you well again!"

"No, no, you must not tempt me!" he cried hoarsely. "Now that I've seen you, now that I've held you in my arms, know you still love me, I'm well again and strong, and life is a different thing. Put the ship back—"

She laughed. "But you don't understand! This is your own ship, the galley which you dreamed, rigged with the sails and ropes you had on your little model! I've been in Crete all this time; no one suspected I was not Jean Guiri, a man, a merchant. The Venetians sold me this galley, I had her rigged and armed, I bought slaves, I hired archers and fighting men. She's yours, you understand? Now take her and seek the infidel corsairs, and put your great idea to the proof! Here is one of your heart's desires come true."

"And you did this!" muttered Roche, overwhelmed with it all, when once he fully understood the matter. "You—But how? It must have cost a fortune!"

She laughed again. Her joyous, eager laughter was a brave thing to hear.

"I *had* a fortune; those gems—you remember them. Now none are left, and the outcome is in your hands. Seek plunder from the Moors, or we all starve!"

WHEN Roche heard this, his admiration and love and wonder passed all bounds, and the heart quickened in him. Then it faltered again.

"It is no use," he said gloomily. "No luck will come of it. Whether I forget my vows and become a recreant knight and go off to the world's end with you, or whether I hold to honor, I am accursed in either case. Put me on shore and leave me, I warn you."

"Don't be a fool," she said quickly. "I'm not here to argue. I've staked everything on you, on your love, on your ability; and I don't intend you shall fail me. The Grand Master gave you leave of absence. Make the most of it! Remember, aboard this ship I'm not a woman but a man. Now, what you need is a drink, a square meal, and a long sleep; and you shall have them, and wake up captain of your own dream-ship."

So he did, though even in the morning sunlight it all seemed a vision unreal. None the less, Roche took heart, forgot his misgivings, and donned his armor that day for the first time in long weeks.

THE ship, his ship! Bought for him with her love, her faith, her wits, her jewels; humility touched him with the thought, and a surge of savage resolve that he would be worthy of her. He found the crew good enough, the Catalan crossbowmen superb, and he drilled them according to his liking, working them at the ropes and the little cannon day after day. To the slaves at the oars he gave wine instead of whips, so that they put out their strength gladly for him.

But the sea remained empty.

The days passed. Roche headed for the Greek islands, where the corsairs were wont to raid for slaves and lay in wait for Byzantine galleys; Moors they saw none. Provisions were running low. The Catalans began to murmur about ill luck. It was true they had cruised for weeks and sighted no one. Questions of pay arose; the Lady Eleanor had no more money. Her jewels had all been sold. And Roche, who had a guilty feeling about the whole affair, scanned the seas with his mouth adroop at the corners and the old sense of misfortune bearing him down.

"I tell you, whatever I touch will come to evil destiny!" he said fiercely to the girl, his eyes clouded and somber.

"Nonsense! We can put in at Candia and mortgage the ship," she returned.

He shook his head. "It's no use."

"At least, you have your strength again!"

He eyed her gloomily. Before he could speak, the Greek master knocked hastily, and came into the cabin on the word, his eyes rolling.

"Guns! Flashes of guns on the horizon, Lord! Ships at work there—"

Roche leaped up, and darted on deck. It was true. A calm, almost windless sea, and across the horizon the flashes of guns. The oars were put out.

All that night they rowed on, until with dawn sprang up a fine steady wind

Flannigan, eying Terry in surprise, said, "I thought you'd gone with Interocean Air Lines, kid. It's—"

"I was with them." He swung to Millburn. "If you won't go, let me have that plane. *Now*—before it gets too dark!"

"Going down there's a good way to kill yourself," Millburn snapped.

"I wouldn't care!" Terry groaned. "That's my father down there, can't you understand? A plane's the only way to save his life!"

"You could have it, if I were sure you'd get it back. But I don't think you would."

In black despair, Terry dropped his arms heavily against his sides.

And then Flannigan was speaking. "Listen," he was saying to Millburn, "I gave this kid a few hours of instruction before he went into the Army. I know his father. If this kid wrecks your plane, I'll guarantee the damage, see?"

IT seemed strange to be in a cockpit again, with the ground sliding past to the changing roar of the exhaust. Terry banked cautiously south, and set his course toward Shepardsville.

Darkness lay to the east, and the west was bathed in a chalky reddish glow. From the air, he could see this flood. The valleys south of Louisville were filled with water, like fingers extended from the palm which was a bend of the Ohio.

As he flew, he examined the cockpit, the equipment of the plane. He had never flown one similar to this, a little monoplane with the engine on a cowled-in mount above the wing. The landing gear pumped up so that the wheels nestled into recesses on each side of the hull; and when the wheels were up, the plane became in actuality a flying boat. There were flares for emergency, and lights for the instrument-board. The only thing he lacked was landing-lights.

And the need for them was going to be acute, he knew, when he probed between those hills and tried to land. The very thought of trying to do it made him shiver, for he realized all the dangers of this mission. Yet the thing he feared most now was not the prospect of what he meant to do, but his own will, his own response to a dreaded thing he had to overcome. What would he do, when it was time to land? Would he blow up in a panic, or would he go on down and do the job? He wasn't sure. But here, tonight, he felt, he might learn more about himself than he had ever known before.

Thinking about that, all weariness dropped from him. He should have felt exhausted, after being up all night; but he wasn't tired any more, he was only hungry, and that was but a vague discomfort in his stomach and a feeling of acid stickiness inside his mouth.

Darkness caught him just as he entered the valley which was his objective. It came down like a curtain drawn together in the west, leaving a weird gloom that seemed to be partially absorbed by the water below, so that there was still the outline of the flooded area, with the hills utterly black where they thrust up against the clouds.

He saw the shadow of the little headland before he found the house. The house was practically submerged, but he could see an oblong patch of black that marked the gable line. He could not tell whether his father was still there, and circling and seeing nothing, his heart felt heavy with fear that he was too late.

Now that he was here, he wasn't sure he could get down; and the thought of failure engulfed him with a kind of prickly heat. The ceiling was six hundred feet or even less. He turned back and forth, seeing the navigation-lights whip through the lower tendrils of the mist, exploding into momentary glows of red and green. The hills on every side were almost in the clouds, if not already in them. The thought of losing his sense of orientation and flying into a gaunt slope made his scalp tingle with a tension that kept mounting.

Suddenly, almost below, he saw a flare of light as from a match ignited, a mere pin-point of flame, like a bright star that peeps through a hole in scudding clouds and then is gone. He knew then, positively, that his father was alive. He knew that no matter how afraid he was, he had to land. He *had* to. He swung to the west and banked back sharply, feeling all his reflexes speeding up. But in spite of fright, he cut the gun and started down.

With dilated, straining eyes he tried to see the surface of the water. Depth perception was a tricky thing, and he couldn't judge his altitude. He realized that he might fly in too hard, and split the hull wide open and sink before he could climb through the hatch. He realized that he might strike something in the water, and nose over and be trapped. But still he eased the ship down, holding his breath, bursting the gun with short blasts to keep his speed.

them, had laid aside their arbalests and were taking to sword and shield. Roche nodded. As he did so, one of the corsairs fired her guns. A lead slug smashed into his helmet and sent him headlong on the deck.

Jean Guiri leaped to aid him, and got him up, dizzy and shaken. In this moment the tiller swung untended; a moment of disaster. One of the corsairs smashed full into her bows and flung grapnels, and scimitars flashed across her rail. The other, momentarily disabled, got out oars to creep up astern.

The battle-cry of the Order pealed up. Roche, his heavy sword swinging, bore into the fray. Sword and sling and arrow left his clanking figure unscathed, but that broad blade of his sheared through chain-mail and turban. The attack was met and held and checked. Behind him, the Catalans fought like devils, and the seamen drove into the fray, casting the Arabs back to their own decks and following after. Certain of these seamen bore axes, and suddenly the mast of the corsair toppled and crashed down.

"Back!" shouted Roche, and headed his men back aboard, casting off the grapnels. Barely in time, too; the other corsair was coming up under her stern. Just in the nick, she veered away; the lateen sail swung to the wind, and was clear.

TWO of the Moors lay crippled now. Roche, unheeding the rain of arrows that poured in upon him, aimed for the third corsair; he was doing the hunting now, grimly determined. Desperately the Moor evaded, but could not escape. At last Roche had his prey, luffed sharply and drove for her, seamen handling the lines expertly. This time he crashed along her starboard bank of oars, splintering them, smashing them.

"Let loose the slaves!" he shouted, and promised freedom to all those who fought for him. They yelled like madmen. Already he was bearing back, coming alongside that third corsair again. Grapnels were flung. They caught, they held. And now Roche headed his own men over to her blood-slippery decks, and hewed his way through the Moors until their captain fell under his sword. Then, with yells of despair, they surrendered.

Wounded here and there, blood running from under his armor, Roche leaned on his sword and panted forth orders. The Christian slaves chained to the benches of the corsair were freed. Most of them leaped for weapons and followed him back, aboard his own ship. No lack of men now!

The grapnels were loosed. He bore down upon one of the two cripples and laid it aboard, and was over on the Moor's decks when a shrill, high yell from Jean Guiri gave him warning. The second cripple was heading in, oars aflash, and it was too late to evade. She smashed into the bows of his ship with cruel force and her men poured over.

Now befell the grimmest fight of all. Each of the Moorish champions tried to bring down that steel-clad figure whose mantle had been ripped away and whose massive sword swung in tireless hands of death. Bring him down they could not, but one by one went down themselves before him. The freed slaves, Moor and Christian, fought like devils behind him, and those who remained of his own men.

So in the end one ship was cleared, and then the other, until the Moors chose slavery rather than steel, and flung down their arms. Then Roche found Jean Guiri at his side, screaming something. Exhausted, he put up the vizor of his helmet.

"The ship, the galley! She's sinking, Pierre—her bows were crushed—"

Barely able to stand, utterly spent, Roche took the blow helplessly. It was true. His galley was sagging, was filling fast, her bows smashed in. For his men, engaged in making the victory secure, all was wild exultation, but for him, defeat. Wearily, he put off his helmet. Jean Guiri helped him doff his armor, and bound up his half-dozen wounds.

"We've won, and we've lost everything," he said. "Three corsairs taken, yes; but our own galley gone."

"But she proved your ideas, Pierre!"

He laughed bitterly. "At the cost of everything. Our men gone, our ship gone. What good are these corsair hulks, these Moorish slaves, to us? None. I told you there was no luck in loving me, in anything I did. There is a curse upon me, and it is the end."

He sank down upon the deck, leaned back against the bulwarks, and stared before him with eyes dulled and lifeless. The weakness of complete exhaustion had him in its hold. His eyes closed and he passed into unconsciousness.

The Venetian ship drew down, and men from her came aboard in a small boat.

When Roche came to himself, he was in the richly dight cabin of the corsair. Jean Guiri was gone now. Beside him

was Eleanor, all disguise flung aside, pouring wine between his lips. He wakened, drank gratefully, and felt warmth flood into him. A third person was here, a grave, keen-eyed man clad in the sober garb of Venice.

"Pierre!" exclaimed the girl. "This is Messer Carlo Mocenigo of Venice—"

"Who owes you life and liberty, noble knight," said the Venetian, smiling. His eyes went from one to the other of them, probing, questing, comprehending. Roche nodded and let his chin fall on his chest.

"It is nothing," he said dully. "You have won much. I have lost everything. You owe me no thanks."

"Still, I desire to speak with you in all courtesy," Mocenigo said. "How you fought those Moors was a marvel. Never have I seen a galley so handled, or one so rigged as to accomplish miracles."

"And you never will again," said Roche bitterly, and came to his feet. "Good signor, if you would talk, then talk with this gentle lady, who has also lost much. I must ask you to excuse me and charge me with no discourtesy; I need the fresh air, and am in no mood to talk."

He went out on deck and paced up and down the red planks, speaking to no one. He had won a victory, yes, and a bitter one. Now he knew, more than ever, that life held nothing for him and for this woman who loved him. He regretted sharply that he had not died in this fight. There was nothing left for him, or her!

Of a sudden he halted his stride, and his brows drew down. He saw Mocenigo before him, and was angry.

"You still press me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes." The Venetian smiled gravely. "You have lost a ship, sir knight, but you have, perhaps, gained a hundred ships, or five hundred."

"Eh?" Roche looked hard at him. "What d'you mean?"

"Why, just this: Venice needs you; come and take charge of the Arsenal, and provide us with war-galleys that will handle as speedily and neatly as this ship of yours handled. With such ships, Venice will sweep Genoa off the sea! Can you do it?"

"No," said Roche, though his pulses hammered. "I am vowed to the Order, signor, and could not do this without being released from my vows."

Mocenigo's lips twisted slightly.

"Aye? Released—for Venice, or for other reasons?"

"It is impossible," Roche said curtly. "I have no influence, no wealth."

"Venice has wealth for you, and influence for others," Mocenigo said. "Listen! This is a business proposition, sir knight. Will you come to Venice with me? Yes or no. I'll guarantee your release from the vows of the Order, and full charge of the Arsenal."

Roche stared at him a moment, then grunted skeptically.

"And what's your guarantee worth? How do I know you have any influence?"

"I should have," said Mocenigo. "I'm one of the Council of Ten, and my uncle happens to be the Doge. Yes or no?"

The Lady Eleanor had come up to them, listening.

"Yes," she said briskly, and took the arm of the astounded Roche. "Yes, my Lord, a thousand times yes! Eh, Pierre?"

It was already said. And when Mocenigo turned to his boat, she shook Roche by the arm and looked up into his face with wide starry eyes.

"My brother is Cardinal de Lusignan, and my father's the King of Cyprus," she said softly and gayly, "but you're the only living soul who will ever know it, my dear. Are you satisfied with your evil future, and properly ashamed, and very humble?"

Roche laughed, as though a weight had fallen from his heart, and kissed her.

"I'm humble, for all my life long, before you," he said.

SO there was the story, as I got it from the old documents of Inspector Rosch. Next time I was in Port Huron, I had a chat with him about it all. The curious thing was, that there was really something in the story, for I had discovered that about this time Venice did change over the rig of her galleys, and swept the seas with them. When I asked the Inspector about that point, he laughed.

"Well," he said, "I've got the best possible proof that it's all true, although I didn't mention the fact. You see, I'm the proof."

"You?" I said, puzzled. He chuckled softly.

"Yep, me! You see, this Pierre St. Roche was the last of the family—and I've got the genealogy to prove it."

I got the point after a minute.

"You mean, he married the girl!"

"Just that," said Inspector Rosch.

In the next story of this already famous series Vasco Da Gama and his daring crew share with you a desperate venture.

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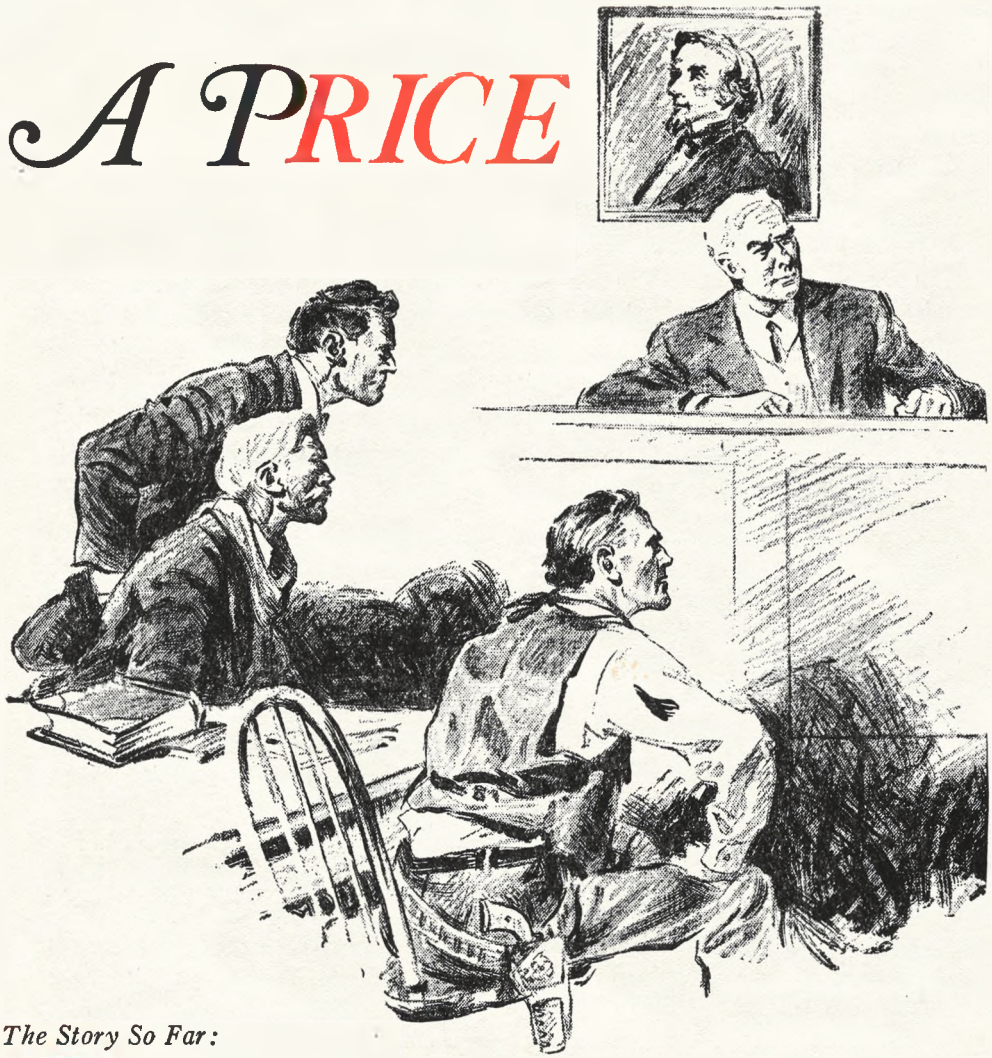


The Story So Far:

"ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD FOR THE ARREST OF BLAKE FORREST." Beneath this photograph on the post-office wall at Fair Play, Forrest read a very accurate description of himself. The only known mark to distinguish him was a scar on the back of the right hand. He was wanted for robbing the president of the bank at Rosedale, Jake Gildea, of six thousand dollars; and for the hold-up of an express-car on the Texas and Pacific.

"Can't be more than fifty thousand guys in Texas the description fits," commented Forrest when Steve Porter, a young Texas Ranger present, spoke of the resemblance.

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

Blake offered to go with the ranger to the Sheriff's office. Outside, he escaped by a ruse, vaulted onto his horse and was out of range before the young officer could get into action.

Forrest was about to make camp that night in the brush far from town when he came upon a young woman almost exhausted from thirst. She proved to be Janet King, the daughter of a prominent rancher; on her way to town she had been thrown from her horse and the beast had run away.

The wanted man cared for her that night, and next day took her back to town on his own horse—with the result that he was recaptured by the ranger and placed in Sheriff Waggoner's jail. The Sheriff, however, was an old friend of Blake's—who knew, indeed, a thing or two about Waggoner's own past. And Forrest persuaded Waggoner to allow him to escape in order to round up evidence to clear himself of the false train-robbery charge—this on Blake's promise to give himself up again in two weeks.

In the town of Deer Trail, however, Forrest was recognized by his enemies the Terrell gang, and had to shoot his way out when they trapped him in a wagon-yard. . . . Riding away afterward in the rain, he found Funnel Creek flooded and the bridge washed out; even

on HIS HEAD

The author of "Oh, You Tex!" and "A Man Four Square" is at his best in this stirring novel of the old West.

By WILLIAM MACLEOD RAINE

as he rode up, a train starting across the bridge crashed into the creek. Forrest plunged into the flood and succeeded in rescuing four people; but later when they sought to thank him, he had ridden away unrecognized.

Janet King, chagrined at having been the cause of Forrest's recapture, had induced her father's old friend Judge Henry Vallery to undertake the outcast's defense. Upon her return to the Granite Gap ranch, she found recently employed as a ranch hand a reckless youth named Stone Heath; she discovered he was a friend of Blake Forrest, and from him she heard the reason for the enmity of the Terrell crowd against Blake. Shortly thereafter Heath, because of his association with Forrest, was taken to the jail by the Sheriff.

Meanwhile, in a line-rider's cabin Forrest met another cowboy pal, one Bill Crabb, who with Heath had been with Forrest at the time of the T. & P. hold-up, and could confirm his alibi. Rested and fed, Forrest and Crabb separated, to seek evidence proving Forrest's suspicion that certain members of the Terrell gang were the ones really guilty of the hold-up. In this quest they were surprisingly successful; and after meeting again at the cabin to compare notes, they set out for Fair Play, for Forrest's promised return to custody. As they walked into the Sheriff's office, Waggoner stared at Blake in almost incredulous relief. "I'm here," Blake drawled. "Get out your handcuffs." *(The story continues in detail:)*

WAGGONER chuckled. "To Mexico with the handcuffs! Sit down, both of you. Tell me about it, Blake. All I know about you since you left is that you went over to Deer Trail and 'most took the town apart one night."

"Only thing about that is that I was leaving there in a hurry and bumped into three-four fellows who got in my way," explained Forrest, taking a chair.

"I had a talk with Craig Shannon yesterday. He told me how it was. You were lucky."

"Not half as lucky as the Terrell gang," Crabb amended. "He might have rubbed out the whole mess of them."

The eyes of the Sheriff twinkled. He liked the valiant doggedness with which Forrest's friends defended him.

"I meant he was lucky having a witness like Shannon present when the fireworks began," Buzz explained. "Hadn't been for that these miscreants could have got away with their story that he fired on them from cover and started the rumpus."

"Of course I was lucky," Blake said. "All the way through. In having a fine straight man like Shannon for a witness. In not getting loaded with lead while I was high-tailing it over the fences or ducking around in the wagon-yard. If I hadn't had every break in the world they would have fixed my clock."

Bill stuck to his guns. "They didn't get a break, did they? Four wounded, and nary a one planted in Boot Hill."

"Did you round up those witnesses you went after?" asked Waggoner.

"I'm going to have to do a lot of talking," Blake said. "No use doing it several times. Bring in my lawyer Judge Vallery, that ranger Steve Porter, the district attorney, and my old side kick Stone Heath, if he is still your guest, and we'll get it all over with in one powwow. Does that sound reasonable?"

"I would say so." The Sheriff grinned at him. "I reckon, if you're telling the story of your wonderful adventures you'll forget where you got that file."

"I have already forgotten. Before you start rounding up the audience, why not put us in the same cell as Stone Heath? We've got a few things to talk over."

"Suits me. You can all stay right here in the office, if you like."

Blake shook his head. "No sir. Wouldn't look good for you, Buzz. We have to think of Ranger Porter's feelings. When you get him here, bring us all out of a cell. Kind of surprise him."

STONE HEATH, boredly reading the advertisements of a country newspaper for the third time, heard footsteps in the corridor and looked up to see who was coming. He let out a joyous "Hi-yippi-yi!" at sight of his friends.

Waggoner left them together. He was gone about an hour before he came back and unlocked the door.

"Everybody present," he grinned, "but I haven't told them yet whyfor they are here. Come on, fellows!"

He marshaled his prisoners into the office. "Thought we'd have a little get-together meeting, boys," he said.

Porter leaped up excitedly. "When did you capture Forrest?" he cried.

"I didn't capture him," the Sheriff answered. "He just drapped in because he heard he was wanted. Gents, this is Blake's party. Seems he wants to make oration. If agreeable to everybody, we'll sit in and listen."

THE ranger moved his chair to the door and sat there. He had no intention of being caught napping again by some clever trick.

"I'll be very glad to listen to anything Mr. Forrest has to say," the district attorney assented noncommittally.

"It's a long story," the accused man began. "Perhaps I had better begin with the day I came into Sampson & Doan's store and first met Ranger Porter. Surprising as it may seem, I didn't know until I read the poster there that I was accused of robbing the Texas & Pacific train. The news did not greatly disturb me, because I knew I had four witnesses who could testify I was at a cow-camp of the Circle Three B, sixty miles or so from Crawford's Crossing, at the very hour the train was being robbed."

"Interesting if true," commented Robinson, the district attorney.

"Interesting *and* true," Blake said, smiling at him. "Crabb and Heath were with me. We spent the night with two line-riders of the Circle Three B. They are on their way to town now, and I am sure will be glad to answer questions."

"Were they with you at the time the Valley Bank was robbed?" asked Porter acidly.

"We won't take up the Valley Bank matter today. I'm discussing the train hold-up now. It is not possible I could have been at Crawford's Crossing then, because I have a copper-riveted alibi."

"You were recognized by the express messenger," Robinson reminded him.

"So I was," Forrest agreed. "That's important; I don't want you to forget it."

Porter was not satisfied with the way things were going. "If you didn't rob the T. & P. express, who did?" the ranger said, flushing with resentment. "You can't tell me you don't know anything about it."

The answer of Forrest surprised greatly four of the men present.

"I know a lot about it," he drawled.

Vallery shot his cuffs nervously.

"What do you know about it, if you weren't implicated?" demanded Porter.

"I know who did do it. I thought that somebody ought to be running down the miscreants, and since nobody else seemed to be concerned, I broke jail and got busy myself."

"But by Judas Priest," broke in Vallery, "do you mean to tell us that you actually have gathered evidence connecting other parties with this crime?"

"That is what I am trying to tell you."

"And that you weren't in on it—had nothing to do with it?" Steve Porter insisted skeptically.

"No more than you had."

"I don't believe a word of it," the young ranger snapped.

"You will," Stone Heath told him. "And you'll thank Blake for putting you on the right track after you had bogged down."

"Maybe it would be a good idea to listen to what Mr. Forrest has to tell us," Vallery suggested. "He seems to know more about this than we do."

"A lot more!" Porter slipped in.

"After breaking jail I went to Deer Trail to find where my witnesses were," Forrest explained. "While I was talking with Craig Shannon I was attacked by Wes Terrell and his friends."

"Not the way I read the story," the ranger interrupted.

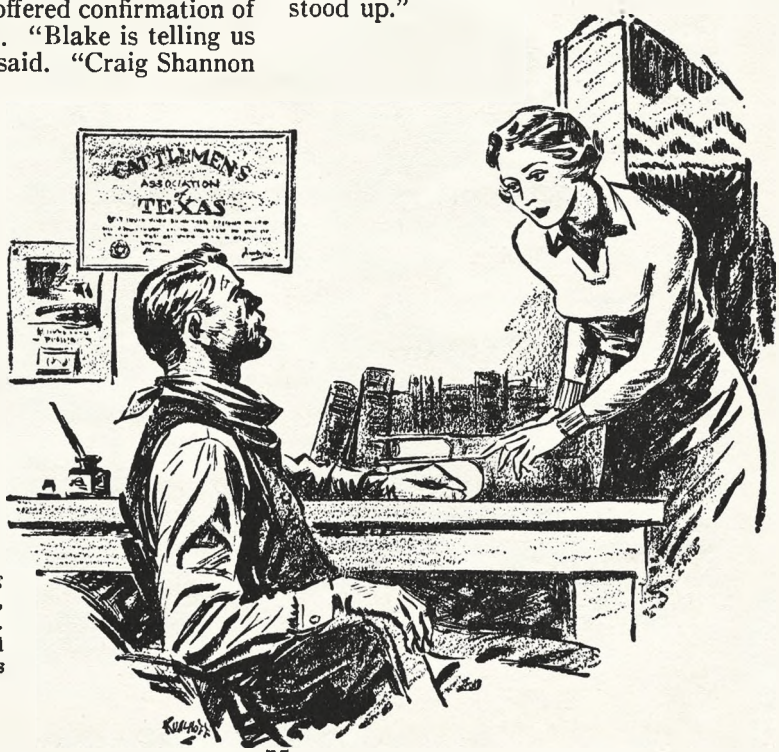
Buzz Waggoner offered confirmation of the prisoner's story. "Blake is telling us the right of it," he said. "Craig Shannon told me yesterday, and whatever Craig says is so. Wes Terrell came up and recognized Forrest. He yelled for his friends to come and rub him out. They came running—Webb Lake and Pres Walsh and young Phil Decker. When they began pouring lead at Blake, he lit out. They chased him to the wagon-yard where they had the fight."

"That the way of it, Forrest?" the district attorney asked.

"Yes sir. I didn't answer their fire because I had to get out of there in a hurry. After they had me trapped in the wagon-yard, I knew that I had to fight—or be killed. *They did not want to arrest me.*"

Robinson slanted an inquiring look at him; in it curiosity blended with admiration. "You must have had your hands full—four against one," he said.

"I had luck," Blake said simply. "It was dark, and I was hidden among the wagons. They had to dig me out. I had a crack at Walsh first, and slammed his head against a wagon-wheel. Then Lake helped me out. He and Terrell came on each other in the dark and didn't wait to find out they were friends. They blazed away, and Terrell went down. A moment later Lake saw me. He missed, but I hit his arm. That left only Decker. I played I was Walsh, got close, and pistol-whipped him. I lit out. My luck had certainly stood up."



"Aren't you making too much of this, Father?" Janet said. "I'm not infatuated with the man, if that's what you mean."

Stone Heath grinned at Forrest derisively. "You see, gentlemen, what it is to be lucky. That's all you need. A kid from school could have done it, with luck. All he had to do was to put out four gun-fighters yelping for his hide. Only four. I wish I was lucky like that."

"Quit joshing, Stone," his friend told him. "If it had been light, I'd have turned my toes up to the daisies. . . . Well, I rode over the hill and vamoosed. After I got to thinking it over, I sorted out two here and two there, and it seemed to add up to four. Why this sudden energy to wipe me out? They are enemies of mine, to be sure, but they've had several chances to start fogging during the past two years and haven't taken them. Why now?"

"A thousand dollars' reward," the ranger mentioned.

"So there is, and that might be the reason. But another one kept sticking in my mind. I was accused by Ray Terrell of leading the Texas & Pacific bandits. It would be good business to have me out of the way before I could prove myself innocent, if for private reasons of their own they did not want any more dust raised about the matter."

"WHAT private reasons?" asked Vallery, puzzled.

"Ray Terrell, express messenger on the train that was robbed, said he saw me with my mask off during the hold-up. That wasn't true. He might just be trying to pay off the debt owing me because I shot down his brother Buck in self-defense. *Or maybe it was important for him and his friends to have suspicion directed elsewhere.* This looked to me like an inside job. How did the bandits know there was a big money shipment on board that day? They knew the pay-roll would be along soon. But on just what train? The express messenger would know. Maybe he wired them, after it was put on board, from some point up the line."

"Wired them where?" Robinson asked.

"To some depot near Crawford's Crossing. My guess was Horse Creek, because I was going on the hunch that the Terrells did the job, and if they did they could stop there on the way from Deer Trail to the Crossing without going far out of their way. So I drifted in to the depot at Horse Creek and found out a telegram was sent from Santone on the twenty-third, the day of the robbery, to a Sam Jones, saying a baby was being sent on the express that day, account of scarlet fever being in the neighborhood. Mr. Jones came in to get the telegram, but he didn't come back later after the baby, and there wasn't any baby on the train for him anyhow. The 'baby' was the gold shipment."

"By Judas Priest, I'll bet you are right," Vallery cried.

THE ranger stared at Forrest, doubt and admiration struggling in his face with chagrin. Lieutenant Bronson had been on this case and evidently had taken the word of the express messenger Terrell, since there had been no cause to suppose the man was not telling the truth. Forrest had just held up a bank. What more likely than that he and his gang would follow up by robbing a train? And maybe he had. Possibly his alibi was framed. It would not be hard to get some of his friends to swear to one. All four of his witnesses might be in the stick-up as deeply as this man Forrest.

"Who was this man Sam Jones?" the ranger asked.

The prisoner directed his gaze at Porter. "I don't know, but I can guess. He was described to me by four-five people at Horse Creek who saw him, and the description fits Webb Lake. He was riding a gray horse. So was Lake when he left Deer Trail the morning of the twenty-second."

"You checked up on Lake?" Porter asked, suspicion still riding high in him.

Forrest turned to Crabb. "Say your piece, Bill," he drawled.

"Lake left Deer Trail at daybreak the morning of the twenty-second, along with Wes Terrell and Pres Walsh. They didn't show up again till Friday. I got that from Homer Burson, a kid who works at the corral where they keep their horses. Told him they were going hunting, but when they showed up they had no game with them and their horses had been ridden hard. Like Blake says, Lake was on a fleabitten gray gelding; Wes rode a big bay with four white stockings; Pres Walsh had a round-bellied sorrel. The kid pointed the mounts out to me." Crabb finished explosively: "They're guilty as hell."

"I think so," Forrest agreed quietly. "Inquire at the Horse Creek depot for a girl named Willie Fulwiler. She can tell you about Jones and the telegram. The man bought supplies at the store. He was seen by another man called Billy Boss. When Jones went into town to

"Buzz wouldn't have me for a boarder any longer. Seems I didn't hold up any train."

get the telegram he left three friends in the brush outside of town. This man Boss was looking for one of his hogs and bumped into them. They waved him round. His description of the horses fits the ones the Terrell gang were riding."

Young Porter kept his eyes fixed on Forrest. He did not know whether these men were telling the truth or not. The prisoner had fooled him once. He did not forget that. The ranger wished he had had more experience in judging men. It would not do to let his admiration for this intrepid scamp get the better of his judgment. A man could have a winning smile and still be a villain. Robinson and Waggoner seemed to believe his story. But you could not put trust in a fellow notorious as a killer and known beyond question to have robbed a bank.

"It works out right neat, doesn't it?" he scoffed. "These Terrells are your enemies. They claim you held up the train. When it's your turn you pass the buck back to them. I don't know any of these witnesses you have. Maybe you're all in it, each one alibi-ing the others."

Blake showed no resentment. "Take it or leave it, Porter. Opportunity's like a baldheaded man with a beard, I've heard. You can catch him coming but not going. Maybe I'm offering you a chance to make a name for yourself. Maybe it is just a fairy tale. *Quien sabe?* If you are too busy to bother with it I reckon Buzz may want to take a crack at it. His political career won't be hurt any by digging up evidence to convict these train-robbers."

"Not none," agreed the Sheriff.

"I didn't say I wouldn't look into this," the ranger said quickly, "only I don't have to believe everything you say, not after the way you ran out on me once."

The prosecuting attorney spoke. "After we have talked with these Circle Three B riders, we'll know whether Forrest's alibi stands up. Personally, I think it will. Why should he pull a windy on us, when he knows it wouldn't stick? Morris of the Circle Three B will know if these line-riders were off the job two or three days. Besides, I'm willing to believe the Terrells would do a job like this. If you don't report this to Lieutenant Bronson, you may be making a serious mistake."

PORTER flushed. He was boy enough still, to resent advice from an outsider. "I'm going to report it," he said huffily. "But I'm going to insist Sheriff Wag-

goner keep Forrest here. In any case, there is another charge against him."

"So there is," Blake said. "Keep me well locked up, Buzz. . . . Oh, one thing more, gentlemen. Too many of us know about the evidence against the Terrells. We'll have to be clams, to give Mr. Porter a fair chance to investigate without the suspected men getting notice of what is being done. If there is a leak among us it may be harder to get the necessary evidence."

"As well as give them a chance to pull their freights for points north, south, east or west," Stone Heath added.

"If there is any talking done, it won't be by the rangers," Porter said. And the others too pledged themselves to silence.

CHAPTER XII

JANET followed her father into the little room he called his office. He sat down in the big armchair back of the table that served as a desk. Uncertainly, she looked down at him.

"Something on your mind, daughter?" he asked.

"I'd like to go down to Fair Play with you tomorrow, Father," she said. "I have some shopping to do, and we can pick up Helen and Bess there and bring them back with us."

"Hmph! You have shopping to do!"

"Yes. You know Aunt Maud and Uncle Henry have been wanting me to pay them a visit. I promised long ago I would."

"And if you were staying at the Vallerys, you would hear all about how the trial was going, wouldn't you? I reckon you would attend some of the sessions."

"I expect so. I'd like to go."

It was characteristic of his forthright daughter, he thought, not to try to disguise her great interest in the outcome of this trial.

"Texas has been a battlefield for fifty years, Janet," he said slowly. "You know all about how we fought the Mexicans first and then the Comanches. After we had them both whipped, came the Civil War. When we got that out of the way, we found the State a happy-hunting-ground for most all the desperadoes in the country. Seems like they all piled into Texas. The rangers helped and are still helping to mop them up; but decent citizens had to lend a hand too. Fact is, Janet, the cattle-steals got so big we had to fight or go bust. If we didn't win the thieves would. There wasn't any law to aid us. Well, we were hard and thorough —did things you couldn't justify in an old settled country."

"I know, Father," the girl said. "I've heard often about the horse- and cattle-thieves."

"Remember, daughter, that though there was no law except the one we carried on our hips, there always was a clear line between those who were good citizens and those who were ruffians and scalawags. We wanted to build up west Texas and make it safe for women and children. They wanted it to stay a refuge for bandits. We wanted schoolhouses and churches, and law and order. They stood for the six-shooter and rustlings and wild towns filled with human parasites contributing nothing to the welfare of the community."

"Yes, Father," she said meekly, and then spoiled it by grinning.

He pulled up to ask what she was laughing at.

"I didn't know you could be so eloquent," she commented. "Congressman Sanderson is nothing to you."

"Too much oration," he agreed. "Well, I'll talk turkey. About this Blake Forrest: I've never met him, but lately I've heard plenty. Quite a man, they say. One of those wild reckless devils that people like. A good cow-hand—top rider —game as they come—makes friends and stands by them to the finish. But never forget that he has gone bad. He's a killer, and he's a thief."

"I wish you had talked to Stone Heath about him," Janet said.

He shook his head. "Wouldn't make any difference. You can't change facts. Heath is his friend. What Forrest does may seem right to him but not to us. Heath is wild himself. He makes excuses, but the man's record is there. Forrest has been a turbulent fellow. Where there is so much smoke, there must be fire."

"He never killed anybody except in self-defence, Stone Heath says."

"I've heard another story. In any case, he robbed the Valley Bank. There's no doubt of that."

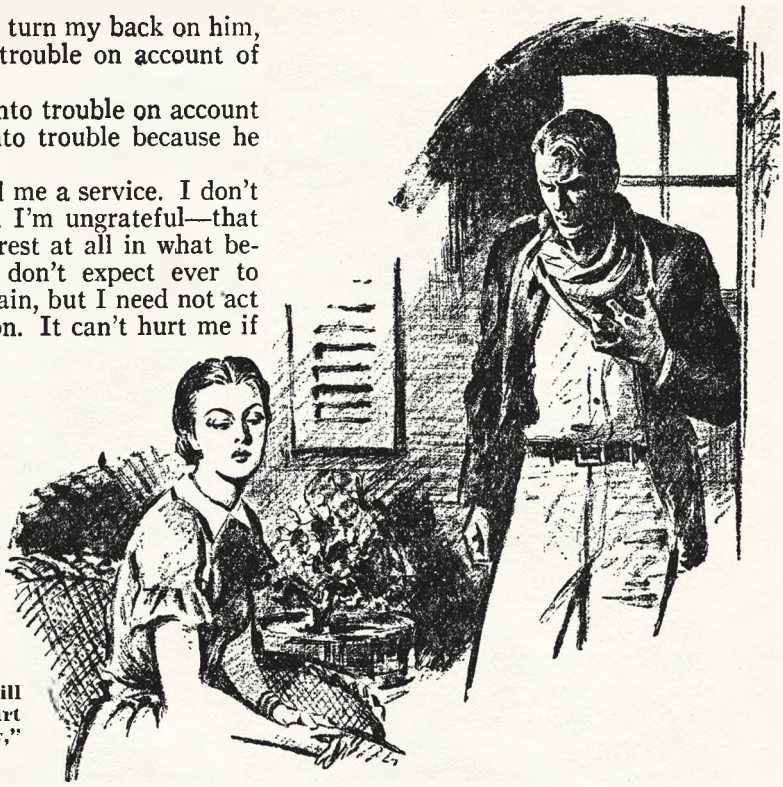
Janet repeated the tale she had been told by Heath as to the reason for the robbery.

Again the cow-man shook his head firmly. "Excuses, Janet! I'll not deny I have some sympathy with Forrest, but laws are made to be obeyed. This fellow may be the kind that women like. I don't know. But I can't have my daughter interested in a scalawag like that."

"Ought I just to turn my back on him, since he got into trouble on account of me?" she asked.

"He didn't get into trouble on account of you. He got into trouble because he robbed a bank."

"Anyway, he did me a service. I don't want him to think I'm ungrateful—that I haven't any interest at all in what becomes of him. I don't expect ever to speak with him again, but I need not act as if he were poison. It can't hurt me if he is wild—even if he has gone bad as you say."



"I suppose you will be leaving this part of the country now," Janet said.

"No. Not if you keep your head and don't—" He did not finish the sentence.

"Aren't you making too much of this, Father?" Janet said, a flag of pink flying beneath the brown of her cheeks. "I'm not—infatuated with the man, if that's what you mean. I wouldn't marry such a man if he was the last one in the world. I'm not crazy, you know."

Curtis King was relieved.

"I have to be father and mother both now," he told her, and his wistful smile was an apology. "I reckon I'm too blunt, daughter. Your mother would have known how to handle this. All I was thinking is that I'd rather see you dead than married to a scoundrel who would ruin your life. But I ought to have known you better. . . . Yes, if you want to go down to Fair Play tomorrow I haven't any objections."

THE first man they met on the main street of Fair Play after they had stepped out of the surrey was Stone Heath.

"Thought you were staying at Buzz Waggoner's hotel," Curtis King said.

"I was, but Buzz wouldn't have me for a boarder any longer." The cowboy dragged his words lazily. "Seems I didn't hold up any train."

"Do they know who did?"

Heath's face was a blank wall. "I wouldn't know about that. I haven't heard of anybody being arrested. Except Blake Forrest."

"He's still in jail, of course."

"Sure. His trial begins today—for the Valley Bank business." Heath's gaze had picked up some men coming down the street toward them. All the amiable friendliness vanished from his eyes. They grew hard and cold.

Janet wondered. Her glance followed his, to the four men straddling along the sidewalk. Three of them she did not know. The fourth was Phil Decker, a brother of her schoolmate Helen. The Deckers had been close friends of her family for a generation. The others were all older than he—hard-looking characters; one of them wore his arm in a sling.

Curtis King spoke to them. "Good morning, boys," he said. "In town for the trial, I reckon. There will be quite a gathering."

"We're here as witnesses," Wes Terrell said, lifting his hat to the young woman. "Aiming to help send that scoundrel Forrest to the pen'." He spoke to the owner of the Granite Gap ranch, but the triumph was directed at Heath.

"I don't wonder you don't like him," Heath said with cool hardihood, "after the way he has showed you-all up three or four times."

"That'll be enough from you," Pres Walsh cried angrily.

"Enough from all of you," King ordered quietly. "I'm surprised you don't know better, with a lady present."

"We didn't mean to start anything," Phil Decker said. "Better move on, boys. See you later."

He lingered to talk with the Kings. "I'm expecting Helen and Bess in two-three days," he explained. "Helen's school closed Friday. She is right tired of teaching reading and arithmetic, and I expect she will enjoy being with you-all up at the Granite Gap for a while. Bess too. She hasn't been any too peart since the train-wreck, though she's acting more like herself now."

"We'll take care of her at the Granite Gap," the ranchman promised. He was very fond of Bess Decker. She had lived with them for two years after the death of her mother ten years earlier. Her father was a boyhood chum.

"Soon as they get to town, let us know," Janet said. "We'll be at the Vallerys'."

THE lawyer and his wife were very pleased to see Janet. They did not often have young people at the house, and the good spirits of youth cheered them. Curtis stayed at the hotel.

After supper Janet made an opportunity to see the lawyer alone.

"Uncle Henry," she began with no circumlocution, "I want you to carry a note from me to Mr. Forrest."

"Now look here, miss," he retorted promptly. "I quit playing Cupid a right long time ago. If you want any notes carried, you get Curt to take them."

Her grin was a mixture of cajolery and impudence. "No sir. You're going to take the note your own self. I've written it. Here it is. You can read it."

"I don't want to read any of your love-letters," he said, waving it aside.

The girl's color deepened. "Don't be silly, Uncle Henry. It's not a love-letter. You know that very well. It's just a little message hoping that he will be acquitted. Read it. See if it isn't perfectly proper."

"I don't care how proper it is," he exploded. "Point is, it isn't wise. Suppose this got out and folks talked. Don't forget that this man is a criminal and is going to the penitentiary for a long stretch of years."

"How could it get out? Is Mr. Forrest the sort of man who would—boast about it?"

"No. Still—"

She folded her hands and looked demure. "I'm a young lady, and I ought to think of appearances. For young ladies must be very circumspect. Isn't that the word? He might misunderstand and think that I was a brazen young hussy."

"We can't make our own laws." The accused man rejoined: "I've heard you made yours, Mr. King, in the days when rustlers were in this country."

"All right—I'll look at the note."

While he was reading it, Janet made comment: "We can't all be wrapped in cotton and laid away in moth-balls until we are married, Uncle Henry. When somebody does us a great kindness we have to show appreciation, even if the some one happens to be a young man."

"I suppose if I don't take this note, you'll get it to him some other way," Vallery said, looking at her severely over his spectacles.

"Of course," she said sweetly, "but I know you are going to take it."

He snorted. "All right. I'll see he gets it, but I won't bring you back an answer."

"There won't be any answer," she said.

Having come to know Forrest pretty well, his lawyer reflected that she was probably right. The outlaw would not compromise her by so much as a sign of recognition.

CHAPTER XIII

"SOME one to see you, Blake," Buzz said, and stood aside to let the visitor enter the cell. "Meet Colonel King of the Granite Gap ranch."

Forrest rose from the cot where he had been lying and shook hands with a strongly built broad-shouldered Westerner who had *cattleman* written all over his face, bearing and clothes.

The prisoner offered his guest the only chair and sat down himself on the cot. The object of this call was not clear to him, and he waited for King to explain.

Of the two, Curtis King was the more embarrassed. "I've been talking to a good friend of yours, Mr. Forrest, a young fellow who is riding for me," he said. "You know who I mean—Stone Heath."

"I know him very well. A top rider—good man in every way—entirely trustworthy."

"He hasn't been with me long, but I have no complaint." King threw away that opening and came bluntly to one nearer his heart. "Fact is, sir, I'm greatly indebted to you for your kindness to my daughter when you found her lost."

Blake had in his vest pocket a note from the young lady, but he did not mention that. It was a pleasant harmless message, but he intended to destroy it before he was taken from his cell to the courtroom.

He waved the cattleman's thanks aside. "I couldn't have done less, Colonel. You know that. She couldn't have met anybody who wouldn't have done as much."

"That does not relieve me of my obligation, sir. If there is anything I can do for you—no matter what it is—I want you to call on me."

The man on the cot shook his head. "Can't think of a thing you can do, but I appreciate the offer."

"Not short of funds, are you?" King blurted out. "Trials cost money. Glad to make you a loan."

"I'm obliged to you, sir," Forrest answered. "But I have drawn on my bank for a sum sufficient for my needs." His smile was cynical. He might almost have said in so many words that Jake Gildea was paying the expenses.

The owner of the Granite Gap had a sense of frustration. But he persisted.

"I have another ranch in the Big Bend country," he said. "In case you are acquitted, you might like to leave this section and make a fresh start. I can always use a top rider."

"Sorry," Forrest replied. "Don't think I'll be able to accept that offer, sir. I expect to take a job to work for the State of Texas."

"Haven't you any defence?"

"The best witness I have is old Jake Gildea. He won't say anything for me; but when the jury gets a good look at him, they may vote not guilty on general principles."

"You've given up, then. Are you going to plead guilty?"

"Why, no." Forrest looked at him in mock surprise. "There's no guilt in taking from that old skunk what belongs to me and doesn't belong to him."

"The law—"

"Yes, I know about that," the young man interrupted. "The cards are stacked for scoundrels like Gildea. When he robs widows, it's a financial transaction. When I make him shell out his blood-money, it's bank-robbery."

"We can't make our own laws," the older man said gravely. "Not individually. We all have to abide by the group laws that our representatives make."

"I've heard you made yours, Mr. King, in the days when the rustlers were pulling off the big steal in this country," the accused man rejoined.

"That was before law and order had come to the frontier."

"I see." Again Forrest's cynical smile flashed. "But now they are here—and Gildea can pull off his crooked stuff with full protection."

King understood that the prisoner realized he would be convicted and would stand up to his sentence without batting an eye. The ranchman was of the old fighting West himself, and he held to the view that it is what a man is and not what he has done that counts. He had seen a horsethief go into a burning house to save a child, with the chance of ever coming out alive nearly negligible, while a score of respectable citizens stood back daunted by the danger. Looking now into the hard reckless face of Forrest, he felt it was not an evil face; but he had not subdued himself to the discipline of the new era, and he would have to pay the price.

The cattleman rose. "If there is anything I can do for you—now or later—I hope you'll feel free to call on me."

Forrest, thanking him, said he would.

The cattleman found Vallery in his office. The lawyer would be a very busy man for a few days during the court session. He had four or five cases coming up for trial.

"I've been to see that man Forrest, Henry," the rancher told his friend. "Looks to me like he hasn't a chance."

"Not a chance, Curtis," admitted Vallery, leaning back in his chair and stretching his arms in a characteristic nervous gesture. "All I can do is get extenuating circumstances into the record, and I'm not even sure I can do that."

"What does Robinson mean by bringing this riffraff from Deer Trail to testify against Forrest? I mean that Terrell crowd. The fight in the wagon-yard had nothing to do with the bank robbery."

With a mysterious smile Vallery explained: "They think they are here as witnesses against Forrest, but they are not. A little surprise for them."

THE case of the State of Texas *vs.* Blake Forrest opened next morning, but Janet and Mrs. Vallery did not attend the trial until afternoon, for the defendant's lawyer had told them the morning would be occupied in selecting a jury and in the opening statements of the lawyers. On the way to the courthouse they met Phil Decker and his sisters. Helen and Bess joined Mrs. Vallery's party.

Though the room was crowded, some men rose to give the ladies seats. Judge Jackman entered a moment later, and almost immediately afterward Buzz Waggoner brought in the prisoner.

The eyes of all present turned toward Blake Forrest, and followed him down the aisle. At sight of the strong brown sardonic face, of the compact graceful body moving with such lithe and indolent ease, Janet felt a hot emotion hammering through her veins. She thought he looked as little like a criminal as any man she had ever seen.

HELEN DECKER became aware that her sister was whispering to her, in a voice flooded with emotion.

"He's the man who saved me from drowning," Bess was saying urgently.

The older sister stared at the girl. "Who is? Somebody here in the courtroom?"

"The man who just came in with Mr. Waggoner." Bess added, swiftly: "Can we ask somebody who he is?"

"I know who he is," Helen answered. "If you mean the man sitting down with Uncle Henry. But are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. How could I be mistaken? Who is he?"

"He's the prisoner—Blake Forrest." Helen turned, all excitement, and whispered the news to Janet.

The heart of that young woman sang a wild tumultuous song of praise. He was, after all, a man among ten thousand, one of whom she could be proud.

"I knew he wasn't bad," she told herself happily. "How could he be and look like that? I knew he was good and brave and—splendid."

"He can't be a bank-robber, and I don't care if he is," Bess murmured excitedly. "I've got to thank him for saving me."

Janet did not answer at once. She was thinking—swift, urgent, fugitive thoughts. They must not take him to prison—the man who had saved four lives from the flood, then vanished unknown. She must see her father—and Uncle Henry. They would do something about it. They must!

She whispered to Mrs. Vallery. "Something has come up—very important. I must see my father and Uncle Henry."

Mrs. Vallery looked at her in surprise.

"What do you mean, dear?" she asked.

"Let's get out of here a little while, please. We can't talk in this room."

Mrs. Vallery led the way down the aisle to the door.

"Will you ask somebody to bring Father, Aunt Maud?" Janet said.

"Yes, but—what's it all about, my dear?"

Janet drew her to one side, but it was Bess who answered.

"Oh, Aunt Maud, the prisoner—the man sitting in there beside Uncle Henry —is the one who dragged me out of the river."

Mrs. Vallery asked the same question Helen had. "Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. I'd know him among a million."

A lounger near the door tiptoed into the courtroom and brought Curtis King to them. He listened incredulously, but Bess' certainty convinced him.

Five minutes later the bailiff of the court handed a note to Henry Vallery. Jake Gildea had just taken the witness-stand, but the lawyer took time to read the message. The scrawl ran:

Bess says that Blake Forrest is the man who saved her from the flood after the train wreck. We'll have to get him out of this jam.

The note was signed by Curtis King.

Vallery forgot for a few moments the witness who was testifying, his mind busy with this new development. If this was true, why had Forrest not told him, so that he could somehow get it before the jury? The lawyer penciled a reply on the back of the paper and sent it by the bailiff to King. He wrote that after Gildea left the stand, he would ask for a ten-minute recess.

GILDEA was a fat shapeless man who never took any exercise. The small eyes in the swollen face were crafty and suspicious. Because of his unwholesome personality, he made a bad witness.

Robinson led him through his story as sketchily as possible. Though Gildea was the chief witness for the prosecution, Robinson wanted to get him out of the way quickly. He wished the jury to fix its attention on the robbery and not on old Jake.

"Did the prisoner give any reason for demanding the money?" the prosecuting attorney asked.

"Some cock-and-bull story about a business deal I had with his mother once," Gildea sneered. "Nothing to it."

"Were you in fear of your life when you turned over the money to him?"

"Yes sir, I was. He is well known as a killer."

Vallery at once raised an objection, which was sustained by the court.

"That is all," Robinson said.

Gildea was rising to leave when Vallery stopped him. "Just a moment, please," he said affably.

Step by step he led the witness through the story of the hold-up. Several times the banker snapped at him angrily, but he never lost his air of polite courtesy.

"Now, about this transaction with the prisoner's mother. Will you tell the jury the facts in full?"

The prosecuting attorney objected as immaterial, incompetent and irrelevant.

"If Your Honor pleases," Vallery explained, "I want to lay the groundwork for proof that there was no robbery but merely the payment of a debt long due."

AFTER some argument the judge permitted the question.

The memory of the witness appeared to be very hazy as to details, but Vallery refreshed it with papers submitted to him for identification. It was the story of a sordid steal on the part of one managing property for a widow who trusted him. Apparently Gildea had skated on very thin ice, but he had escaped legal liability, because Mrs. Forrest had signed papers whenever asked by him. By the time the attorney for the defence had finished questioning him, beads of perspiration glistened on the banker's face.

"You say you turned this money over to the defendant because you were in fear of him," Vallery said gently.

"Wouldn't you be afraid of a desperado?"

"Just answer the question, please," Vallery interrupted quietly. "Yes or no."

"Yes, I was."

"Did Mr. Forrest at any time draw a gun while he was in your private office?"

"He had a six-shooter strapped to his hip."

"You have not answered my question."

"His fingers were within a foot of the butt of his forty-five."

"Answer the question, Mr. Gildea," ordered the judge.

"No," the witness snarled.

"Did you have a gun in the room, Mr. Gildea?"

"Yes."

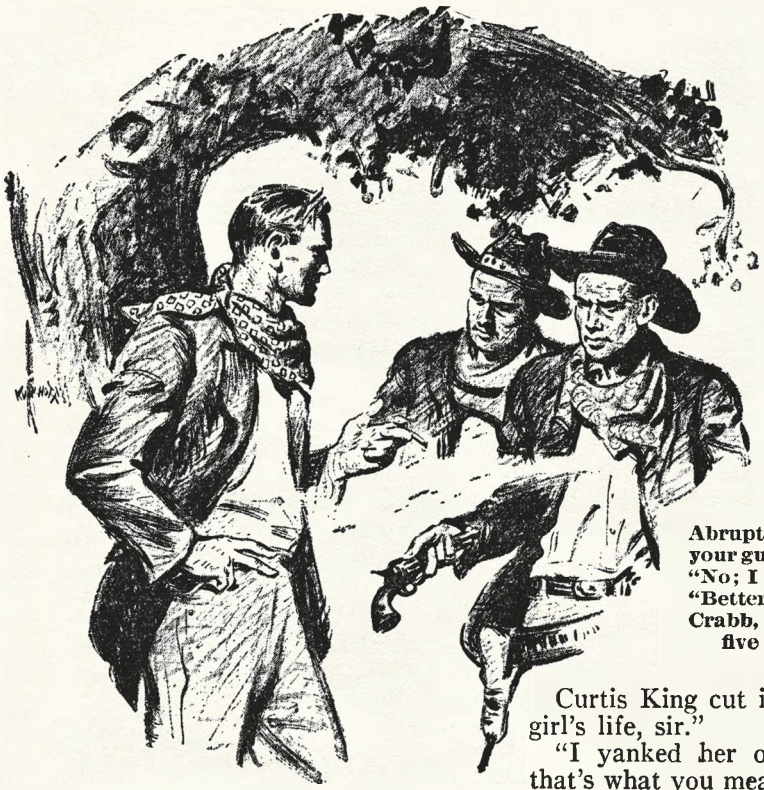
"Where was it?"

"In my desk."

"About a foot from your fingers, maybe."

Sharply the prosecuting attorney objected. The court sustained the protest. Vallery smiled. He had got his point before the jury.

"It is known to you, is it not, Mr. Gildea, that this is still an Indian country, and that many of our citizens who travel much still carry revolvers?"



Abruptly Heath said, "Got your gun with you, fellow?" "No; I left it at the hotel." "Better take mine," said Crabb, and drew a forty-five from its holster.

Again Robinson objected. Vallery was satisfied to have the question ruled out. He made one last query, impressively:

"Is it not true, Mr. Gildea, that you turned this money over to the defendant voluntarily because of an uneasy conscience troubled by the fact that you had long owed it to him?"

"No," the witness roared. "Nothing of the kind."

"That is all," the lawyer said.

Gildea left the stand much ruffled—but Vallery did not flatter himself that he had shaken the fact of the robbery.

BUZZ WAGGONER brought the prisoner into his office, where he found not only Mr. and Mrs. Vallery but the King family and the Decker girls waiting for him.

"Something important has developed, Forrest," explained Vallery. "This young lady, Miss Bess Decker, says you are the man who saved her life after the train wreck."

The prisoner looked more closely at the slim long-legged girl. He smiled at her. "I told you that you'd sleep—and you did," he said.

She grinned at him shyly. "Yes, Doctor. How's the shoulder?"

"Fine, nurse. A little stiff yet, but otherwise good as new."

Curtis King cut in. "You saved this girl's life, sir."

"I yanked her out of the creek, if that's what you mean," Blake answered.

"They've been looking for you. So have the Hunts, to thank you for saving little Myra."

"Did I save her? I climbed a tree and brought her down, if she's the same kid I have in mind."

"You swam the Funnel to get across to her, and you dragged out Finn Gunter and his little boy."

"Sure. With a rope tied around my waist, so I had no chance of drowning. Glad I was there to give them a lift out, though. But what has this to do with the price of beans in Tennessee? We're keeping a heap of folks waiting in the courtroom."

Vallery said: "Perhaps you don't know that everybody in this part of the country has been anxious to find out who it is that saved four lives from the Funnel."

His client was annoyed. "What difference does it make? I was present, so I pulled out the folks I could reach. Mr. King has twenty men riding for him would have done the same. You're not going to make a fuss about it, are you? I'm not going to be made an idiot of with a lot of hero tomfoolery."

Bess stood up to him, her eyes flashing. "If you think you can save my life and not have me say thanks, you're mistaken. I was there. I saw what you did. Two or three times you went un-

der and I thought you were gone. Every time you went into the river you risked being drowned—and you know it as well as I do. So there."

"I wouldn't argue with a lady," Blake smiled, embarrassed. "Now that's over with, I reckon. I'm thanked. Since you say I helped, I'll ask you to repay the favor. Let's keep this a secret among those now present. I wouldn't want to be joshed by the boys for the rest of my life, and I certainly will be if the paper gets this and prints a lot of hero stuff."

"Wouldn't you rather be joked by the boys than go to the penitentiary?" Vallery asked.

"Don't see the connection," Forrest replied.

"This story will sway public sentiment a lot, and if we can get it before the jury, might affect their verdict."

CURTIS KING took up the argument. "We have to be reasonable, Forrest. You're up against a serious charge, and we have to fight it the best way we can. I understand your feeling. You don't want a hurrah made about what you did at the Funnel wreck. In your place I wouldn't, either. But after all, that's vanity. And think of us. You have done me two great services, for Bess is like my own child. I can't stand by and see you go to prison when it can be stopped perhaps. Can't you see that? We feel —the girls are with me on that—we must get you freed if we can."

"I'm perfectly reasonable," Forrest said quietly. "This Funnel Creek business hasn't a thing to do with the case."

"But if it is brought out, it might win you a verdict."

"Look here," protested the prisoner. "Hundreds of cowboys in this county have gone into bank-full streams after stock. It's nothing to make a song about, and I'm not going to claim any credit for getting wet. That's out. It's not coming into this case. Understand?"

"I think you're wrong," Vallery said.

"Maybe so, but I'm the fellow who has to go to jail, so nobody else can have any kick coming." Forrest turned to the Sheriff. "All right, Buzz. Take me back to the courtroom."

Janet did not say anything. Except to include her in his first sweeping gaze when he entered, Forrest had not looked at her once.

But Bess had something to say. She choked down sobs while she spoke. "We couldn't make an idiot out of you, because you're acting like one already! Why should you care what a lot of dumb cowboys say in fun when it may help you to get off by using what we know? And do you suppose Janet and I are going to feel happy to see you sent to prison for the rest of your stubborn life?"

"I reckon it's his say-so, Bess," Curtis said. "I feel the same as you do, but it's Mr. Forrest's right to do as he pleases about this."

Forrest spoke to Bess gently, smiling at her. "You speak your piece right out, Miss Decker. That's all right with me. I appreciate your interest, but I just can't go around yelling that I'm a fair-haired hero. Sorry, but it has to be that way."

He and Waggoner walked out.

"So he's going to prison!" Janet said, a bleak wind sweeping through her heart.

"Not if this story will keep him out," Vallery said. "I'm running this defence. I'll get the facts in whether Forrest likes it or not." He glanced at his watch. "Time I got back to the courtroom!"

The others went with him.

After the bailiff had brought the court to order, the prosecution called a plump pink-faced youngish man in jean trousers and a seersucker coat as its next witness. He gave his name as Homer Packard and said he was cashier of the Valley Bank. After Forrest had walked unannounced into the private office of the president, he testified, Gildea had rung for him and told him to bring the Holloway note from the safe. He had done this. Five minutes later the prisoner had left the bank hurriedly, carrying one of the sacks used by the officers to carry money. Then Gildea had burst out of his office crying that the bank had been robbed.

UNDER cross-examination Packard admitted that when he first answered Gildea's call to the office, Forrest had been sitting across the desk from the president, smoking a cigarette.

"Any weapon in his hand?"

"No sir, but—"

"At any time did you see a gun in his hand?"

"Not in his hand, but on his hip—"

"Was anything said while you were there to suggest this was a hold-up?"

"Not exactly. Mr. Gildea told me to bring the Holloway note. I could see something was wrong."

"Answer my questions please. Nothing more. You say that Mr. Forrest left hurriedly. What do you mean by that? Did he run?"

"No-o, but he was kinda in a hurry."

"Witness excused."

After the prosecuting witnesses had given their evidence, Vallery asked the court for a directed acquittal verdict on the ground that the prosecution had failed to show a robbery had taken place. The judge refused this request. Before the defence had called any witnesses, he adjourned court for the night.

During the ensuing twelve hours Vallery was very busy. A messenger rode out to the Hunt ranch, another to the village where Finn Gunter lived. Ever since Vallery had taken this case, he had differed with his client on one important point: He had held that Forrest ought to stay off the stand, since he could offer no testimony that would help him and might be badgered into admissions that would prove fatal. Bluntly the accused man had vetoed this cautious policy. If he didn't get into the witness-box, everybody would know he was afraid, Forrest said. He was going to get up there and face them.

Now Vallery withdrew his opposition. He had rearranged his defence and was going to make a try for acquittal on entirely different grounds. Knowing Texas and Texans, he thought there was a pretty good chance of succeeding.

CHAPTER XIV

BLAKE FORREST'S testimony did not help him. He would not lie, and to tell the truth would have convicted him. When Robinson asked him if he had not robbed the Valley Bank, his answer was an almost insolent evasion.

"I talked the matter over with Gildea, and he decided to pay me what he had owed my mother," the accused man said with a cynical smile. "I threw off the interest."

"Answer my question," snapped the prosecuting attorney.

"Why, I've just told you," Forrest drawled, surprised innocence in his face, "I had a nice little talk with Gildea and we agreed I'd better take the money."

"You threatened his life, didn't you?"

"I'm a peaceable man, Mr. Robinson."

The judge admonished Forrest that he must stop quibbling. Robinson repeated the question.

"I don't recollect exactly what I said. Maybe I mentioned to him that he is some kind of a cross between a rat and a skunk. He scares easy."

"You're a notorious gunman, aren't you?"

Instantly Vallery objected. The court ruled that the inquiry had been put improperly, and the prosecutor reframed his attack to draw from Blake that he had killed three men in self-defence, two of them while serving as a ranger in pursuit of criminals.

"After you broke out of jail, did you stop at some cache and dig up the money you took from Gildea?"

"You mean the money he gave me," Forrest corrected. "Maybe I did."

"Is it true that before you had been out of jail twenty-four hours you engaged in a gun-fight at Deer Trail?"

THE cool gaze of Forrest swept the courtroom and halted at a group of three men standing by an open window near the back of the hall. The men were Wes Terrell, Pres Walsh and Webb Lake.

"Hardly amounted to a fight," he said carelessly. "Some riffraff tried to murder me—and gave up the job."

There was a murmur of laughter among those present. Some one in the back of the room called out: "You done said it, boy!" The judge wielded his gavel and looked severely at Stone Heath. "The courtroom will be cleared if there is any further interruption," he announced.

The prosecuting attorney waved a hand in dismissal. He had got all he wanted out of the prisoner. Forrest was leaving an impression of a hardy and dangerous man who moved outside the law to gain his ends. . . .

On re-direct examination Vallery followed the lead the prosecutor had given him.

"Where were you the second night after you left Fair Play, Mr. Forrest?"

"In the brush," Blake answered, a flash of anger in his eyes.

"Did you not, in point of fact, spend the night on the bank of the Funnel Creek?"

Forrest's hard gaze challenged Vallery, as did his curt reply. "Nothing whatever to say about that."

"You refuse to say where you spent the night?" Vallery continued blandly.

"I do. It has no bearing on this trial, and you know it."

Vallery excused the witness and asked that Janet King be called to the stand.

Janet moved down the aisle with light ease, apparently not conscious of the buzz of excitement running through the room.

She seated herself and waited. Vallery and his client were engaged in a whispered argument. Apparently Forrest was protesting bitterly at something and his lawyer was refusing to yield. The attorney had his way.

After a preliminary question or two, Vallery came directly to the point he wanted to develop. "Where and when did you first meet the prisoner, Miss King?"

"On the Mal Pais desert." And Janet added the date.

"What were you doing there?"

"I was lost, and had been for twenty-four hours. My horse had thrown me and I had been wandering around without food or water. Mr. Forrest saw me. He fed me, looked after me, and brought me to Fair Play next day."

Robinson jumped to his feet. "I fail to see the bearing of this, Your Honor. This desert meeting was long after the bank-robbery."

Suavely Vallery explained that he was bringing character witnesses to show that his client was not the kind of man to rob a bank. There was a verbal wrangle between the lawyers, after which the judge decided to admit the testimony. Evidently Miss King was taking the stand with the consent of her father. Judge Jackman was a politician, though an honest one. He saw no reason for antagonizing the owner of the biggest ranch in the county.

"How did Blake Forrest treat you, Miss King?" asked Vallery.

"With great consideration. As my father might have done."

"When he brought you to Fair Play what occurred?"

"He took me to the hotel. Before he could leave town he was arrested."

VALLERY flashed a smile at the prosecuting attorney. He knew that even if Robinson objected to this last statement, it would still be in the minds of the jurors if not in the record: Blake had come to town, knowing the risk he ran, to bring Miss King back to safety.

Janet was excused without cross-examination.

The bailiff called the name of Bess Decker. Again there was astonishment in the courtroom. It expressed itself in shuffling feet and the murmur of voices.

Bess was flushed and embarrassed. Vallery tried to put her at ease by using her first name and speaking in a gentle conversational tone.

"Have you ever met the prisoner?"

Bess looked at the man sitting beside her friend and nodded.

"Yes. He saved my life when I was drowning in the Funnel after the train-wreck." Her voice was eager.

INSTANTLY Robinson knew his case was lost. It did not matter if Forrest was guilty. The sudden startled shift of the eyes of the jurors to the face of the accused man, the swift approval that broke out almost in a shout from the astonished spectators, told the prosecuting attorney what the verdict would be.

"How did he save your life, Bess?" Vallery inquired.

The eyes of the girl were starry. "He swam into the river and dragged me out."

"You are sure the man who rescued you is the prisoner?"

"Of course I'm sure. He was there all night. After he had rescued me, he jumped in and saved the little Gunter boy—then his father Mr. Finn Gunter. I kept thinking he would be drowned. A big piece of driftwood hit him and smashed his shoulder. He was under the water a lot of times. Last of all he swam across the Funnel to get Myra Hunt out of a tree where the flood had washed her. It was terrible, Uncle Henry. I—I—"

She bit her upper lip, to keep back the sudden sob that swelled in her throat.

"It's all right, Bess," the lawyer encouraged. "Just one more question: Did Mr. Forrest tell you who he was?"

"No, he didn't." She rushed on impulsively. "I know he doesn't want me to say anything about it now. But when he came in yesterday and I recognized him, Uncle Henry, was I just to sit here and say nothing?"

"You did exactly right, Bess. You may go now, unless Mr. Robinson has some questions to ask you."

The prosecuting attorney shook his head.

The next witness was Gunter. He confirmed what Bess Decker had said. His small son followed him. Little Myra Hunt was too small to be called, but she too did her share. She sat with her father and mother near the front of the room and more than once waved an excited hand at the unresponsive Forrest. During a moment of silence she cried to her parents, in a voice audible to all: "He called me Sugar when he tooked me from the tree."

During all of which Blake Forrest looked dourly straight in front of him. They were making a fool of him, he felt.

Buzz Waggoner took Forrest to his office while the jury considered its verdict. The Sheriff overflowed into a chair and lit a cigar, after having offered a smoke to his prisoner.

"You sure did yore best to get into the penitentiary, Blake," he wheezed, settling himself comfortably. "By jumping Jupiter, you acted like Vallery and these witnesses who were talking you out of jail were yore worst enemies."

"I'm not out of jail yet," Forrest said.

Stone Heath and Bill Crabb burst into the room. They flung themselves on him joyfully.

"You doggoned sly old bronco-peeler!" Crabb shouted. "Whyfor did you keep it under yore hat that you're the fair-haired lad who yanked half the population of this county out of Funnel when it went on a rampage? Looks like you aint got good sense."

"He's one of these here shy violets, Bill," contributed Heath with a wide grin. "If it hadn't been for the King young lady and little Miss Decker—"

"They came through wide and handsome," the Sheriff said.

"Y'betcha! Busted Robinson's case wide open. This prosecution has croaked, cashed in, handed in its checks." Heath flung up his hat with a yell.

"The jury is still out," mentioned Blake dryly.

"Couple of the boys can't write," explained Crabb cheerfully. "The others are learnin' them to print *'Not guilty'* on their votes."

"I wouldn't offer two bits Mex against yore saddle for a conviction," Waggoner said. "In about five minutes they'll be sending for us to come back and listen to the good news."

THE Sheriff was right. Inside of the specified time a messenger ran into the office, his face beaming, with the news that a verdict had been reached.

This was no settled community devoted first to law and order. On the Texas frontier men were judged by other standards than those which prevailed in New England. These jurors had fought Comanches to protect their wives and children. They had pounded through the brush after moss-horns, with cactus and mesquite flogging their hands and faces. They had crossed deserts marked by the white glistening bones of cattle that had failed to survive through the withering droughts. On the long trail drives they had ridden out blizzards, swum bank-full rivers, and dashed after stampeding herds while the lightning played on the horns of the stock. The two qualities that counted most in that wild land were courage and loyalty. No arguments were necessary to show that Blake Forrest did not belong behind the walls of a prison. He was their kind of man.

WHEN the verdict was read by the clerk, the Confederate war yell was lifted in a wild whoop. The judge was among the first to congratulate the acquitted man. The prosecuting attorney beat him to it. Sensing the swift swing of public opinion, he wanted it understood there had been no animus behind the State's case. To see men struggling to reach Forrest, one might have thought he was Fair Play's favorite son instead of one who had been posted all over west Texas as a bandit worth a thousand dollars to his captor.

Bess Decker laughed and cried and cheered. She waved her handkerchief, and in her joy kissed Mrs. Vallery and her sister. Janet did not move or speak. She had been watching the dark impassive face of the prisoner when the words, "Not guilty!" dropped from the lips of the clerk. Almost instantly the rush of the crowd had hidden him, but she knew he was still cool and reserved, regardless of his private emotions. A wave of delight ran through her. He was saved from prison, and she had helped to do it! He might never look at her again, but she had paid part of her debt to him. That was something he could not wipe out of his memory.

Mrs. Vallery worked toward the place where her husband and his client were standing. Craig Shannon shouldered a path for her.

"Open up for Mrs. Vallery, boys," he called. "Clear a way. You'll see plenty of Blake later. I reckon he'll be in circulation quite a while now."

The lawyer's wife surprised her husband. After she had congratulated Forrest, she invited him to come to supper that evening. "I do so hope you will come," she said, and looked so earnestly anxious that the refusal Blake was framing died on his lips.

"I'll be glad to come, Mrs. Vallery," he said quietly, and added with a smile: "I've been some annoyed with the judge for the way he handled my case, but it turned out he was right and I was wrong."

"If you insist on being a public character, you can't keep people from talking

about it," she replied. "After all, it isn't a crime to rescue people from a flood."

"No, ma'am, and nothing to brag over, either. What time shall I come?"

"At six o'clock."

Forrest did not realize until he reached the lawyer's house that the Kings and the Decker girls would be there for supper. Otherwise he would have excused himself. He did not want them to think that they owed him any more thanks. In point of fact, it was the other way.

Bess met him on the porch, starry-eyed and shy. "You still mad at me?" she asked.

"I haven't any time been mad at you," he said, shaking hands. "I just didn't want a fuss made about nothing."

Mrs. Vallery came to the door to meet her guest. "If Bess is quite through with you," she said, smiling at the girl.

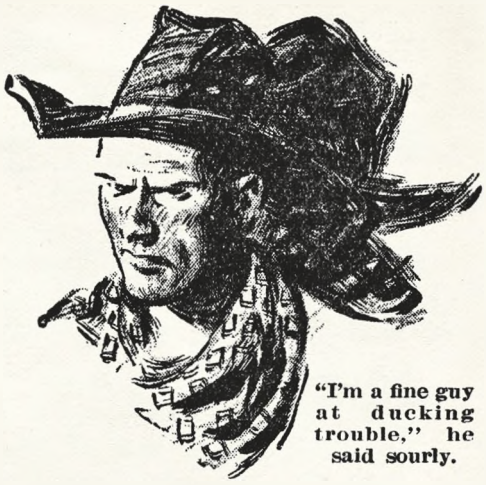
Janet and Vallery were in the parlor. Miss King had very little to say, but Blake Forrest was very much aware of her. Curtis King breezed in from a business appointment. Before they sat down for supper, he managed to get a word with Forrest alone.

"I've been hearing some talk. Nothing to it, maybe. I don't know. But the story is that Terrell and his crowd have been drinking and making threats against you. You don't want trouble with them, of course. I suggest you ride up with us to Granite Gap tomorrow. My proposition is still open about a job for you on my Big Bend ranch."

"I can't let these fellows run me out of town, Mr. King. If they are hunting for me, they will have to find me." Blake looked quietly at the older man. He knew that from the viewpoint of the frontier he was on solid ground. A man under fire could not sneak away and still hold his head up.

"Now look here, boy," Curtis answered impatiently. "Circumstances alter cases. You have just got out of one jam. If you ram-stam into another right off, you will practically be admitting you're one of these gun-men who stomp around looking for trouble. Mind, I don't say you'll be one. I mean, that's how it will look to good citizens who will be watching you from now on. You have come to a fork in the trail, owing to the good break you got today. Be mighty sure you choose the right one."

"That's all true, Mr. King. I'll say this: If Terrell and his friends don't die until I attack them, they will live forever. I'll avoid a difficulty with them if I can, but I won't light out like a scared jackrabbit."



"I'm a fine guy at ducking trouble," he said sourly.

"You don't have to do that. Just act as if you hadn't heard a word of their big talk and leave town with me. Anyhow, keep out of their way. I understand that Bronson of the rangers is about ready to arrest these scoundrels for the Texas & Pacific robbery. Soon as he does that, they'll be too busy to fool with you."

Forrest smiled skeptically. "Would you take your own advice if you were in my place, Mr. King? Let's say some enemies were threatening you. Would you run away and hole up? Or would you face them down?"

"Not a parallel case," the ranchman snapped. "When you get older you'll learn that a man sometimes has to pay no attention to what folks say in a case like this."

CHAPTER XV

BLAKE and Janet wandered to the porch after supper. Bess was helping their hostess clear away the dishes, and Curtis King had retired with Vallery to the library to talk over a cattle contract. The soft velvet night lapped the ugly little town and magically softened its rawness to a thing of beauty. The moon and stars were out, enough to give a light that might be dangerous. Forrest remembered what the cattleman had told him, and was careful to stand behind the thick bougainvillea vines.

"I suppose you will be leaving this part of the country now," Janet said, and felt a wave of color beating into her face. Why had she mentioned that? Perhaps he would think she was begging him to

stay, or that she meant he was disgraced and ought to go.

He gave her question back: "Why?"

"I don't know—I thought maybe—"

"That I had better try a new start where people don't know I am a bank-robber who got off by a fluke?"

She did not evade his challenge, though a breathless tremor passed through her bosom. For the first time he had opened a door into his life.

"*Are* you a bank-robber?" she asked, her voice so low it just reached him.

"You heard the evidence," he said.

"I think you took the money."

"So I'm a criminal."

"No," she protested.

A sardonic smile rested on his hard lean face. "Perfectly justified? Just taking what was my own from a scoundrel who had stolen it?"

She shook her head. "No. You can't right one wrong by doing another."

"Then I'm guilty."

"Yes, but that does not make you a criminal—if you don't keep the money."

Forrest did not answer. Two men were moving up the dusty road.

"You had better go into the house," he said quietly.

"What do you mean?" she asked, startled at the change in him. Her eyes followed his, and fear rose to her throat. "Those men—you think—"

The call of a coyote sounded.

"It's all right," her companion said. "They're friends."

He moved to the gate to meet them. Janet walked into the house.

STONE HEATH and Bill Crabb joined Forrest. He knew they had come to bring him information, but ignored this. With an elbow on the top of the gate, he grinned derisively at them. "We've just finished a top-notch supper—fried chicken, biscuits that melt in your mouth, mashed potatoes with gravy, string beans, real coffee, and strawberries and cream to top off with. If you've come for a hand-out, I'll find out if Mrs. Vallery has any wood she wants chopped."

Abruptly, Stone Heath said: "Got your gun with you, fellow?"

"No. I left it at the hotel. One of you want to hock it?"

"Better take mine," Crabb said, and drew a forty-five from its holster under his left arm.

"What's the urge?" Forrest asked. "I'm a guest of the Vallerys. They don't either one look dangerous to me."

"It's the Terrell bunch," Crabb explained. "They're up at Peake's Place getting roostered. If a jury hasn't sand enough in its craw to convict you, why, they aim to take a hand. That's the talk they are making."

"Did they mention what kind of hand?"

"Not necessary. You know what they mean." This from Heath.

"I reckon you boys were not present during the powwow while they were making oration."

"No. Buzz Waggoner brought us the word. Said to tell you to look out."

FORREST drummed a forefinger on the gate. "Second time this evening this has been mentioned to me. Maybe there's something to it. I don't want a mix-up with these birds if I can help it. Not an hour ago I told Curtis King there would be no trouble if they would leave me alone. But I don't aim to let them run me out of town."

"What's Lieutenant Bronson doing?" Crabb demanded hotly. "Why doesn't he put them under arrest and try them for the Texas & Pacific robbery?"

"He will, soon as he thinks he has evidence enough," Blake said. "The rangers move slow, but they get there. . . . Do you reckon these scoundrels know where I am now?"

"Sure they know. Everybody in town has heard that Mrs. Vallery gave you an invite to supper."

"Then what's to prevent them from coming down here and lying in wait behind those cottonwoods to blast me when I come out from the house?"

"Not a thing in the world," Heath answered promptly.

"I wouldn't like that," Blake said placidly. "Mustn't be any trouble here. I wouldn't want the other guests frightened. Reckon I'll step in and say good night to my hostess. Back in a couple of minutes. Stick around."

Forrest walked back into the house. "I find I'll have to be leaving," he told Mrs. Vallery. "Some business has come up unexpectedly. I have enjoyed your hospitality very much. It was good of you to ask me." To her husband he said: "See you at your office in the morning, Judge."

Curtis King looked at him with eyes narrowed. "Do you expect to see me too?" he asked.

"Yes sir. I'm still thinking about that Big Bend offer."

"Janet says your friends are outside. That's good—to have friends who stick by you when you need them."

Forrest nodded, understanding the warning. He was being advised not to appear without them as long as he was in town.

"They're tough *hombres* and hard to shake," he said carelessly.

From the moment he had reëntered the room Janet's eyes had not left Forrest. She knew that this business which had come up was serious.

When he shook hands with her, she said in a low voice: "You'll be careful, won't you?"

His surprised gaze fastened a moment to hers. He answered, smiling at her: "From now on I'm going to be the kind of guy that takes an umbrella out for fear it will rain."

HEATH and Crabb were waiting for him outside. They walked down the dusty road toward town. Again Bill offered him his gun.

"You might need it—sudden."

"Not I," Blake said gayly. "I'm a reformed character." He put it in the words of a negro spiritual.

"I wrastled with Satan and I wrastled with sin
Stepped over hell, and come back ag'in."

"Are Wes Terrell and Pres Walsh and Webb Lake reformed characters?" Heath asked dryly.

"No information on that point, Stone," Forrest said cheerfully, and continued to sing:

"Isaiah mounted on de wheel o' time,
Spoke to God A'mighty way down de line."

"Just out of plumb idle curiosity, I'd like to know what you're figuring on doing when you get back from the camp meeting," Heath suggested.

"Me? Why, I'm going up to my room at the hotel to play seven-up with you boys. After that I'm going to bed."

"Not going to pay any attention to the brags of these scoundrels?"

"Not a bit. If it's just talk it will die down. If they mean business I'll duck it if I can."

"And if you can't?" Bill wanted to know.

"Why, that will be a bridge to cross then and not now."

"We heard Wes says for you to light out of Texas if you know what's good for you."

"Did he send me railroad fare?"

"You want to go heeled, Blake," remonstrated Crabb. "If they knew you weren't toting a gun—"

"They would shoot you into rag dolls," Heath finished for him.

When they turned into the hotel it was by the side door leading through the barroom. A rowdy group of half a dozen were drinking. The three friends had walked into the very crowd they were trying to avoid.

Into Heath's ear Forrest dropped a word of instruction. Rapidly Blake led the way toward the door opening into the lobby. He did not reach it. Terrell caught sight of him and gave a yelp of surprise.

"Here's the damned buzzard-head," he called to the others.

With three swift strides he had cut off his enemy from the lobby.

Forrest moved to the end of the bar and rested his left forearm on it, so that he faced the row of men lined up in front of it. He stood there negligently, at apparent ease, watching with a cynical smile the consternation his arrival had produced. But his eyes, half hooded by sleepy drooping lids, had the glittering pounce of a hawk.

Three of those in the place were casual bar-flies lapping up free drinks. A new round had just been ordered, and the glasses were full. The spongers did not wait to empty them. Swiftly, without actually running, they got out of the line of fire. One vanished through the door. A second took refuge behind a table overturned by him in his flight. The third lay down back of the bar.

"SO you came here looking for trouble," Lake said in a flat voice. His right arm was in a sling, and the belt he wore had been shifted so that the weapon in it could be drawn by the left hand.

"No sir," answered Forrest, dragging the words. "Trying to duck it. Heading for my room where I could hide under the bed."

"I'll bet you're plumb scared, Blake," Heath said, following instructions.

"Quivering like an aspen," his friend admitted, with a cool laugh. "Why wouldn't I be, with these wolves howling for my blood? Looks like the end of the trail might be in sight—for somebody."

"You don't reckon it would do any good for you to beg off," Heath proposed, his grin insolent in its mockery. "Mebbe if you'd get down on yore marrow-bones

and beg pretty, these Bill Hickok gents would let you go this time."

The sudden appearance of his enemy flanked by two devoted friends had taken Terrell at disadvantage. He had no doubt they had walked in prepared for a battle. The gaze of the big man slid to his companions, to Pres Walsh and Webb Lake, and found no comfort there. They would fight if necessary, but they had no relish for a fracas of this sort. They waited for their leader to make the decision.

Wes Terrell shirked making it; he wanted a sure thing when he started guns blazing against Blake Forrest.

"Whoever told you we were looking for you lied," he said flatly. "If this town wants to make you its fair-haired hero, that's all right with us. We've got our own opinion of you, and we're not afraid to tell it anywhere, by thunder."

"Except when Mr. Blake Forrest happens to be present," Heath added.

"Then or any time," Terrell boasted, saving face. "Come on, boys. Let's get out of here where the air don't smell of skunks."

He swaggered out, Lake and Walsh at his heels.

Heath gave a whoop triumphant. "You doggoned old buckaroo, they don't want any of your game!" he cried.

Crabb pounded Forrest on the back with a hamlike fist. "I never did see such a bad-man tamer. And you unarmed all the time!"

"Come out of yore forts," Heath called to those in hiding. "Fourth of July all over, and no fireworks. Your drinks are still waiting on the bar for you."

The innocent bystanders reappeared, still a little shaken from fright. "Did you say that Mr. Forrest isn't armed?" one of them asked, after he had emptied his glass at a gulp.

"Not this time," Heath explained. "But next time he meets those birds he will be. Bet yore boots on that."

FORREST led the way upstairs to his room. He knew that within an hour all Fair Play would have heard the story of how he had called the bluff of the Terrell gang and made them back down from their threats. Nothing less than his death would satisfy them now.

"I'm a fine guy at ducking trouble," he said sourly. "Unless Bronson puts them all in the pen', guns are going to start smoking right soon!"

The thrill-crammed climax of this fine novel will appear in our forthcoming April issue.

Murder

A mystery of the North.

A CRASHING of brush. The rapid approach of a huge body down the slope of a densely forested ridge. The hoarse, coughing bark of an enraged bull moose.

David Bascomb slipped deftly out of his pack-straps, cocked his rifle and stepped in behind a tree.

In the shadowy spruces up the ridge a dark shape showed. The trapper's rifle cracked. There was the sound of wild plunging, the dull thud of a heavy fall.

Bascomb's bronzed face lighted with a smile of quiet satisfaction. He levered another cartridge into the chamber of his rifle and began working carefully up the ridge, where a huge hoof and the buff-and-black shank that supported it showed above the top of a fallen log.

"Dead as a salted mackerel!" Bascomb told himself, and pushed forward cautiously to look over the log.

on the Copperaxe

By REG DINSMORE

A single glance and his scalp prickled with horror.

Lashed to the wide-spreading, palmated antlers of the moose was the body of a man.

In another instant, Dave Bascomb was over the log and his keen hunting-knife was slashing at the *babiche* thongs that held the man to the moose's horns.

A few swift slashes and the trapper dragged the limp form clear. He bent over it, searching with eyes and ears for signs of life. But the man was dead.

There was little about the battered body to reveal the tale of the tragedy. Nothing by which identification was possible. Evidently the man had been nearly stripped of his clothing before being bound to the horns of the bull. Now, after perhaps hours of flight by the moose with his helpless burden, all the clothing that remained on the man's body was a shred of undershirt that clung to one torn shoulder and a pair of tattered lumberman's breeches that encased the broken and twisted lower limbs.

Bascomb sank down upon the fallen log. Although he had thought his nerves were iron-like, it was with trembling hands that he filled his pipe. The pungent fumes of the tobacco steadied him.

What fiend had done this thing? For what purpose? How could it have been accomplished? To subdue a healthy, untamed bull moose long enough to lash a man to its antlers—the trapper could not imagine anything so improbable.

Men had warned Bascomb to stay away from the Copperaxe. They had spoken of strange misfortunes that had overtaken trappers who in the past had laid their lines there. He had laughed at these weird yarns. Hadn't he run trap-lines months on end in country just

as wild? Why, then, should he stay away from a rich fur country like the valley of the Copperaxe?

Yet before him lay incontrovertible evidence that some sinister force was at work here. Puzzled, slightly frightened, Dave Bascomb turned his attention to the body.

But there was little to be learned. The sprinkling of gray in the dark hair betokened a man perhaps in his middle forties; strong muscles and a broad chest showed him to have been no weakling.

That the man had been some time in the woods, Bascomb was positive, because of the heavy paddle-calluses back in the crotch of thumb and forefinger of the right hand. Also there were spots on the top of each shoulder where the long use of pack-straps had thickened the skin.

THE trapper explored the pockets of the tattered breeches, but he found nothing. Ah, there was one more pocket —the small watch-pocket near the waistband! Bascomb slipped an exploring finger into it—touched a small hard object no larger than a kernel of corn. Gingerly he drew it out.

The thing proved to be the tiny steel blade and ivory bead of the front sight of a rifle. At some time it had received a heavy blow that had bent it badly. Evidently it had been taken from its mounting and discarded as useless. The trapper studied the bit of ivory-tipped steel for a moment, then put it thoughtfully away in his pocket.

Further search failed to reveal anything. Bascomb turned away and made off toward his cabin.

After a time he returned and at the end of two hours all that remained to tell of the unknown man was the pile of stones that the trapper had placed over the new grave to keep the wolves away. Then swinging his pack to his shoulders and glancing at the sun, he took up the back trail of the moose.

It was easy to follow the track of the bull. Frightened as the animal was, its every effort had been to run away from its fearsome burden. The deep indentations of its hoofs were plain in the moss.

In a little beaver meadow, four miles from where he had killed the bull, Bascomb came upon the spot where the binding of the victim to the moose had taken place. Here were the tracks of the animal where it had walked calmly down from a ridge and into the frost-bitten grass of the meadow. Here was where it had fallen—simply fallen, apparently. And here was where it had risen and made off with mighty frightened bounds. The lashing of the man to the animal's antlers must have occurred while the moose was lying there in the meadow. But—moose do not lie obediently down at command and allow men to approach. Bascomb bent his every sense to the reading of the tracks.

At the spot where the bull had fallen, he found a drop or two of blood—whether from moose or man he had no way of knowing. What interested him more were the tracks of a man which came to the spot from the far bank of the meadow, and returned in the same direction. He followed them to the bank. There, behind a fringe of young jack-pines, were tracks where *two* men had stood. And on the ground near by was a horn of rolled birchbark, such as is used by Indians and guides of the North to call moose in the mating season.

Bascomb's woods-trained mind pieced things rapidly together. The mating season of moose was at its height. The bull had responded to the call, and then had been downed for a time. But how?

"Creased!" Bascomb shouted the word as the explanation flashed into his mind.

"Shot through the crest of the neck close to the spine, the way the plainsman used to knock down a horse he couldn't reach with his rope!"

The trick required accurate shooting, Bascomb knew, but if the bullet is rightly placed, little harm is done and the animal will be on its feet again in a matter of minutes. . . .

All right, the moose had been creased. Then, there behind that screen of pines, one of those men had overpowered the other, carried him to the fallen animal, and lashed him to its antlers.

But the cold cruelty of the deed, the evident premeditation of the thing, why?

For a long time Bascomb stood there on the bank of the meadow picturing in his mind what had happened. Then he took the trail of the man who had left the spot. But the murderer's cunning had forestalled him. Behind the meadow a sterile ridge raised its barren crest; the trail led straight to its top. Here among the bare ledges, Bascomb, despite his trailing skill, lost the footprints. There was nothing more that he could do.

A MONTH passed. And then one day, on the far reach of a distant marten line, Bascomb crossed the track of a

man. There was, moreover, something about this track that was not normal. It circled and zigzagged this way and that; it curved and weaved among trees and rough going, when better footing was easily available. Again and again the man had fallen in the new snow.

"Either snow-blind or crazy!" was the trapper's mental comment after following the trail a short distance. "Better look into this."

SCARCELY a mile farther along the trail, Bascomb overtook the wanderer. The man was young. He had been in the bush a long time, as the ragged condition of his clothing attested. He was without rifle or snowshoes; and by the fact that he was vainly trying to climb the perpendicular face of a twenty-foot ledge which he had patently mistaken for a snowdrift, Bascomb knew that he was snow-blind.

As the trapper approached, the young man heard the swish of his snowshoes, and with a cry of fear turned to flee. Wondering if the man was demented as well as snow-blind, Bascomb followed.

A dozen strides, and the blinded man tripped and fell. As if realizing his helplessness, he rose to his knees and turned toward the sound of the trapper's approach. Tearing open his ragged mackinaw, baring his chest, he cried:

"For God's sake, Geller, or Le Moix, whichever it is, finish this thing! Shoot me! Anything to have this torture over with! Logan died without telling where Dixon is. So did Blair. Do you think I'd betray their loyalty? Never! Now shoot—get it over with."

Bascomb walked close and placed a pitying hand on the young man's shoulder. The blind man did not flinch, but the trapper felt the tautening of muscles beneath his palm, the involuntary setting of the man's body against the shock of knife or bullet.

"Take it easy, buddy!" said the trapper gently. "Nobody is going to hurt you! 'Pears to me you need grub and something done for them eyes of your'n. Better come along to my cabin."

The blind man swayed unsteadily—then pitched forward fainting into the snow.

Bascomb went back to where he had left his dogs. He drove them close to the huddled form, then pulled off his parka, wrapped the unconscious man in it, and putting him on his sled, headed for his cabin.

For the next three days the trapper was busy concocting strengthening broths, tending the cooling packs that he placed on the sufferer's inflamed eyes, and watching fearfully for signs of gangrene in the frosted fingers and toes of his patient. And under his skillful care the young man regained strength rapidly.

Bascomb learned that his patient's name was Nelson—Ross Nelson.

That was about all that Bascomb did learn, however, for as Nelson said: "I'm blind. I'd rather not do a lot of talking until I can see who I'm talking to. Just the same, I want you to know that I appreciate what you're doing for me, Bascomb. Maybe I'll talk after my eyes get well."

Bascomb did not urge him. "Take your time, Nelson. Needn't ever speak of your troubles to me if you don't feel like it. I don't aim to horn in on anyone's business."

Nelson grew stronger; and his blindness passed. Bascomb went back to his neglected trap-lines, while Nelson stayed close to camp, helped with the cooking, the woodcutting, and the skinning of the animals the trapper brought in. Bascomb liked the young man. Nelson was helpful, dependable; his presence broke the monotony of the long winter. But not once had he offered any explanation of the strange words he had said at the time Bascomb found him. Yet Bascomb was not one to pry into another man's secrets; nor did he mention the incident of the corpse-laden moose.

WEEKS later, at the table one evening, Bascomb felt in his pocket for a match with which to light his after-supper pipe, and his fingers came in contact with the rifle-sight that he had found in the pocket of the dead man. He took it from his pocket, laid it on his palm and studied it contemplatively.

One of Nelson's hands shot across the table and grasped the trapper's wrist. Bascomb looked up to find Nelson's eyes fixed in fascinated horror on the bit of steel. Without a word the trapper passed him the rifle-sight.

Nelson's face was ashen, and as he turned the sight, examining it from every side, his hand trembled visibly.

"Seen it before, I reckon?" said Bascomb.

"Seen it? God, yes!" Nelson's voice was grief-shaken. "I helped Fred Logan take that bent sight out of his rifle and put in a plain blade whittled out of

caribou horn. That was just the day before he went moose-hunting with Geller. . . . Logan never came back from that hunt! Tell me, Dave, how did you come by this?"

Bascomb told him—in detail.

Nelson listened silently, his young face clouding with hate.

"Poor Logan! God, what a death! Geller, the beast! The maniac! The smooth plausible liar! . . . Geller killed Blair too, Dave—Jerry Blair, a prince, and my lifelong buddy. He'd have killed me too if it hadn't been for you!"

BASCOMB made no answer. Nelson regarded him long and earnestly. Presently he said:

"I've been with you a month, Dave. I feel I can trust you. Shall I tell you about this Geller and why he did what he did to my friends?"

"I'd powerful well like to know," said Bascomb grimly.

"Ever down the Copperaxe to where it enters the ocean?" Nelson asked.

"Man, you're talking distance now!" exclaimed the trapper. "It must be nigh three hundred miles north of here where the Copperaxe hits salt water."

"Nearly that, Dave; and a mighty wild country all the way. Something like forty miles above the mouth of the Copperaxe, and across a divide from one of its western feeders, lives an Indian tribe. They call themselves the Wakipau.

"It's a small tribe, and only a few people know of their existence. They mix with the other Indians and Eskimos of the coast very little, with the whites not at all. They are so primitive that they still use bows and arrows, and spears, for their hunting. There's hardly a gun among them.

"It seems that the country where these Wakipau live is the richest kind of a fur-pocket. The marten there run large and dark. Foxes grow nearly as big as coyotes, and the percentage of cross, silvers and blacks among them is larger than in almost any other place in the Dominion; mink, fisher and otter are plenty. Knowing little of the value of furs, the Wakipau kill only enough to supply skins for clothing."

Dave Bascomb's pipe had gone dead. His blue eyes were shining with interest.

"Ross," he breathed, "you're talkin' now about a trapper's paradise!"

"That's what we thought," said Nelson grimly. "That's why we came up here from the States—Dixon and Logan and Blair and I. That's why two of us will never see home again. That's why Griff Dixon is off up north there now."

"Say, Ross, are you sure this Injun tribe aint just the invention of some scatter-brained bush-rat? Solitude sometimes gets under a feller's skin and does things to his mind. I've heard a powerful lot of onlikely yarns that have been brought out of the bush by trappers."

"I'd stake my life those Indians are there, Dave! Griff Dixon may be pretty hard-boiled, but he was never known to lie to a friend. You see, he was in there himself, last year, and saw these people with his own eyes. It was like this:

"Griff's one of those fellows that have a perpetual yen for adventure. Once he wanted a fling at the far North. His M.D. degree got him a chance to ship out of Seven Islands on a whaler. Went along as ship's doctor. Somewhere around the mouth of the Copperaxe the ship ran into bad weather and the sticks were blown out of her. She limped into a sheltered cove to make repairs.

"One day the crew saw an Indian waving to them from the shore. A boat was put over the side, and the Indian brought aboard. He couldn't speak a word of English, but by signs he made it understood that one of his people had been mauled by a bear, and he'd come for a doctor. It would be a long time before the whaler could go on with her hunting, so Griff Dixon packed a kit and went along with the Indian.

"It took Griff and his guide four days to reach the Wakipau village. There it developed that old Ta-uik, the chief of the tribe, was the one who'd been hurt. What with wounds and the heathenish things that the medicine-man had done to him, the chief was in a bad way."

"THEM medicine-men are bad cats, all right!" nodded Bascomb. "I ought to know. One time, when I was livin' with the Labrador Chimos, I was took down with the flu. The danged medicine-man chased the sickness into my little toe with his drums and rattles. Then he cut off the toe and hove it away. I was too blame' sick to help myself. Never have loved medicine-men much since!"

"Well, this Uktish had been practicing some such stuff on the chief," said Nelson, "but Ta-uik was wise enough to see it was doing no good. That's why he sent for a white doctor. It was touch-and-go for the chief, but Griff patched him up and pulled him through.

"For God's sake, Geller, or LeMoix,whichever it is, finish this! Shoot me — get it over with!"

"Ta-uik was mighty grateful. When Griff left to go back to the ship, Ta-uik shoved a big bundle of fur into his pack. When Dixon came to look it over, he found the old chief had given him ten silver fox skins."

"Ten silvers!" gasped Bascomb. "A small fortune!"

"Yes sir, ten of 'em. And such skins, Dave! I've seen those pelts, had them in my hands. Each was a perfect specimen and they were exactly matched. When Griff got them back to the States he sold them for a lot of money."

"And Dixon decided to go back after more, huh?" asked the trapper. "I should've thought most any red-blooded man would!"

"Right! But Griff didn't say much aboard ship about his experience at the village, however. He knew that if the crew got one look at those pelts, they'd forget all about whaling and make a raid on those Indians. When some of the sailors asked him what he got for all his trouble of gallivanting off inland, he showed them some gewgaws of carved walrus ivory he'd picked up at the Wakipau camp.

"But there was one man aboard the whaler that Griff didn't fool. That man was Geller, the second mate. Geller must have noticed the size of Griff's pack when he came back, and mistrusted something. Weeks later, when the whaler was well on her homeward voyage, Dixon discovered that the locker where he had put the skins for safekeeping had been broken into and the pelts taken.

"Griff is canny. He knew it would be two weeks before the whaler could make port. Instead of bellowing around about the loss of his fur, he kept quiet and did some detective work. Finally he satisfied himself that it was Geller who had stolen the fur, and he went after the man.

"He caught the mate on deck in the dark hours of a night watch and accused him of the theft. Geller laughed at him. Griff Dixon's not such a big man, but he sure knows his rough-house stuff. Maybe his methods were crude and painful—for Geller—but before Griff was done with him, the mate confessed the theft and produced the fur.

"Well, that was about all from Geller —then—except of course that he raved and roared and threatened to kill Griff at the first opportunity. Griff thought little of the threat.

"When the whaler made port, Geller "swallowed the anchor"; he jumped ship. Later, as Griff was packing his belongings and preparing to quit the ship, he found a note Geller had left for him. In it the mate swore he'd hunt Griff down and kill him if it took a lifetime to do it. Also he swore he was going north, find that Wakipau village and pillage it for fur. Griff laughed at the childishness of the note and forgot it. . . .

"You see, Griff Dixon, Fred Logan, Jerry Blair, and I were in the same outfit in France. We'd been through a lot together, and knew each other better than most brothers. As soon as Griff got back to the States, he got us all together. It was so late in the season, though, that we knew ice would block us if we tried to reach the Copperaxe by ship. So we got our outfit and trade goods together, and came to Height of Land by rail, then down the four hundred miles of river by canoe.

"Of course we were soft. Eight hours of paddling was plenty for the first day. We camped early. A half-mile back of our camping-place was a high bluff. Without stopping to put up the tent, the four of us set off for the top of the bluff for a glimpse of the country to the north. Halfway up the hill Fred Logan remembered that he had left his binoculars in the canoe. He turned back to get them. When he came within sight of the canoes, a man was just making ready to smash them with an ax."

"Logan oughta drilled the critter!" grunted the trapper. "A man's canoe may mean his life up in this country."

"That's just what he did, Dave. Hit the man hard, too. But before Logan could get to him, he'd crawled away into the woods and hid."

"A bad Injun, probably," ventured Bascomb.

"We thought so at the time. Logan was not near enough to tell whether the man was white or Indian."

"HAVE any more trouble before you reached the Wakipau camp?" the trapper asked.

"Not a bit. We got our trade-goods within ten miles of the Indian village with no further trouble except a whale of a lot of hard work. There we built a log building to act as a trading-post. Then, because Dixon knew the Wakipau didn't like most white men, he got us to leave him there alone to trade with them. We promised to return for him by the first of March; then the three of us—Logan, Blair and I—said so-long to old Griff, and came back across the divide to the Copperaxe.

"We had all winter to wait for Dixon. To pass the time, we decided to do some trapping. Thirty miles back up the Copperaxe we found a promising fur country, built a cabin, and set out some traps. We'd been there a few weeks, and everything was going fine, when a stranger blew into camp.

"THIS stranger was a nice-appearing chap—said his name was Robbins and he was up from the States on a hunt. He had three guides with him—two Indians and a 'breed by the name of Le Moix.

"Robbins asked if we minded if he made camp across the stream from our cabin and stayed there for a few days. Of course we were glad to have him camp near by. He was a good talker, played a keen hand of poker, and we liked his company. We said nothing to him about Dixon, however—thought it was just as well to keep that under our hats.

"Then one day, Jerry Blair went hunting with Robbins—and that night Robbins came into camp alone. He said he and Blair had become separated some time in the forenoon, and that he hadn't seen Jerry since.

"We waited up half the night for Blair, but he didn't come in. Robbins seemed as much worried as Logan or I. At daybreak he turned out his Indians and we scoured the surrounding country for a week. Never a sign of Jerry Blair did we find.

"Robbins stayed on. He and Le Moix did considerable hunting. The freeze-up came, and winter. Robbins' Indians laid up their canoes, and it looked as though they were getting ready to winter there. Logan and I thought it rather strange, but it was none of our never-mind."

"Blair," asked Bascomb, past the stem of his pipe, "—what d'ye think happened to him? Do you s'pose Robbins played him some kind of dirt?"

Ross Nelson's face hardened. "Neither Logan or I mistrusted such a thing at the time. But now I know that he did just that!"

"How d'ye know, Ross?"

Young Nelson sprang to his feet. His dark eyes blazed.

"How do I know? Because Robbins wasn't Robbins at all, but *Geller! Geller, the mate who'd robbed Griff Dixon of the skins aboard the whaler!* Somehow he had discovered that Dixon had left the States for the Copperaxe country, after more of that fur. He'd followed in the hope of killing Dixon and getting the fur himself. *Geller killed Jerry Blair because Jerry wouldn't tell him where that Indian village was!"*

"And Logan—the man I found lashed to the horns of the moose? Was that more of this Geller's work?"

Nelson was pacing the cabin now like a leopard in its cage. "Yes, Logan was the next! Oh, why couldn't I have seen through that smooth devil! He was so sympathetic about Blair's disappearance —and all the while, damn him, he was planning Fred Logan's death!"

ROSS NELSON paused in his pacing to stare through the window into the raging blackness of the stormy night.

"After Jerry disappeared, Geller stayed on. Hunting had been poor; meat was getting scarce. He proposed a moose-hunt—he'd learned the moose-call as a boy, somewhere in New Brunswick, he said, and was quite a hand with the birchbark horn. He and Fred Logan planned a hunt. They came off up the Copperaxe in this direction. Five days later, Geller came back—alone again. I guess you're the one who knows what happened to poor Fred Logan."

Bascomb nodded grimly. "What did Geller have to say for himself when he got back?" he asked.

"His mask was off. He'd killed two of us, but still he hadn't found out the location of the Wakipau camp. When I asked him where Logan was, he laughed at me. 'Logan and Blair are both just where you'll be if you don't tell me where Dixon and those Indians are—and tell me damned quick!' he threatened.

"And then, Dave, when it was too late, it dawned upon me who he was. I tried to edge to where my rifle was standing against a tree, but Le Moix was already there, covering with my own gun. I was trapped.

"And Geller—he gloated! 'I got him, that damned Logan, and I got him right!' he boasted. 'If it hadn't been for him, I'd have blocked Dixon's game the first night you fools were away from the rails. Two minutes more and I'd have smashed your canoes—but he got me, and for two weeks I had to hole up like a gut-shot wolf while Dixon and the rest of you went on. I swore he'd pay for that shot, and pay he did. Last I saw him he was taking a ride. I'll bet before that ride ended he wished he'd told me where Dixon and the Indians were! Anyhow I've squared with Logan, and I'm sure *you* won't refuse me the knowledge, Nelson.'

"You can see for yourself, Dave, there wasn't but one thing for me to do. That was to tell Geller to go straight to hell."

"Good boy, Ross! So Geller drove you out of camp, eh?"

"Yes, drove me out without matches, compass, food or a gun, and told Le Moix to follow me. I suppose he figured I'd make straight for Dixon's trading-post rather than starve. That's where I fooled him. I'd have died first. I led that Le Moix on a wild-goose chase far off here to the south. The second day out it snowed. In the storm I managed to give the 'breed the slip. How long I wandered before you found me, I don't know, Dave."

The trapper thoughtfully refilled his pipe. He washed the supper dishes. Later he went outside the cabin, and Nelson heard the three sled-dogs bickering over their supper of frozen moose-meat.

Bascomb came in, pulled off his parka, shook the snow from it and hung it on a peg. Then, with careful deliberation, he began packing a couple of duffel-bags with supplies.

"What's the idea, Dave?" Nelson inquired curiously.

"You agreed to be back at Dixon's trading-post by the first of March, eh?"

"Sure did!"

"Well, you've got to be there, aint you? We're pullin' north in the mornin'. Me, I'm ready any time to take a hand ag'in' a critter that'll lash a man to the horns of a live bull moose!"

NORTH along the white silence of the frozen Copperaxe, Dave Bascomb and Ross Nelson traveled for a week.

Geller's camp they found deserted, and it was evident by signs that the party had been gone for some time. Recent snowstorms had obliterated all trails, and it was impossible to tell in what direction Geller had traveled.

"Maybe he got cold feet and pulled for the States," mused Bascomb. "But as long as we aint sure, we gotta figger

he's still to be reckoned with. We'll push on as fast as we can, but by a different route than you took when you went into the Wakipau country with Dixon. We gotta play this game safe.

"If Geller's stumbled onto that Injun village and has got the best of Dixon, and if he suspicions that maybe you beat his time and lived to get to help, he's no doubt expecting you to come after Dixon. If that's so, he'll have some one watchin' the route you used before. We'll swing a big circle to the west and come to the place by another direction. In a fight, Ross, surprise is a danged good thing to have on your side—and a whale of a fight we've sure got on our hands if Geller's found them Injuns!"

BASCOMB'S woodcraft, combined with Nelson's knowledge of the country, enabled the pair to reach Griff Dixon's trading-post in four days. In all the miles of their circuitous route they saw no sign of the Geller party, and both were beginning to believe the man had left the north. Now, as they looked down from the top of the bluff from which they had sighted the post, their thoughts were more of the comfort within those low log walls than of other things. Trail-weary as they were, the promise of warmth and good food was a welcome promise indeed.

Twenty minutes later, the dogs fed and housed in the lean-to of the store, Bascomb and Nelson were settling themselves by the glowing stove in the low-ceilinged trade-room, and Nelson was telling Dixon of Geller and the murders of Logan and Blair.

Dixon, a well-built man of forty, with a short blond beard and steady gray eyes, listened in shocked silence. Before Nelson had finished with the tale, he was slowly pacing the floor.

Suddenly he paused in his pacing and flung a hand toward the rear partition of the room. "Gentlemen," he said quietly, "back there in the storeroom is enough fur to make us all independent. When it's marketed, my part of it shall be used to bring Geller to the justice he deserves. I'm the one who induced those poor boys to come up into this country. I'm the one to settle with Geller. His trail will cross mine sometime. When it does, he'll pay."

And Bascomb, watching Dixon, knew the man to be making no idle vow. He had seen quiet-spoken men in action in the past. If he wasn't mistaken, Dixon was a man to tie to. "Well," he remarked, "I'm kind of an outsider on this deal, but if you don't mind, Dixon, I'd like to help. I don't crave neighbors who lash people onto the horns of live bull moose!"

"Thanks, Bascomb!" said Griff Dixon gravely. "By the way, where do you reckon Geller is?"

"Ross and I figgered he might be hereabouts when we seen the shutters you got on them windows."

Dixon shook his head. "No. Geller hasn't been here. This Wakipau camp is hard to find. Perhaps he's given up the search and gone back to the States. Those log shutters—I put them on recently. You see, I had a little trouble with the Indians a few days ago, and rigged the shutters so that they couldn't get the jump on me."

"Trouble?" inquired Nelson. "What went wrong, Griff?"

"Oh, it's that fanatic of a medicine-man Uktish. Ever since I came in here last year and patched up old Ta-uik, Uktish has been jealous of me. In a professional way, you might say. I suppose he figures I belittled his medicine. As soon as I got in here last fall, he started right in trying to turn the Wakipau against me.

"Ta-uik, the chief, is rather easy-going, but he realized that a little surgery did more to save his life than all of Uktish's magic. When he found out what was going on, he called his people to council and urged them to trade with me. For a time he put Uktish's anti-white-man propaganda on the blink, and the fur came in in a flood.

"But not long ago the trading stopped. I visited the village and found I'd sure enough got a bad break this time.

"It seems a papoose had died. What made it bad for me was because the child had been wearing a sweater that came out of the store here. Uktish had seen his opportunity, of course, and had jumped on it with both feet. He had made those Indians believe that the sweater was bad medicine, and had been responsible for the child's death. He stirred the hunters with his wild talk until they promised to help him wipe me off the map.

"As soon as the old chief got wind of what was going on, he sent his young son to warn me. When the boy reached here, there was a bone-tipped arrow driven clean through him. Somehow Uktish had discovered that the chief was warning me. He followed the boy, shot him, and left him for dead.

"I did everything I could to save the lad, but the chief's son died. You can see how deeply I am in debt to his father. It seems that this venture was ill-fated from the first. I've wished a thousand times I'd never come. Two of my dearest friends and this innocent Indian lad have already paid the price of my folly with their lives. If I live to be a hundred I'll never be able to square myself with my own conscience. Never!"

"No use to figger it that way," consoled the practical-minded Bascomb. "It's ventures such as your'n here that have pushed back the frontiers of the world. Tell me, did the Injuns jump ye as they planned?"

"Yes, but the affair didn't amount to much. They'd never faced rifle-fire before. After I'd scratched two or three of them through the shoulders and legs, they went back to their camp. I noticed that the old chief wasn't with the raiding-party. I've an idea he's about the same as a prisoner in his own village."

"HOW long ago did this happen?" the trapper wanted to know.

"Nearly two weeks."

"Has that danged medicine-walloper tried to put across any more shindiggery?"

"No. Not a single Indian has been here since. I've simply been holding the fort and waiting for the first of March and the return of Ross and—and the other boys—"

Bascomb swept the almost empty shelves of the store with a glance. "Well, Dixon, your trade-goods are about all gone. You've got a good bunch of fur, you say. What's the matter with packing up tomorrow and pullin' out o' here? Nobody can tell when that Uktish bird'll pull off another raid. Can't trust them medicine-fakirs as far as you can heave 'em—and I'm the guy that gave a toe to learn that fact!"

"Suits me," nodded Dixon. "I've had about all of the North I want for a while. Besides, if Geller has gone back to the States, I've got work to do down there."

THAT night it snowed. Squall after squall scourged the barrens, and the wind howled like a wolf-pack as it tore at the sturdy walls of the post. Dave Bascomb was the first man out of his blankets. He stoked the air-tight stove with fresh fuel, then opening the door a crack, he peered out into the gloom of the Arctic dawn.

The storm had ceased. A foot of new snow lay on the ground. No hint of daylight was yet in the eastern sky. To the north the aurora blazed and flared, sweeping the heavens with streamers of greenish-red and lighting the barrens with a ghastly radiance. The trapper's gaze swept out across the trackless waste, noting the probable depth of the new snow, whether it had drifted enough to impede dog-sled travel; a blue bank of haze to the west portended more wind.

As he was about to turn away from the doorway, something on the side of a distant ridge caught his attention. He looked closer. What was that sinuous thing that moved like a great dark serpent against the blank whiteness of the slope?

Then, as the significance of the thing he saw filtered into his brain, Bascomb stiffened. Turning his head, he spoke quietly:

"Dixon! Take a look here, will you?"

Something in the trapper's tone brought both Dixon and Nelson tumbling hurriedly from their bunks.

Bascomb pointed to the doorway. "That ridge over there to the nor'-west. Tell me what you see there."

Dixon looked, caught his breath sharply, and turning, grim-faced, began throwing himself into his clothes.

Now Nelson was peering uncertainly at the distant ridge. "Why—I don't see anything, Dave! Yes—I do now. Something crawling down the slope. A—a band of caribou, eh?"

"Hardly!" grinned Bascomb, pulling his rifle from beneath the lashings of the sled, which had been brought into the store the night before. "Not caribou, Ross, but every danged hunter in the Wakipau tribe, or I don't know Injuns when I see 'em!"

"Right!" agreed Dixon. "They've headed here to clean up the post. Lucky for me you fellows blew in here last night."

Bascomb's mild blue eyes were lit with tiny dancing fires.

"Man," he exulted, as he made sure his rifle was in perfect order, "this here makes me think of one time up in Ungava when Sandy MacCail and I had a misunderstanding with some North-shore blubber-eaters! Douse that candle, Dixon. You don't want them Injuns to know you're expectin' 'em. This new snow has wiped out the tracks Ross and I made las' night. The dogs are out of sight in the lean-to. Uktish and his gang'll never mistrust we're here. Man, it's good to be livin' this mornin'!"

BASCOMB stationed himself at the door, while Dixon and Nelson each swung the shutter of a window slightly ajar and poked their rifles through. Silently they waited.

The Indians crossed a frozen creek two hundred yards from the post. Here they bunched as if deciding on a plan of action. A moment later six men left the main body and approached the post.

"Looks like they want to powwow," whispered the trapper. He let them come to within twenty yards of the building, then stopped them by the simple expedient of driving a bullet over their heads.

A man stepped from the group, and in Wakipau, addressed the store.

"It's Chief Ta-uik!" whispered Dixon in surprise. "He says that he and Uktish have come to an understanding, and that the six of them want to come in here and talk with me. He says he's bringing me good news. Think I'd better let them in?"

"I don't trust no Injun!" whispered Bascomb.

"But," Dixon reminded him, "Ta-uik gave his son to save my life. I'd surely be an ungrateful whelp if I didn't—"

"All right. If you say the old chief is on the level, let 'em come. We ought to be able to take care of ourselves. But wait! Me and Ross better be out of sight somewhere, and ready to do business if anything breaks wrong. Here, Ross, grab that sled and let's hide it behind the counter. Chuck them two parkas out of sight somewhere. Now, Ross, you step into the fur-room and watch through a crack of the door. I'll squat right back of the counter here. . . . All set, Dixon. Light a candle and let 'em come!"

Dixon lit a single candle and swung open the door.

In from the darkness, wading knee-deep in the white frost-fog that swept across the floor of the warm room, stalked the six men. All but the old chief paused as soon as they were inside the door. Back there in the shadows their faces, muffled as they were by the closely drawn fur hoods of their parkas, were indistinguishable. Ta-uik walked forward to face Dixon, who stood well back by the stove.

"Ch-yan-pii," ("The-trader-who-cures") "I have come to say that my people have no further quarrel with you. Yesterday came a stranger to my village who talked with my shaman Uktish, and showed him that you were our friend, rather than our enemy."

"Good news indeed, Ta-uik!" said Dixon.

"So," continued the old chief, "Uktish brought this man to me, and together we held council. We came here to say that I, Ta-uik, chief of the Wakipau, am ready to forget that you doubted my friendship—for doubting it you must have been, else you would not have held my son, whom I sent to warn you of danger, as a hostage. Now, Ch-yan-pii, if you will release the boy from wherever you are keeping him a prisoner, I will go back to my village with my people and leave you in peace."

Dixon stiffened.

"Ta-uik," he said with a searching glance at the figures by the door, "you and I have both been tricked. I'm *not* holding your son as a hostage. He came here dutifully, as you told him to do. He warned me. But when he reached me, there was an arrow through his body. Your son died. There, on the wall, is the arrow that killed him. Perhaps you would recognize it."

THE old chief's eyes leaped to the spot on the wall where the arrow hung. Two swift strides, and he had it in his hands.

In another instant he was back at Dixon's side, facing the grinning medicine-

man who now crouched waiting, his hand on his knife-hilt.

With burning eyes fixed unwaveringly upon Uktish, the chief again addressed Dixon.

"It is true, Ch-yan-pii, I have been tricked. And in my foolish trust of Uktish and this stranger who has come among us, I fear that I have also helped to trick you. Uktish of the crooked tongue has lied once more to his chief. He it was who killed my son—this is his arrow. For this treachery I am about to kill Uktish. But before I do so, I would know more of this stranger who is in league with him. Step forth," he ordered, pointing a steady finger at the tallest muffled figure by the door; "step forth and face Ch-yan-pii here, the man you claimed as your friend!"

The man indicated by the chief swaggered forward, and with a laugh, threw back the hood of his parka.

DIXON recoiled as if he had been struck.

"Geller!" he gasped.

Bascomb's impulse was to drive a bullet through the man, but a cautious glance past the end of the counter showed him that Geller was pointing a wicked-looking automatic straight at Dixon's heart. A bullet tearing into Geller might mean a spasmodic tightening of the man's trigger-finger—and Dixon's death.

The trapper crouched, muscles taut, awaiting his chance.

"Surprised, eh?" crowed Geller. "I wouldn't reach for that rifle, if I were you! Just remember those are all my men there by the door. There's five of us against you and the old swab of a chief here. You haven't a chance."

As Geller spoke, the men by the door separated, ranged themselves across the front of the room. The 'breed Le Moix, and Geller's two Indians produced revolvers from beneath their parkas.

As for Uktish, he was well pleased with himself. By his skill as a liar and his alliance with this strange white man he had fooled the old chief and caused Ta-uik to deliver both himself and the hated Trader-who-cures into his hands. Geller had promised him that Dixon should die. He himself would see to it that the chief should also perish in the fight. What was more natural than that the chieftainship of the Wakipau should fall to him? He gripped his knife and edged forward.

Ta-uik, his eyes still fixed upon the medicine-man, his voice cold as the wind of his native barrens, spoke:

"Ch-yan-pii, my friend, we are but two against five. The odds grow no less with waiting."

Dixon knew that he must play for a break. He knew that because Geller's gun was shoved square against his ribs, Nelson and Bascomb were withholding their fire. Of course Ta-uik, knowing nothing of Bascomb's and Nelson's presence, could see no reason for delay. Somehow Dixon must hold him for a moment.

"True, Chief, the odds grow no less with waiting," Dixon admitted. "But Ta-uik, I brought you all this trouble. You gave your son to save me when my life was threatened. Now let me try to arrange a way with this white man so that there will be no bloodshed."

"You forget, Ch-yan-pii," said Ta-uik calmly, "that it was I who sent a hunter to the big waters and brought you here in the first place. Ta-uik, chief of the Wakipau, stands by the friends of his own choosing. As for bloodshed, it is the only way that the death of my son can be avenged. Uktish, the false one, the assassin, must die! Let us delay no longer, Ch-yan-pii, my friend."

Dave Bascomb knew that it was now or never. Cautiously he slid his rifle-barrel above the counter, and was just lifting himself to cover Geller—when something happened that shattered the strained tensity of the room and sent guns and knives racing with death.

Ross Nelson had cracked with the suspense. Stepping from the fur-room, he had thrown a bullet at Geller. And in his haste, Nelson missed.

FOR a split second Geller, his men and the traitorous Uktish stood frozen in surprise. Then one of Geller's Indian guides snapped a shot at Nelson, and Nelson went down without a sound.

Bascomb shot the Indian squarely between the eyes.

Geller, thrown off his guard by the sudden conflict about him, twisted his head to stare at Bascomb; and Dixon, seeing his chance, brushed Geller's gun aside and drove a sudden savage blow to the man's face that staggered him against the wall.

Dimly, through reeking powder-smoke, Bascomb saw Dixon reach for the rifle behind him. He saw Ta-uik and the medicine-man leap at each other with

Nelson went down without a sound. . . . That he was consistently hitting Le Moix, Bascomb was well aware; yet the 'breed's automatic continued to spit flame.

flashing blades—saw Geller recover from the blow that had staggered him and loose a stream of bullets at Dixon. Then something jerked viciously at his own shirt-sleeve, and he was aware that Le Moix and Geller's other Indian were shooting at him. Swinging his rifle into line with the grinning 'breed, the trapper threw bullet after bullet, working the lever of his rifle until the weapon stuttered like an automatic.

That he was consistently hitting Le Moix, Bascomb was well aware. Yet the man refused to go down. Dead on his feet, the 'breed's fixed grin did not change, and his automatic continued to spit flame. Bullets snatched at Bascomb's clothing, and continued to thud steadily into the wall behind him. The thing was a nightmare; Le Moix had more vitality than a grizzly.

Out the corner of his eye the trapper saw Ta-uik and the medicine-man clinch and fall to the floor in a terrific death-struggle. He saw Dixon pitch forward beneath Geller's deluge of lead.

Ah, the 'breed's knees were buckling, at last! He was done!

Bascomb's rifle jerked around. Its fore-sight found Geller's chest. Now—

Click!

Even as the sickening realization came to Bascomb that his rifle was empty, Ta-uik and Uktish rolled against the wall, jarring the flimsy shelf where the candle sat. The bottle in which the candle was stuck toppled and fell. The room was plunged into total darkness.

A sudden numbness flowed through Dave Bascomb's body. Something hot was trickling down the side of his face. A great dizziness, a convulsive clutch at the wall, and the trapper's mind went blank. . . .

Cold.

The monotonous *sing-song* of a barbaric chant in which many voices joined. Flickering firelight that washed in through the open doorway and painted the logs of the wall a sinister red.

These things were what Bascomb awoke to, from oblivion.

He put a hand to his swimming head, sat up and looked about.

Near him Uktish sprawled grotesquely. By the unnatural twist of the shaman's neck and by the ever-widening stain that spread upon the hewn floor, the trapper knew Uktish to be dead.

Le Moix and the Indian lay where they had fallen. Ross Nelson, too, was where he had slumped down. Geller,

the chief and Geller's second Indian had disappeared.

In the doorway, flat on his belly, lay Dixon.

Bascomb tried to rise. The room whirled about him. He sank back, and on hands and knees crawled to Dixon's side.

Dixon's head twisted around. "Bascomb!" he gasped. "I thought Le Moix got you!"

"He come plenty close!" admitted the trapper weakly, wiping the red drip from his eyes. "What's goin' on?"

Dixon's reply was an awe-filled whisper. "Look!"

ON the flat before the post a huge fire had been kindled. Around it, in a circle, were grouped the Wakipau hunters. Chanting, keeping time to the weird words by the stamping of feet and the raising and lowering of their spears, they were watching something that was taking place near the fire. The circle shifted, and through a space between two hunters, Bascomb glimpsed a picture that was to live long in his memory.

By the fire stood Ta-uik. The old chief's naked upper-body was slashed and gashed by a dozen knife-wounds, but his arms were folded regally across his chest and his head was held proudly erect. In the snow at his feet lay the form of a man.

As Bascomb looked, two heavy-shouldered Wakipau hunters approached this prostrate form, one from each side. Rawhide thongs were in their hands—thongs which they nonchalantly coiled as they moved forward. The other ends of those thongs were about the throat of the man on the snow! As the hunters partially lifted the limp figure the more easily to loosen their thongs, the head rolled grotesquely, and the firelight played for an instant upon the distorted features.

"God 'lmighty," breathed the trapper, "it's Geller! They've *strangled* him. How'd this happen, Dixon?"

"It happened," said Dixon huskily, "because Chief Ta-uik has come back into his own. He killed Uktish. Then somehow he got out of the store here and told his hunters of how the medicine-man had murdered his son and betrayed him to Geller. I was lying there with a

bullet through my leg, expecting every moment that Geller would finish me, and I heard it all.

"Those Wakipau hunters had been mighty fond of Ta-uik's young son. When they heard that the shaman had murdered him, they made for the post here at a run. Geller's second Indian heard them coming and took a swift sneak into the darkness. Geller faced them. They charged straight against the muzzle of his blazing gun and took him alive. Uktish was dead, but Geller was the medicine-man's accomplice. Uktish was beyond their vengeance, but Geller was not. There was nothing that I could do to stop them."

"Stop them!" grunted Bascomb, who was now on his feet searching the floor for the candle. "Why should you? Say, are you bleeding bad?"

"Some—but get a light and look to Nelson first. I heard him groan a moment ago."

Bascomb's head had cleared somewhat. He found the candle, and with the expert help of Dixon, who crawled across the room, examined Nelson.

"Bad but not fatal," was Dixon's swift diagnosis. "We can pull him through."

FOUR months later a little brigade of five canoes, manned by sturdy Wakipau hunters, made its way up the swollen current of the Copperaxe. The naked torsos of the hunters glistened with the sweat of their exertion. Their broad paddle-blades flashed rhythmically in the warm sunshine. They chatted and joked happily as they bucked the strong current.

Dave Bascomb, sitting amidship of one of the canoes, his back propped comfortably against a bale of fur, was far from being as much at ease as he appeared. Another mile, and he would be back at his own cabin. That would be fine, if it were not for the fact that when reaching there, he must bid Nelson and Dixon farewell and watch them pull away toward civilization.

He glanced across at the two canoes in which Nelson and Dixon rode and saw the pair smile knowingly at each other. Why shouldn't they smile? Look at those two rear canoes, piled gunwale-high with prime fur!

"Hey, Dixon!" the trapper called above the purr of the current beneath the canoe prows. "My cabin's just around the next point. Tell the Injuns to swing in, will you?"

Dixon nodded, said something in Wakipau, and the canoes edged toward the shore.

"I wonder," continued Bascomb, "if you fellers would mind doin' me a favor? I've got a little bunch of fur there at my camp. Will you take it out and market it for me?"

"Glad to do it!" said Dixon gravely.

"Bet your life, Dave!" agreed Nelson.

Again Bascomb saw the two exchange smiles. Well, dang their pelts, they could grin if they felt like it; he didn't!

The canoes swung in to the landing. Bascomb stepped ashore and went up to his cabin to pack his fur. Griff Dixon and Nelson landed and waited for him by the canoes. Bascomb shouldered his bundle of fur and returned to the landing. He was mighty sober, this hard-bitten trapper.

When he straightened up from placing the fur in a canoe, he found Dixon on one side of him, Nelson on the other. Again they smiled.

Bascomb tried to speak. His throat went suddenly dry. He cleared it sharply. "Aw, hell, fellers, I—"

He paused in astonishment. Slowly but firmly these two grinning lunatics were shoving him toward the canoe. What was the matter with them?

But they pushed Dave Bascomb into the canoe, shoved him down until he was sitting once more in the bottom of the craft. Dixon spoke a curt word to the paddlers, and the Indians, also grinning, shot the craft out onto the stream. Then Ross Nelson and Griff Dixon did a joyous bear-dance on the bank and climbed into their own craft.

"HEY!" fumed the trapper. "What's the big idea? Put me ashore!"

"No chance!" yelped the delighted Nelson.

"Not in a thousand years!" grinned Dixon. "Ross and I are not pikers! A third of that fur back there is *yours*, Dave!"

"Yeah," chimed in Nelson, "and we're going to drag you right along down to the States with us and see to it that you get your third of the profits—whether you want 'em or not, you old bush-rat!"

"Right!" corroborated Dixon. "And when it's all over, if you feel like it, Dave, we'll talk about next year and another little trading venture into the North. How's it listen?"

"Aw, hell!" grumbled Dave Bascomb, but he too was smiling now.

Warriors in Exile

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

"A Crown Is Earned" follows the fortunes of the Foreign Legion—and of a royal Legionnaire—against the Chinese Black Flags.

LANGLADE was in jail, over in Yuma. The sheriff told me about it, as we talked.

"It's a damned shame, honest! The old boy was drunk, and he lifted the roof—sure; a fine was slapped on, and of course he didn't have a cent. Then we found out he'd been in the Foreign Legion, and he's not a bad sort at all. The judge is off on vacation, and I can't get the fine remitted for another month or so, and that jail is hotter'n the hinges of hell."

"How much is his fine?" I asked.

I was headed East anyhow, and being alone in the car, gladly agreed to give Langlade a free ride out of the State. So I paid his fine, and he climbed in, and off we went. There was no blarney about Langlade. He asked why I did it, and I said on account of the Arizona heat.

"Heat! They don't know what heat is in these parts," he said. "I was in the Tonkin campaign, and that was hot. It was wet, too. Why, for six months I never once took off my uniform to sleep! That was the time Bernard got his crown."

"Was the Legion in Tonkin?" I asked innocently. He snorted.

"It still is, a lot of it. You run out to the cemetery in Saigon, sometime—a cemetery that would do for London or Paris! We had some queer ducks in the Legion back in those days, too. Bernard was one of the queerest ever, and the finest."

Langlade was a crunchy little old man, bullet-headed, scarred, well over seventy but spry as a whip. He had a snappy, blasting way of speech—a man of no sympathy at all, hard as nails, bitter at life, accepting a kindness with no more thanks or gratitude than he would have accepted a kick. Pretty much a man on all counts—the kind of man an easy-going chump like me would like to be if he could.

"Count me in on it," said Langlade.

All the way to the New Mexico border, Langlade made only occasional remarks. He mentioned Bernard once or twice; the two men had been buddies in the Legion, years ago. Langlade was getting acquainted with me, in a cautious way, and I encouraged it, for I was getting curious about this fellow Bernard.

We got into Lordsburg for dinner. He was going to stop there, he said; he had some notion of getting a job in town.

"When we get there," he hiccuped, "you shoot; I'll work!"

We went into a hash-house and sat up at the counter together, and as we ate, he suddenly let out a cackle and pointed at an advertising sign against the wall. It displayed a gaudy scarlet crown, some trademark.

"See that crown?" Langlade observed. "That's the kind of a crown Bernard used to rave about. He had one tattooed on his arm—got a woman in Oran to do it, before we went out to Tonkin. He was royalty of some kind, a German princeling, I'd say at a guess. Sober, he was just a solemn, handsome, genial youngster. Drunk, he became another man, a crazy devil. Once or twice a year he went on a bender, a big one; a bad habit for a young chap, too. Then he would mostly talk German or English and rave about that crown. No one paid any attention to his ravings, of course.

"We landed at Haiphong, forty days out from Marseilles; and before we transshipped on to Hanoi, Bernard was in a mess. Even me, I never saw a man so drunk. And I must explain that, when he was really liquored up, Bernard was another person entirely. Some people are like that: one man sober, another person drunk. When he was sober, Bernard was a real prince—quiet, with a sweeping blond beard, neat as a pin, fine big blue eyes that could hold a twinkle at times, and utterly precise and reliable. . . . Come on, let's go outside and look at the stars."

I paid for the meal, and we strolled out, with the bright glitter of Arizona's stellar display twinkling down at us. We wandered around, found a deserted spot to sit, and lit cigarettes.

"IT was a night like this, with the stars of Tonkin overhead, that first night in Haiphong," said Langlade. "I ran into Bernard, got him into a side-street, and wrestled with him—literally. Here! Look at that fellow, and you'll see Bernard—"

A man with two mules was rolling along. A desert rat, a prospector, bearded, and bawling some maudlin song. Langlade spoke under his breath. The old prospector's figure took on youth. His grayish beard yellowed. His slouch hat became a casquette—and I saw Bernard, the Legionnaire. The white sunhelmet fixed the date; it was in those early '80's when the hapless Legion was at its first job in these parts, before the brass-hats realized that a white sunhelmet in the jungle made a swell target for Annamese rifles.

It was in the jungle, at night; the fourth company of the Legion was ending its march to join the expeditionary force attacking Sontay. There was fighting every mile of the way. The entire battalion of the Legion had come from Africa to a new land, only to find half Asia awaiting them. The Annamese, vicious fighters who hated whites with a hatred that would never die; the Black Flags, bandit chiefs of the hills; Chinese themselves, regulars down from across the border.

THE jungle, under the bright stars. Bernard wakened. His companion, young Langlade, saw his leonine head uprear, heard his voice come softly.

"What is that sound?"

"A saw," said Langlade. "We march in ten minutes. Get ready."

Langlade was cool, imperturbable; he laughed at the horror in Bernard's face.

For, sitting up, Bernard saw what was going on ten feet away under a lantern. A tirailleur, his leg badly fractured by a bullet, was stretched out on a pile of baggage. He was chloroformed, but agony convulsed his bearded, livid features as the surgeon worked over the leg.

Now and again a rifle-shot rang out. Somewhere a blaze rose lurid against the dark sky. Orders were passed, low-voiced; the march was to be resumed at once. A sergeant came by, detailed Bernard and Langlade to carry the wounded tirailleur when the surgeon was finished. Still Bernard stared at the scene, biting his lips, horror in his wide blue eyes.

"No time to lose," said the surgeon calmly. The leg was off; it fell, a white blotch, to the ground. The artery was ligatured; the job done, the bandage applied, the senseless man was made fast to the only available means of transport. His good leg and his arms were bound to a long, fat bamboo.

"Come along!" said Langlade, and Bernard rose. Each of them took one end of the bamboo, and lifted the wounded man. The column was moving again. As they filed off with their burden, Langlade kicked the white blotch off into the brush. Bernard cursed him.

"You need not have done that! You—"

He directed at Langlade, in the lead, a torrent of guttural German curses. Langlade laughed, and shot back a riposte.

"You're in Asia now, yellow-beard! And wait till you see what's ahead of us; you'll soon lose all your fine notions of gentility, M. le Prince! Crowns, indeed; you'll get a crown that you're not looking for, in this jungle."

It was the first time that Langlade had ever taunted his friend with this crown business. They had a furious give-and-take over the senseless burden, until an officer savagely shut them up. Langlade, to tell the truth, was scared stiff. . . . Jungle fighting was something new, and the tales of terror had spread all through the column.

He admitted it freely enough at dawn, when they were up with the other troops and in camp.

"Sorry," he said frankly, as he and Bernard dropped in exhaustion. "I've had cold devils crawling up my spine the last two days, for a fact. These stories about torture and mutilation, these Chinese we have to face—well, I've been afraid."

Bernard reached out and touched his hand. "Spoken like a brave fellow, Langlade! Forget the whole business."

Oddly enough, this little affair drew them closer together and evoked from Bernard a new and very sober confidence. They were moving on Sontay, a supposedly impregnable citadel and the chief fortress of the Black Flags. The outlying stronghold of Phusa blocked their way, and while the Legion kept aid from issuing from Sontay, the Algerian tirailleurs carried Phusa.

SAID in few words, done in the course of a barbaric night of savage fighting. Bernard and Langlade, with little to do, could see the Algerians fighting up the hillsides and through the bamboos—there was light enough, though not from the stars. The Chinese had fired huts here and there, and every now and again, sallying in among the Algerians, went at them with the cold steel.

"They say those Chinese get seventy-five piastres for every head they fetch in," said Langlade. "Wait till the tirailleurs carry the place—you'll see some killing done in return!"

"I wish we were doing it," said Bernard wistfully.

Langlade gave a cluck of surprise.

"What! This from you, who faint at the sight of blood?"

"Don't be a fool," said Bernard pleasantly. "They tell me all these places have rulers—kings and emperors. Is it true?"

"Allah alone knows!" Langlade spat out the Arabic phrase. "This country is new to most of us, and filled with wild stories. They've got a couple of emperors in Annam and Tonkin, sure, and kings scattered all over. Why?"

"I want to loot a crown," Bernard confided to him. "Listen, my friend: When I was a boy in Germany, a prediction was made that I would win a crown in a distant land. It was sure to come true. You comprehend? I could not inherit one for myself; too many stood in the way. When I am drunk, I know well that I've talked of it to you. Not to others. A crown! Well, now the prediction is coming true."

Langlade stared in the lurid night. "A crown? You mean, get one as loot?"

"I don't know," murmured the other. "Loot a mere gold crown? No, no, not just that. Win one—that was the prediction. We've heard a lot about men who have deserted and become chiefs or rulers. Look at that Englishman in Borneo, who's a rajah. With all these native states between here and China, up in the hills, over toward Siam—I tell you, it could be done! If I looted a crown in one of these places, it might become very possible."

"You're off your nut," said Langlade with decision. "Look here! The Algerians will mop up these Chinese before morning. Then we go at Sontay. It's full of Yacs, as our men call the Black Flags. The citadel has a hundred cannon, ten thousand Chinese regulars, ten thousand Black Flags, and five thousand Annamese armed with American repeating rifles. You'll see something before we step inside, and it won't be crowns either! So talk sense."

"All the same," said Bernard, fingering his yellow beard, "I tell you it was predicted that I'd win a crown in a distant country—"

The man believed in the prediction. As though his mention of it to Langlade had unlocked a secret place in his heart, he did not hesitate now to speak of it.

LANGLADE, who had been puzzled at the man and his hidden past, was a practical sort of fellow who took no stock in prophecies. He had long since figured Bernard as some sort of German noble, perhaps a prince. Such a thing, in those days, was nothing rare in the Legion.

But now, under the stars and the fire-glare, as they listened to the bullets going *clack-clack-clack* among the bamboos, Langlade knew that his friend was one of those simple, terrible men who see things with the eyes of children. And he made an effort to waken Bernard to the truth.

"Before you talk about winning a crown," he said, "you'd better start in by winning the Médaille Militaire! That's a necessary start, my friend."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bernard. "I believe you're right!"

Some moments later, Langlade realized that his friend was missing, with rifle and bayonet. . . .

Action intervened. The Legion companies were deployed on a wide front to throw back a sally of Chinese regulars from Sontay. The red rippling fire of rifles slanted across the night and into the dawn. Toward four o'clock, the enemy attacked in force, and failed.

WITH dawn, the Algerians were inside Phusa, concentrated on exacting a bitter vengeance for their mutilated comrades. The Chinese and Black Flags beat a sudden retreat, and flooded into their walled city with its hundred cannon and its impregnable citadel. Langlade, too busy to worry about a lost man, saw nothing at all of Bernard until, as the mess fires were smoking into the sunrise, murmurs of amazement from the wearied ranks drew his attention.

Then he saw Bernard ambling along, huge, shaggy, joyous, spotted with blood from head to foot, rifle and bayonet dripping red. He had gone out alone to take part in the clean-up, and had half a dozen slight wounds to show for it.

"Now," he said to Langlade, as he halted and puffed, "I have the Médaille Militaire! You'll see."

He learned otherwise, soon enough. When the officers got through with him, he came back to Langlade, shaking his head with a puzzled expression. He was no simpleton, but the heat and the fighting had made another man of him.

"I did wrong, yes," he said with a sigh. "However, I meant well. And now you can see for yourself that I don't faint at the sight of blood. I needed to fight, to find out for myself how it would be hand to hand. Well, I'm not a coward, at least! And they tell me mandarins in the citadel wear caps which are the same as crowns to these yellow devils."

His white sun-helmet was gone. Like other men who had lost theirs, he took one of the round Chinese hats and wore it; a few moments of the terrific sun was enough to knock a man out, for it was different from the Algerian sun. Langlade eyed his friend with real worry. The man was changed. Perhaps the morning sun had already touched him.

All that day they moved in on the city. Between the wide moat and the wall were planted bamboos, almost impenetrable, while the moat was defended by outer works masked by bamboos. Word had spread that an assault was to be delivered, that the town was to be taken by storm next morning. Meantime, the outer defenses had to be cleared.

It was savage, stubborn work, but the Legion was saved for the morning's job.

The huge bamboos were shattered; Bernard hurled himself at them, and a gap was made by his weight.

Toward noon Bernard, who had been ordered out with a reconnaissance squad, showed up with an excited glitter in his blue eyes.

"Now I've learned something exact!" exclaimed the blond German, flinging himself down and lighting his pipe beside Langlade. "I heard the lieutenant say we were to attack the west gate. Three huge black flags are there, with Chinese writing on them in gold. I'm going to have one of those flags."

"Has your mania turned from crowns to flags?" demanded Langlade.

The other gave him a quick, laughing glance.

"Mania, eh? Is that what you think it, my friend? Come, I'll be frank with you: I had a family at home, you understand? I was not good enough for them; I was the black sheep. I could not stand the folly, the hollow mockery, of glittering uniforms unearned, of court functions, of bowing and scraping servitors—nothing earned, nothing real!"

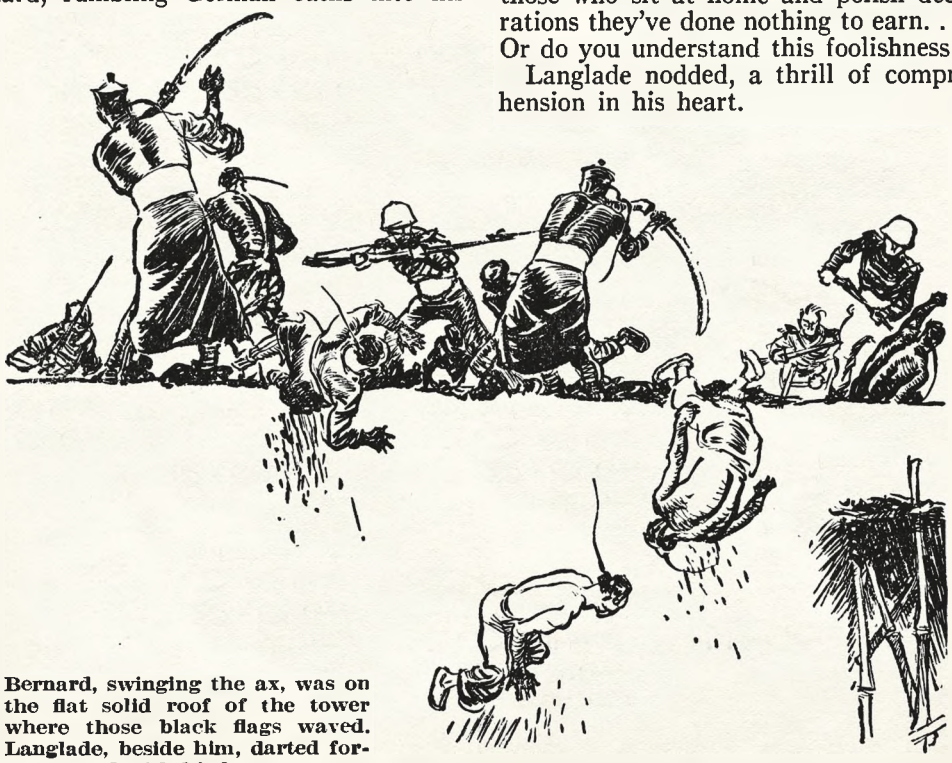
His profound bitterness, his burst of confidence, gripped Langlade. Here, he knew, was his first real insight into this blond German, into the man's past and future, into his hopes and failures and ambitions.

"All that sickened me," went on Bernard, rumbling German oaths into his beard. "I rebelled against it; and I was chucked out. I slipped away and went to Paris, and joined up with the Legion. They hope I'll be killed quietly. My father, a harsh, cruel man, hopes I'll never show up again to disgrace him, as he calls it. Well, what about that crown? I tell you, I mean to earn it! I've learned what a man's life is, in the Legion. I've learned what's real, what's worth while. Yes, I've had crazy notions about deserting and becoming some sort of a native ruler—who hasn't? But here's what I really want."

He sucked at his pipe for a moment, and all the glitter had left his eyes. They were somber and earnest, like his voice.

"I've told you more than anyone else knows or suspects," he said. "Now for what I really want to do. I want to send home a crown, you understand? A real crown. One I've looted or captured or won; I want to send it home to that harsh man, as a token of my contempt, if you like to call it so. Or, if not a crown just yet, then one of those Black Flags yonder. The highest trophy obtainable, something I've won with my own two hands, the way my ancestors won their lands and titles. Not by inheritance, but by fighting. If I can do this, it'll put me on a higher level than those who sit at home and polish decorations they've done nothing to earn. . . . Or do you understand this foolishness?"

Langlade nodded, a thrill of comprehension in his heart.



Bernard, swinging the ax, was on the flat solid roof of the tower where those black flags waved. Langlade, beside him, darted forward with his bayonet.

"Understand it? Yes," he said quickly, a most unwonted touch of warmth deepening his words. "Yes! You're a poet, a knight errant! And I thought you were just some German princeling."

Bernard's lips twisted in a smile.

"Perhaps I'm a little of all three, Langlade. I'm telling you all this so you may comprehend what that old boyhood prediction means to me—the crown I'll win in some far land. This is the land, no doubt about it. Or perhaps up in China. And I suppose you still think it's foolishness?"

Langlade shook his head.

"I'm proud that you wanted me to understand! I'd take a run-out powder with you tomorrow," he said. (Yes, the Legion had precisely that bit of slang, long before it was ever transferred to English.) "If you said let's go and look for a crown up in the hills, I'd go. That's the way I feel."

Bernard gripped his hand.

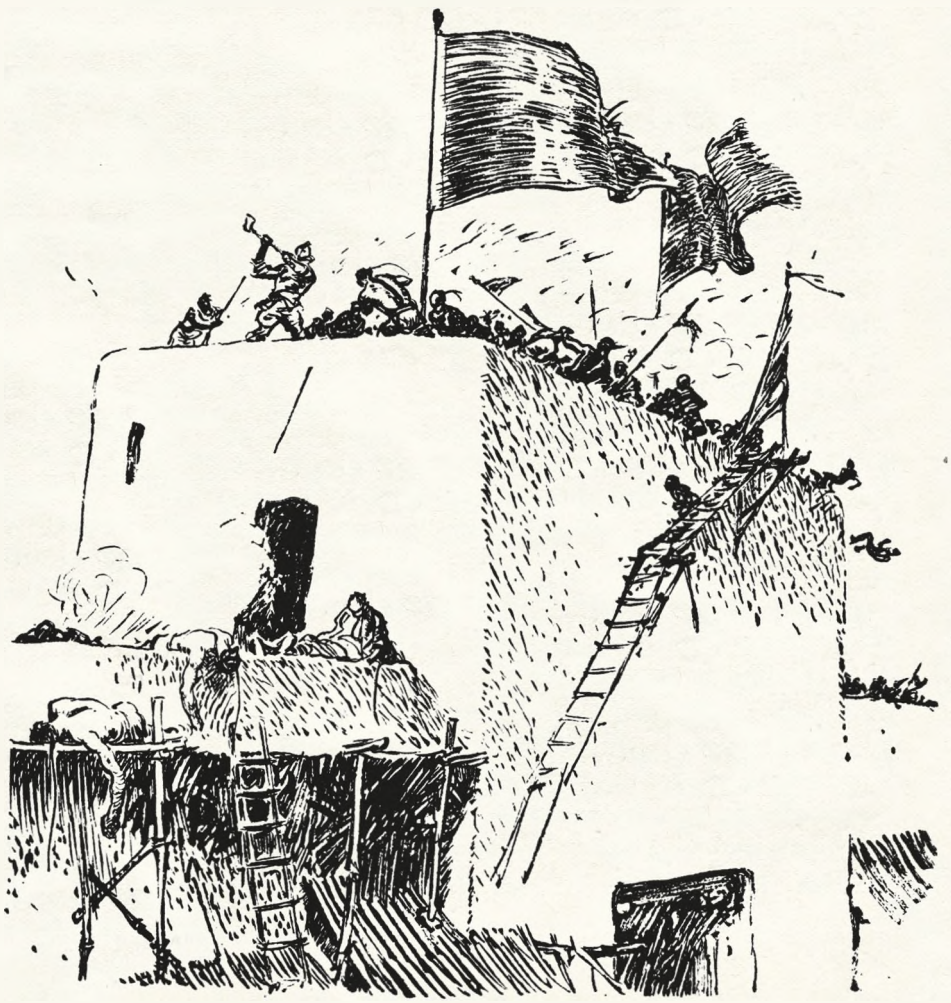
"Oh, I'm not completely mad, unless drunk," he said, and grinned. "We know each other, you and I; we'll hang together. Well, I'm going to have one of those flags to send back home, no matter what it costs!"

"Count me in on it," said Langlade.

AFTER this, he regarded his friend with new eyes. Undoubtedly, he reflected shrewdly, there was more to the story than Bernard had admitted. A woman must be somewhere in it, since a woman was in every life-story behind those bearded bronze masks of the Legion. However, that was none of his business, and he shrugged it away.

That afternoon, that evening, rumors flew through the lines. The morning assault was postponed until next afternoon, when the mopping-up of the outer defenses would be finished.

Then the Legion was to lead in the assault upon the city.



Sontay had four gates, each one set in a tower, midway of one wall; the bamboo palisades outside the gates were formidable obstacles in themselves. Word went around that Lieutenant Poymiro, during the reconnaissance, had discovered something else, and Bernard confirmed this report: A small postern to the right of the west gate where entry might be made. Then it was learned that the marines were to attack this possible opening, and sullen fury filled the whole battalion of the Legion.

"That's right!" growled Langlade. "If something easy shows up, give it to the others, and let the Legion take the toughest assignment!"

Bernard laughed. "You should be proud of it, *mon ami!* They're going to issue axes and hatchets, I understand. We'll beat the marines inside, be sure of that!"

Night came on, and the bright stars. Dawn drew down, and with morning the operations began, but the Legion was held inactive. Orders came along. At two o'clock the Legion was to assume combat formation and sweep everything clear outside the west gate. When the "Charge" was sounded, they were to go in—just like that. Meantime, the Algerians would be making a false attack at the north gate.

TOWARD noon, Bernard disappeared. He did not show up until the battalion was forming; then he came rolling in, drunk as a lord, with his canteen chock full of navy issue brandy. He had been visiting with the marines, and regulations being relaxed, had made the most of the plentiful cognac. Langlade gulped down a stiff drink, and off they went.

Split up into squads, with the fourth company in the lead, the Legion went at the job. The walls, the thickly grown bamboos, the palisades, rolled out clouds of smoke; balls and bullets hailed forth in a rain of death. In a series of rushes, the Legion spread out and attacked. Men died; officers died. Some of the squads were wiped out.

Under Lieutenant Maquard, a burly man with a jaw of iron, the squad containing Bernard and Langlade worked its way forward. From time to time Bernard swigged at his canteen, brushing aside the remonstrances of Langlade. The big German was fighting drunk, and carried an ax worth a dozen of the hatchets issued to the other men.

"When we get there," he hiccuped, "you shoot; I'll work!"

It was nearly five when they were ready—fifty yards from the wall and the thick palisade. Everything had been cleared up behind. They were across the moat, past the clumps of bamboos. They maintained a heavy fire on the wall, and Bernard kept on punishing the brandy, until he flung away his empty canteen.

"You see them?" He pointed to the three huge black flags above the gate, showing now and then through the powder-smoke. "One of those, *mon ami!* Just one."

"Bah! Let's have all three!" exclaimed Langlade, who had not neglected the cognac himself. "Listen—*listen!*"

A thin, fine voice of bugles. Lieutenant Maquard came to his feet—it was the charge, the order to assault.

"Vive la France!" he yelled hoarsely. "Forward!"

The men leaped up. Half a dozen of them went rolling, under a hail of balls. Maquard was already dashing forward. Langlade was after him, Bernard and the others lumbering into speed. Maquard was at the palisade, hacking at it with his saber, when Bernard came up with a wild yell.

"Out of the way!"

Ax in hand, the big German hurled himself at the bamboos. Others joined him, their hatchets at work, while Langlade and the files to right and left maintained a heavy fire on the wall and parapet above. Upright, careless of bullets, Bernard slashed like a madman. The lashings of the palisade, thick withes of bamboo, were finally cut through; the huge bamboos themselves were shattered. Bernard hurled himself at them, and a gap was made by his weight. The lieutenant was up and over him, the first man inside.

Until the breach was widened, few could follow. Langlade shoved in among the first. Bernard had discarded his rifle, and was swinging the ax, a man gone berserk. Langlade joined him, bayonet and bullet at work. The Chinese fell back. As more Legionnaires burst in, the Chinese gave way and fled.

With a roar, Bernard turned to the parapet, Langlade at his elbow. The two of them were alone, for the rush of attack had swept on into the city. Bernard was making for the flat, solid roof of the gate-tower, where those three black flags waved. Here was a man-

darin in fantastic armor; here were Chinese regulars; here were Black Flags in their round straw hats. Rifles cracked. Yells went up.

Straight at them hurtled Bernard, Langlade leaping beside him, firing as he ran, bayonet ready. The ax crashed down, and a spurt of blood dyed the blond beard crimson. Chinese closed in. Langlade darted forward with his bayonet; the ax whirled and bit afresh. Spears slithered at the two; swords glittered; rifles banged. Before that rush of insensate ferocity the throng opened in terror.

An officer leaped at Bernard. One back-stroke of the ax crushed helmet and head together. There was the mandarin, bleating horribly, his gorgeous dragon-robes and queer armor spotted with blood. He went down under Langlade's thrust. The two of them were at the bamboo standards now, where waved the three black flags with their golden characters.

Then the Chinese came in. Ax drove; bayonet thrust; but the two were borne back and back, long halberds and spears thrusting at them. One of the waving standards was pulled down and carried off; another followed. With a roar of fury, Bernard struck aside the halberds and flung himself into the thick of the press.

A frightful yell arose, a wild cheer. The marines were through the postern gate, just beyond. The enemy, thus taken in rear, broke and fled. Bernard, dropping his ax, leaped over the fallen bodies and grasped at the one remaining flag. An Annamese, wounded, came half erect and whipped up his rifle—but Langlade fired first.

"Thanks, thanks!" And with a wild laugh, Bernard tore loose the standard, reached for the gold-decorated flag, and ripped it from the bamboo. A blaze of triumph was in his face. "Look! We have it, *mon ami,* we have it!"

"And for the love of heaven, put it out of sight!" panted Langlade. "The first officer who sees it will send it to headquarters as a trophy!"

Bernard was prompt to see the sense of this, and presently had the silk flag folded away beneath his blue cummerbund.

Langlade, meantime, went to the officer, callously separated the crushed head from the crushed helmet, and from the wreckage of the helmet he extricated a gorgeous peacock plume. He tossed the sopping object at Bernard, then sought the dead mandarin and produced a black silk cap with coral button. This he handed over likewise.

"Not a bad haul!" he observed. "Mandarin cap—that's a crown, anyhow. So is the peacock feather, or what's left of it. Put 'em with the flag, and you've got something worth sending— Hey! What's wrong? You're a hero, old fellow. Not hurt?"

Bernard smiled faintly. He had picked up a spear and was leaning on it heavily.

"Heroes be damned!" he said. "I'm going to be sick. It's the cognac. And the effect's all worn off—"

Langlade grinned. "Worked off, you mean! All right, be sick, and make a good job of it. I'll just see if there's any loot on these fellows."

A surge of figures, and to the bloody scene atop the tower came half a dozen of the Legion, with a tricolor to set in place. The city was taken; darkness was approaching; the job was ended. An officer appeared, bearing one of the two flags that had escaped.

"Ha! Hot work here, eh?" he observed. "It'd mean the Médaille if you'd only taken one of those other flags!"

"Too bad," said Bernard, straightening up, and Langlade chuckled.

WEEKS wore on into months, with the Legion cleaning up all over the place. France was at war with China now; there was talk of various expeditions, to Formosa and Foochow and elsewhere.

Bernard was all afire at the thought of China itself ready to yield him new trophies. He talked often of the crown that had returned to his mind as a fixed idea; he had no secrets from Langlade.

The two of them applied for transfer to the northern expedition. Bernard had found that the Chinese did not use crowns, but this made no difference to him, for there were other insignia of royalty to be had. In a savage little jungle fight he killed the chief of a band of Black Flags, and took from the body a queerly shaped slab of reddish brown stone.

A scientist from headquarters heard about it and tried to buy the stone from him. It was ancient jade, said the scientist; Han jade, such as was only found in tombs these days. And this bit of jade, shaped like an ancient sword, was the royal insignia given by the emperor to a viceroy.

Bernard disdained all offers.

"Look you—the Emperor's insignia!" he said to Langlade that night, joyous as a child as he played with the reddish jade. "No crowns in China, eh? Well, here's just as good. And if I could get this in the jungles of Tonkin, what'll I get when we loot some big place up north? Back this goes by the next boat to my precious father!"

And back it went.

Back, too, went Bernard to the hospital base at Haiphong. He had come down with the insidious jungle fever, which turned his immense frame into a skeleton. So the two friends were parted.

Some days later, destiny descended on Langlade. In a night skirmish, by one of those queer freaks of luck which do happen, a Black Flag slug hit the cartridge-case of the next man, glanced, and took Langlade through both thighs—luckily without touching the bone. So Langlade also went to Haiphong.

When he got there, he was a walking casualty. Of Bernard, at first, he could find no trace. After some days, however, he traced his friend, and promptly sought him out. It was evening when he came into the ward where Bernard lay. A man in fever had just struck the sister attending to him; orderlies were rushing in to hold him down—and the man was Bernard.

The nun who had been struck ordered the men to be gentle.

"*Pauvre enfant!* He doesn't know what he's doing," she said. Then, as Langlade came up and she heard his name, she gave him a curious glance. "Oh! He was asking for you; he spoke of you often, every day."

"Eh?" said Langlade, startled. "Why do you use the past tense, sister?"

"The doctor says he won't live until morning."

So Langlade looked at the blond German for the last time, and had no joy of it; Bernard died in the delirium of fever, muttering harsh German words and fighting the orderlies who held him down.

Nothing particularly sad about it. As Langlade said, all men must die, and one of the curiously interesting things is the story of how other men die and go forth in search of what lies beyond.

UNDER the blazing stars of New Mexico, Langlade's voice died out with this bit of philosophy, and we smoked together in silence. Amazing, I thought, to hear this yarn of other days in such a setting—this story of yesterday in another world, this tale of a forgotten war in an unknown jungle, here across the Arizona border.

"So," I observed, "your friend Bernard never got the crown he had sought so long and far! The prophecy he mentioned never came true, then."

"But it did," said Langlade, emotion in his brusque voice. "That was the queer thing about it all. You see, I did not attend his funeral, because fever caught me; and the same day he died, I was down with the shakes. However, I was in funds. The looting up-country had been pretty good, and I was well supplied with money. So I had the Sister of Charity who attended me fix up a handsome wreath for poor Bernard. It was no mere bunch of faded flowers, but a large wreath of those things they call immortelles—the kind that last forever. You know?"

"Yes," I said. He took a fresh cigarette, lit it and went on.

"IF you ever get a chance to look at the records," he said, "you'll find a singular thing happened. One of the Legion named Bernard was removed from his temporary grave. He was dug up. And I was there when he was dug up. Why was it done? Because a German cruiser was sent to get his body. Yes, damme if it's not a fact! Nobody knew much about it, but I've heard it said that he was a nephew or some near relation of the Kaiser. Anyhow, they sent the cruiser and took him away. He was carried aboard with no end of ceremony, too."

"And that's the end of the story?"

"Not quite." Langlade's voice took on a cynic touch. "That prophecy—it did come true, you see. Those Germans do things methodically. When they dug Bernard up, they took the wreath that was still on his grave, and put it on the coffin; I saw it done. Thus, he went back with the crown he had won in a distant land, just as the prediction said."

"A crown?" I repeated. "But you said it was a wreath—"

Langlade tossed away his cigarette.

"I said wreath, yes, because we're speaking English together," he said. "But as you should know, the word in French is *couronne—crown.* It had never occurred to him that the prediction might have meant a funeral crown. . . . Good night."

Formosa is the scene of the next story in this colorful series—in our April issue.

A spirited drama of the New York State Police.

By
ROBERT MILL

Right in His Lap

"POP," said Captain Charles Field, commanding officer of the Black Horse Troop, New York State Police, "how long have you been in the outfit?"

Sergeant William Cator showed his surprise at the question. He leaned forward in his chair, and the sunlight coming through the window flooded his iron-gray hair, making the gray the predominant color.

"Why, Skipper, I joined up when the outfit first started. We signed up the same week. You remember—"

Captain Field nodded brusquely. He did remember. He recalled that even when he first enlisted Cator had hardly been a young man. That memory was chased aside by the recollection of years of service, and of acts beyond the call of duty. And all these memories made this more difficult.

"How far away is your pension, Pop?" he asked.

Sergeant Cator sat staring at the floor.

"Year and a half, Skipper." He jumped to his feet with an almost pitiful show of energy. "What's it all about, sir? Say, there's plenty of life in the old boy yet. I can go ten rounds with the best of them. I can—"

"Take it easy, Pop," Captain Field interrupted. "You don't have to sell me. Even if we had to push you around in a wheel-chair, I'd think you were a bargain."

Sergeant Cator settled back in the chair. This was worse.

"Is it—" He moistened his lips with his tongue. "Is it Albany?"

Captain Field nodded. "Yes, Pop. Some guy down there has been trying to justify his misspent life. He has gone over the service-records and picked on the old-timers. . . . He wanted to know what detail you were on. I told him,"—Captain Field chose his words carefully, for this was a sore subject,—"I told him I had you in the office because you were more valuable to me there."

Sergeant Cator was silent.

"He came right back at me," Captain Field continued. The commanding officer traced a pattern on a blotter. "He said that if you were so valuable, he didn't see why you hadn't rated a commission during all these years."

There was a heavy silence. Inwardly, Captain Field cursed his inability to put all this in words, in kind words. You couldn't sit across a desk from a man like Pop Cator and tell him you knew he was as honest as a sunset, fearless as a blizzard and loyal as a mother, but that he lacked those qualities of leadership that went with a commission.

The cashier was the first to appear at the office. He almost stumbled

"I told him," Captain Field continued, "that I was to blame. I said that you had been passed up because I was selfish enough to want you where you were because you were more helpful to me there. But I guess it didn't get over. He has ordered you to Albany to take a physical examination and some written tests."

Sergeant Cator stood up. "Right away, Skipper?"

Captain Field nodded.

"Good enough, sir. I'll get rolling."

After the Sergeant left the room, Captain Field sat staring at the wall; several times his hand strayed toward the telephone, but he resisted the impulse. Better not appeal direct to Major John Harner, the superintendent. Not yet. That would be an ace in the hole. . . .

Lieutenant Edward David, all the size of him that was responsible for the name of "Tiny," was the next person to enter the office.

"Pop gone, sir?"

"Yes," growled Captain Field.

"Well," said Tiny David, "he may surprise us on the physical. He played me a stiff game of handball at noon, and he wasn't puffing. He's a great old boy."

CAPTAIN FIELD pushed some papers aside impatiently.

"That's not what I am afraid of," he declared. "It's those monkey tests. The

over something on the floor.

ones where they ask you, 'If you had a dinosaur given to you, would you eat it, wear it or give it to a museum?' Send Pop after a guy with a gun, sitting behind a stone wall, and he'll bring him out. But when he tangles with dinosaurs, and things like that, he has two strikes called on him before he starts. By the way, about how old do you figure Pop is?"

Tiny David pondered on the problem.

"Well, he won a medal in the Boxer Rebellion. That means he must have been at least eighteen at that time. You can figure it out, sir. I,"—he stressed the pronoun,—"I wouldn't remember that far back."

"Humph!" snorted Captain Field. "The Boxer trouble was described in the history I studied when I was a kid in school." He pawed about among some papers. "Turning to a pleasant subject, how would you like to have a troop of your own?"

Tiny David hesitated. That promotion was the goal of his career as a policeman. His own boss! A troop to mold along his own ideas. A territory that would be his, and his alone.

He grinned. "Sort of like it, sir."

"Nothing definite," warned Captain Field. "But there will be a vacancy downstate. The Major wants a line on eligible material. Your name came up in the conversation." Captain Field's face was bland. "I had to be honest. I said that if there was any monkey-business, you would be in it. If there was any hell to be raised, you would raise it. I pointed out that you had an excuse for everything. I explained that you were born tired, and that you hate to chase around needlessly. But I did admit that in between-times you did some rather good work."

"Thank you, sir."

Captain Field waved a hand.

"Don't count on it. But for the next few weeks I would specialize on moving, and not sitting. If you still have that horseshoe you carry, I would rub it for luck. I'll do my part by trying to place you where you will have a chance to grab off something that comes to the notice of the right parties."

"Thanks, sir."

"Not at all. Self-defense. Be a lot quieter for me. Revenge, too. Tickle me no end to see you riding herd on some guy who thinks he is putting something over on you." Captain Field apparently dismissed this vision with regret. "But we can't count on it. You have competition."

"Yes sir," said Tiny David.

That night, conversation in the living-room of the barracks was divided between two topics: The ax was out for Pop Cator. Tiny David was in line for a troop, if—

POP, however, came through the physical examination with flying colors.

"Sound as a man of thirty," was the verdict of the medicoes; and Pop's mark on the mental tests was good enough for passing.

The Black Horse Troop, where Pop was loved, breathed a collective sigh of

relief. But the disciple of efficiency had a weapon in reserve, and he hastened to the telephone.

"If Cator is in the swell shape they say he is," he informed Captain Field, "he doesn't belong in the office. Send him out on the road."

"Are you telling me how to run this outfit?" countered Captain Field.

"Oh, no," came the hasty reply. "I am just making a suggestion."

"I'll consider the suggestion," Captain Field agreed.

Consider it, he did. There was no escaping the logic advanced by efficiency's advocate. Therefore any appeal to Major Harner would find logic in the other camp. Efficiency experts come and go. For that reason, and for Pop's own sake, it might be well to follow the path of least resistance.

On the other hand, it would be tough on Pop to send him out on the road. He had his little home in the town where the barracks were located, and he had reached the age where comfort was important. Also, Captain Field admitted —to himself only—Pop functioned better when his thinking was done for him. But all in all, it was well for Pop to be out of the picture for a month or so. So he summoned him to the office and announced his decision:

"Pop, I am sending you over to take charge of the sub-station at Howard's Lake."

"Yes, Skipper," said Pop.

"Take it easy," Captain Field advised. "Play your cards close to the chest. But if something drops into your lap, I'll help you make the most of it. Keep in touch with me."

"Yes, sir," said Pop.

AFTER that, for a time, things settled down to more or less routine. Outwardly, everything was calm; Pop, apparently, was safe. The Black Horse Troop rejoiced. Then a downstate lieutenant, one of the men in line for the soon-to-be-vacant captaincy, cleared up a bank-robbery—and made the front pages. The Black Horse Troop mourned. This didn't help Tiny David!

Lieutenant James Crosby, however, refused to be discouraged.

"Tiny," he declared, "is lucky. He's out on an inspection trip. Watch something drop into his lap."

The Black Horse Troop brightened.

Then came proof that the slave of efficiency had not forgotten. From Albany came a request for the patrol reports submitted by Sergeant Cator.

Captain Field went over the reports himself before sending them along. If there was nothing outstanding, neither was there anything to draw fire. The reports went forward.

The following morning Pop was on the telephone, and Max Payton, the top-sergeant, in accordance with instructions, threw the call to Captain Field.

"The Adirondack Wood Products Company pays tomorrow," Pop explained. "But tomorrow is a bank holiday, so they are drawing the pay-roll today. It amounts to about twenty thousand dollars. They will keep it in the safe overnight. They have a watchman, but they want us to give them a man to keep him company."

"Fair enough," said Captain Field. "Who do you have?"

"Haines and Harrison, sir." Pop hesitated. "Both rather young, sir."

"Is that plant working at night?"

"No sir."

"Then send Haines. If the plant isn't working, nobody has any business there. The smart thing for Haines and the watchman to do is to lock that office tight, and not open it until they walk out in the morning. Impress that on Haines, Pop. No going out for lunch, and no letting in a friend or two!"

"Yes, sir," said Sergeant Cator. . . .

Trooper Haines, after listening carefully to instructions from Sergeant Cator, departed on the assignment. As an added precaution, Pop called at the plant early in the evening. He found that Haines had passed on the instructions, and that the watchman was willing to abide by them. The two men had brought their lunches, and were on the point of locking up for the night.

Sergeant Cator returned to the sub-station. . . .

Residents near the plant said the night passed without incident. The cashier, preparing for a busy day, was first to appear at the office. He found the front door closed, but unlocked. He entered, and almost stumbled over something on the floor. . . . Some minutes later he recovered sufficiently to use the telephone.

SERGEANT CATOR, icy fingers of dread clutching at his heart, answered the frenzied summons. The something the cashier had stumbled over was Trooper Haines, who was unconscious, and who had been struck over the head by what

the reports would describe as a blunt instrument. The watchman was near Trooper Haines. He too had been bludgeoned. He was dead.

The safe was wide open. The job had been done crudely but effectively, apparently with a sledgehammer. The payroll, of course, was gone.

Sergeant Cator hastened to the telephone and reported all that to Captain Field, who shared Pop's despair.

"Did you tell him about not opening that door?" demanded Captain Field.

Pop told of how he had emphasized that point. He described his visit for the purpose of checking up.

"All right," said Captain Field. "It's a tough break all around. Tough that it had to happen in your territory right at this time. But we can't help that.

"Get Haines to the hospital. Put a man with him, so that if he regains consciousness we can find out what happened. You take over at the plant until I get somebody to you."

Captain Field hesitated just a moment.

"And keep your chin up, Pop."

Before very many minutes had passed, Major Harner was on the telephone demanding to know just what had happened. Captain Field outlined the case.

"It happened in Sergeant Cator's territory, didn't it, Captain?"

"Sergeant Cator is stationed at Howard's Lake," Captain Field admitted. "But he consulted me about this detail, and I assigned Haines to it."

"I see," said Major Harner. A pause. "Think I'll take a run up. Be with you in an hour or two, Captain."

"Yes sir," said Captain Field.

JUST about this time, Lieutenant Edward David, as much at peace with the world as he ever was before breakfast, piloted his car through the streets of Howard's Lake, heading for the largest and best restaurant. Mr. David had passed the night at Canaras Lake; called at an early hour, in accordance with his instructions, he found the dining-room there not open. Thereupon he decided to improve the time by moving on to his next point of call—Howard's Lake.

He was the only customer in the restaurant, and the waitress gave him her undivided attention.

"Good morning, Miss Garbo," he said.

The girl tittered.

"I am not very hungry," Mr. David complained. "But you might bring me a double order of orange-juice while I am making up what I jokingly call my mind."

The girl departed. She returned with the order.

"I am still thinking," Mr. David asserted, "but while you are waiting, you

Illustrated by Monte Crews

The rider prodded his mount, and a cry of pain went up.

might bring me some scrambled eggs, bacon, double order of toast and a large pot of coffee."

In due time this appeared.

"I am ready to give my order now," said Mr. David. "I'll have pancakes, an order of broiled ham, and you'd better bring me some more coffee. Oh, yes, and some French fried potatoes. And if you have any orange marmalade, bring that along."

"How about a steak?" asked the girl.

Mr. David eyed her sternly.

"Didn't I tell you I wasn't hungry?"

Mr. David was at work on the ham when a man passing outside the restaurant attracted his attention.

"Hey, Pop!"

The call, with volume equal to a loudspeaker, carried through the open door. Sergeant Cator halted, peered in the restaurant, recognized the man at the table and entered.

"Hello, Tiny."

Mr. David waved a hand hospitably. "Sit down. Have some food."

Pop Cator dropped in a chair. "Not hungry," he said. "But I could go for some coffee."

Tiny David studied his companion. "What's wrong, Pop?"

"Didn't you get the flash?"

"Nope. What's doing?"

Sergeant Cator told him, in detail.

Tiny David whistled softly. "Your skirts are clean," was his verdict. "The Skipper will back you. He is that kind of a guy. Just the same, it is tough that it had to break right at this time. But that is neither here nor there."

He pushed the dishes aside.

"Haines was nearest the door?"

"Yep. He must have opened it. I tried to drill into his head— But that's water over the dam, poor devil."

"Have any idea why he did open it?" asked Tiny David.

"Nope."

Both men were silent for a moment.

"WHERE were you headed when I flagged you?" asked Tiny David.

"Hospital. Maybe Haines will clear up enough to tell us what happened."

"What do the doctors say?"

"They aren't very hopeful."

"Well," said Tiny David, "greater minds than ours will take up the burden from this point. I suppose our so-called experts are on their way in full cry."

"Due any minute," Cator agreed.

"Do me a favor, Pop?"

"You know where I stand, Tiny."

"Forget you saw me." A crooked grin played over his broad face. "The experts get in my hair. They are swell guys, but I can't keep up with them. If they know I am here, they will want me to help them draw pictures of a red-headed man who is left-handed, and all that stuff. I would rather just poke around a little and talk of this and that with some guys I know in this town."

"That's easy," said Pop. "See you later."

"Right. Where will you be?"

"Here and there. So long."

LEFT alone, Tiny hastily finished his fourth cup of coffee. Then he paid his check and sauntered forth. His first act was to park his car in a garage located in a side street. That accomplished, and again showing a preference for side streets, he made his way to a small and dirty dive on the outskirts of the village.

"Want to see Joe," he told the bartender, as he made his way toward the kitchen.

A thin, undersized man, wearing a white cap, looked up from the stove.

"Hello, Tiny."

"Hello, Joe."

"Guess I know what you want. It's that pay-roll job."

Tiny David nodded.

"You know me, Tiny. If I had even a whisper, I'd lay it on the line. But I aint got nothing."

"Right. But if you should hear anything, pass it along."

"It's yours," the man promised.

Tiny David left the place and made his way along the street, where a number of small boys were at play. One lad was on hands and knees, with another astride his back. The rider prodded his mount, and a cry of pain went up.

Tiny David turned, and saw the sun gleam on a bit of metal in the hands of the boy astride the other. The trooper walked to their side.

"I wouldn't hit him with that," said Tiny David. "Might hurt him."

The boy grinned; the "mount" rubbed his injuries.

"He socked me hard," he complained.

"Let's take a look at that," Tiny David ordered.

The boy handed it over. It was a spur, with the leather strap attached, the type of spur that is regulation in the New York State Police.

"Where did you get that?" asked Tiny.

"From my uncle."

"Does he ride horseback?"

"Nope. But he has these."

"Did he give it to you?"

"No-o. I got it after he went to work. But I'll put it back."

"That," Tiny David approved, "would be the smart thing to do."

He stood beside the boys, leaning against a tree, apparently with no pressing business at hand, and grinning in a way that inspired confidences.

"You know," the boy continued, "my uncle has a suit just like you. One of them hats, and everything."

Tiny David did not seem to attach undue importance to this fact.

"Is that so? Has he had it long?"

"I dunno. Just saw it yesterday."

Tiny David sat down on the grass.

"I'll bet your uncle is planning to join the troopers."

"Gee! Do yuh think so? He didn't say nuttin' about it."

Tiny David's smile was superior.

"Probably planning to surprise you." He pulled a sheet of paper from his pocket. "We are taking on some new men. What did you say your uncle's name was?"

"Pete Seeko. Gosh! When he goes with the troopers, he'll have to quit at the Wood Products, won't he?"

"Probably," Tiny David admitted. "Where did you say your uncle lives?"

"Right around the corner, at 26 Dorsay Street. Say, is his name on that list?"

Tiny David smiled mysteriously.

"The list is supposed to be a secret, son. Don't let on that I told you. By the way, is your uncle going to be home for dinner at noon?"

"Yep."

Tiny David stood up.

"Maybe I'll see you then."

"Not me," said the boy. "Me and the gang is going fishing, and we is going to be gone all day. We is going just as soon as I puts this back. You see, my uncle is going to have company when he comes home, and he don't want me around. They's going to be busy. Guess I better put this back right away."

"Good idea," said Tiny David. "I'll be seeing you."

HALF an hour later, after a careful survey of the neighborhood, Tiny David crept through a grove of trees that surrounded the rear of 26 Dorsay Street. He paused before a rear window. It was the work of a minute to insert the blade of a knife in an opening. The catch moved. Tiny David pushed the window up, and climbed inside.

Ignoring broken fingernails, he pried the stone away, and pawed through loose dirt.

Then he went to work. In a room obviously used for sleeping, his search was rewarded. The bottom drawer of a bureau yielded the complete uniform of a trooper. The spur, recently returned by the boy, was on the top of the pile.

Tiny David stood fitting the pieces of the puzzle together in his mind. This explained it all. Haines had obeyed orders. The door of the office had remained closed until he looked through the glass and saw a man he thought to be a comrade. Then the door opened. Taken off-guard, Haines had been an easy victim. The watchman, undoubtedly, had more chance to resist. That was why he was dead.

The trooper returned to the problem at hand. It was easy enough to explain how the outfit had been obtained. Perhaps stolen from a sub-station. Maybe obtained from some clothier, who thought the transaction was a perfectly legal one. Technically, there was no violation of the law, for the uniform was without the insignia of the organization. That omission, Tiny David noted grimly, would not be noticed in the dark.

He walked from the room and entered the kitchen. There was a wood-bin in one corner. Some tools were tossed carelessly to one side. One of them was a sledgehammer. Tiny David picked it up and examined it closely, taking care not to destroy any fingerprints on the

handle. The head of the tool was dented and bore spots of what apparently was black paint. That, the trooper guessed, came from the safe.

Tiny David glanced about. The floor of the kitchen was paved with thin flat stones. The dirt about one stone had been disturbed, and the stone was a trifle higher than the others.

The big trooper dropped to his knees, and once more the knife was brought into play. Ignoring broken fingernails, he pried the stone away. There was a layer of loose dirt. He pawed through it. His groping fingers struck something, and soon packages of currency were revealed.

Tiny David stood up, and took stock. This was a stroke of luck, the sort of luck that happens only now and then in police work, and usually when least expected. Here it was, right in his lap. The rest was as simple as rolling off a log. There would be publicity, commendation, and, it was only reasonable to assume, promotion. That captaincy and his own troop seemed a certainty.

Then Tiny David thought of Pop. Technically, the sergeant was in the clear. Captain Field would clear him of any possible blame on the assignment of Haines, a rookie, to the detail. Not Pop's fault that a robbery took place in his territory. Not his fault that somebody else in the outfit happened to solve it, particularly when that solution was purely the result of luck.

Tiny David tried to drive home those facts in his mind. Then a host of conflicting thoughts surged in. Pop was under fire. The efficiency-hound was gunning for him. Despite the Skipper, the Haines assignment wouldn't help Pop any. Neither would a major robbery in his territory add to his security. Even more deadly would be the fact that the solution came from some one other than Pop.

INDEED, Tiny David could imagine the conversation in Albany:

"David had a bit of luck," Major Harner would say.

"Possibly, sir," the efficiency-sharp would admit, "but doesn't it seem strange that none of that luck ever falls Cator's way?"

That, Tiny David admitted to himself, was the view almost anybody would share. Strive as he might, and would, to be fair, Major Harner could not help but be influenced by it. And Pop couldn't stand any more reverses.

For just a moment he toyed with the idea of getting in touch with Pop and having him share in the arrest. He put it aside. That wouldn't work. Put a lieutenant and a sergeant on a case, and the natural assumption is that the lieutenant is the directing force. Despite all that Tiny could do, that would be the result. Pop, bless his honest and loyal heart, would only add to it. Tiny David could almost hear him say: "Tiny broke it. I just went along for the ride."

RISING, Tiny David shrugged his big shoulders. With that gesture he renounced the captaincy that he had dreamed about. Then he went to work.

He restored the house to its former condition, removing all traces of his presence. He left by the same back window, carefully closing it behind him. Then he made his way to the restaurant, where he had breakfasted.

The same waitress was on duty.

"You back so soon? My Gawd!"

"I wasn't hungry this morning," Tiny David explained. "Too busy. Now I have time to really eat. Bring me the regular dinner."

When he had eaten the soup, he asked:

"Where is your telephone?"

The waitress indicated a back office.

He located Pop at the hospital. "How is Haines?" he asked.

"Just the same. Still unconscious."

"That's tough. Say, Pop, I am in one sweet mess. Can you duck over to the restaurant right away?"

"Be right over."

He was stowing away roast pork with dressing, but he had a worried frown on his face when Pop entered and seated himself beside him.

"Pop, I am banking on your going to town for me."

"You know where I stand."

Tiny David appeared to hesitate. "All right, Pop. Raise your right hand."

Pop's hand went up.

"Swear that you will do just what I tell you."

"I swear, Tiny. But what's it all about?"

"It's this way," Tiny David began. "I am supposed to be in Deerville. That's why I asked you not to tell the experts I was among those present. Just dropped in here to—to see a friend.

"Ordinarily," he continued, "I would light right out for where I belong, and say a prayer. But I ran into a guy I know and he slipped me some informa-

tion. It may not be worth a hoot, but it is worth looking up. I can't do it. Even if it broke right for me, you know how the Skipper is about being off-post."

"What is the dope?" Pop asked.

"This guy claims to have the dope on the pay-roll job. He says Haines opened the door because one of the mob was dressed as a trooper. He says the uniform is in a bureau drawer at 26 Dorsay Street, where one Pete Seeko lives. According to him, the sledgehammer they used is in the kitchen there, and the money is hidden under a stone in the kitchen floor. He also slipped me the dope that Seeko and his pals will be there about noon to whack up the loot and talk things over."

Tiny David leaned back and prepared to give his attention to dessert.

"This guy may be as crazy as a sewer rat. But check up on it for me, will you, Pop? It will save my neck. Harrison is stationed here with you, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Take him with you. And be careful. I wouldn't say anything to those experts. No use having them laugh at you if the thing doesn't pan out. But even if it does, keep me out of it. You promised. And you know the Skipper."

"How am I supposed to get all this dope?" Pop demanded.

Tiny David hesitated. The story of the boy and the spur would only complicate matters.

"Just the way I did: information received. If they ask you where you got your information, you tell them they can go and cut cards."

"I get it," said Pop.

"Good luck to you," said Tiny David. "Probably just a bum steer, but be a little careful. I'll hang around for a while. Give me a ring when you know what you have found. Then I'll light right out for Deerville and begin to repent my misspent life." He extended his hand. "Pop, you'll never know how you have saved my life."

HE watched Cator leave the restaurant. Then he turned to the waitress. "Myrna Loy! How about another piece of pie? And put a little ice-cream on it, will you?"

The girl hesitated.

"You had two orders of meat and extra vegetables. The boss is in the kitchen. I'll have to bring it to you à la carte."

"I don't care how you bring it," he told her. "Just bring it."

He finished that. He followed it with some ice-cream without the pie. He had another pot of coffee. He read the paper. He discussed the political situation with the proprietor. Some time later he was summoned to the telephone.

"Tiny? We got 'em! Nabbed 'em and the jack! Say, Tiny, you—"

Tiny David cut in sternly:

"You keep that big trap of yours shut, Pop! Don't crab my party. I'll be in Deerville in half an hour. You haven't seen me. Got that, you big punk?"

"Yes, Tiny. But—"

Tiny David hung up the receiver. He was grinning, but there was no mirth in the grin. He paused at the desk to pay his check, and to leave a liberal tip for the girl.

"Called away again," he told her. "Seems like I never get a chance to eat a meal in peace. No wonder I am losing weight. So long, Marlene."

THE Black Horse Troop is back to normal and the efficiency-expert has gone the way of all efficiency-experts.

Pop Cator is back on his desk in the office. He is looking forward to retiring on his pension. The outfit is planning a big send-off for him. The chamber of commerce and some other organizations have asked to be cut in on the party. Everybody gave him a big hand for his work on the Howard's Lake pay-roll robbery.

Whenever Tiny David walks through the office, Pop gazes at him with dog-like devotion. Sometimes there is a plea in his eyes. At those times Tiny David scowls. So Pop remains silent. Tiny, he thinks, is a tough guy to figure out.

The downstate lieutenant got the captaincy. . . . Tiny David is in line for the next one, when, and if, some captain dies, resigns or stops lead.

Captain Field is the authority for the statement it will not be soon.

"No such luck for me," he complains. "There was some reason for you keeping out of the picture over at Howard's Lake. You could at least have been among those present. I haven't been able to dope it out yet, but I will. Offhand, I would say that you played things so that you could stick around here and punish me for my sins."

"That's a good guess, Skipper," says Tiny David.

Another fine story by Robert Mill will appear in an early issue.

Man's Boldest

By STEFAN ZWEIG

(After a long voyage across the almost unknown Atlantic; after long search of every bay on that coast of South America; after a bleak winter in Patagonia; after dealing with hunger and mutiny and despair—now at last a scout ship reported it had found not another bay, but the long-sought strait.)

FOR three days they continued their voyage without reaching the end of this strait. Though they had not found the western outlet, they had seen nothing to show they were in an estuary. The water was persistently salt, and the ebb and flow of the tide continued regularly on the sides of the channel. It did not narrow steadily as the estuary of the Rio de la Plata had done. On the contrary, after the narrows there always recurred a new expansion. It was practically certain, therefore, that this fiord, this canal, must lead into the Mar del Sur, into the ocean which, a few years before, Nuñez de Balboa had been the first of all Europeans to glimpse from a peak in Central America.

Better news could not have reached the sorely tried Magellan after a year of tedious waiting and fruitless search. We can only guess how immense must have been the relief. He had almost surrendered to despair, had contemplated leaving the South American coast for the Cape of Good Hope, and must have made many fervent prayers to God and the Saints. Now, when faith and hope had almost come to an end, illusions were disclosing themselves as truth and dreams as reality. Let there be no more hesitation. Heave anchor and make all sail to the west!

A strange, a ghostly sight it must have been to see these four ships gliding noiselessly into the silent black waters of this bay, which they were the first vessels to enter. Profound indeed was the silence. Like lodestone mountains the hills lined the channel; dark were the skies which here are almost perpétually clouded; overshadowed were the waters; like Charon's boat upon the Styx, shadows among shadows, steered the ships soundlessly through this Plutonic world. From afar gleamed the snowy peaks, white giants, whose icy breath was blown to the voyagers by the wind. No living creature showed itself, yet surely there must be human beings somewhere in the region, since by night on the southward side of the channel could be seen flickering flames, for which reason the explorers called the country Tierra del Fuego—the Land of Fire. But no voice was heard, nor any moving form seen. When Magellan sent a boat for some purpose to the shore, the men found no signs of human habitation, but only an abiding-place of the dead, a few dozen forsaken tombs. The one animal they stumbled upon was dead, a mighty whale whose corpse had been washed ashore. He had come hither only to die in this domain of perpetual autumn. With astonishment the explorers stared into the spectral stillness, into vistas which looked as if they belonged to some cold star.

Sail on, sail on! Driven slowly before the breeze, the ships glided through the untraveled waters. Again and again they cast the lead, to reach no bottom; again and again they looked ahead to see if the bay would close in against them, with no free channel. But at each fresh turn, it remained open, the charmed passage meandering farther and farther.

Magellan spent a month exploring the *paso;* when the channel forked, he divided the fleet, sending two ships to the north while the others investigated the south.

SILENTLY the captains obeyed orders. Ships that were to take the southeastern channel—the *San Antonio* under Mesquita and the *Concepcion* under Serrão—could hoist sail and depart, and soon they disappeared in the devious passage. The other two craft, Magellan's flagship and the *Victoria,* were to have an easier time of it. They anchored at the mouth of Sardine River, for Magellan, instead of immediately taking the south-

Adventure

The ship that first sailed round the world—from an etching by Yngve Soderberg.

"Never can it be forgotten, the splendid venture of these five poor little lonely ships which set forth on their voyage to play their part in the hallowed war of mankind against the unknown, and of which only one got back victorious after having circumnavigated the world. This one deed of Magellan has shown for all time that an idea, winged by genius and sturdily energized by passion, proves stronger than the elements of nature, and that a thing which numberless generations have regarded as impossible can become an eternal truth."

western route, sent out a well-manned small boat. For a preliminary reconnaissance in these peaceful, narrow waters, a minor craft would do very well.

At their anchorage the shore disclosed instead of bald reefs, meadowland and forest. The air was milder, and springs of fresh water reanimated the crew, which for weeks had had nothing to drink but the foul, brackish water in the tanks. They lay at ease on the soft grass, watching the wonderful exploits of the flying fish and the other denizens of the sea.

But what was this trifling interlude of comfort and relaxation, what were these days of idleness, in comparison with the great, the exciting news which was about to reach Magellan? It was not long delayed, for on the third day the small boat obediently returned, and from afar its men were seen to be hailing the flagship with excited gestures like those which had been made by the sailors on All Saints' Day when they came back after discovering the entrance to the strait. This time—and it was a thousandfold more important—they had found the outlet. With their own eyes they had seen the Mar del Sur, the great unknown sea into which this channel opened.

"Thalassa! Thalassa!"—such had been the loud cry, two thousand years before, uttered by the Greeks when, returning from manifold perils, they had at length caught sight of the sea. Now it was re-ëchoed in another tongue, and at sight of an ocean which never before had heard the jubilant tones of European voices.

This was Magellan's supreme minute, the minute of the utmost rapture that any man can ever have enjoyed. All his expectations had been fulfilled. He had kept his word to the Emperor. He first in the world, he alone, had done what thousands before him had dreamed of doing; he had found his way into a new ocean. His life was justified, and by this moment he was destined for immortality.

NOW happened what no one would have dared to expect from a man so harsh and reserved as was Magellan. The stern soldier was suddenly overcome; he who had never before betrayed his inner feelings, surrendered to a surge from within. His eyes filled with tears, which ran down his weather-beaten face and dropped into his black beard. For the first time since he had grown up, the iron man wept. . . .

For a brief moment in his dark and toilsome life, Magellan was able to enjoy the highest rapture vouchsafed to men of creative type. He had realized the idea which had dominated his life. But it was also his fate that he should taste no happiness without having to pay for it with extortionate interest. Every one of his successes was associated with some heartrending disappointment. He could only catch a glimpse of happiness, but could not grasp it; and even this brief hour of rapture was sped before he had fully savored it. For what had become of the two other ships? Why did they tarry so long?

Had there been an accident? Had they gone off their course? Magellan could no longer wait. He ordered the sails to be set, and he steered into the channel in search of his missing consorts. But the horizon remained blank.

AT length, on the second day of the search, a sail was sighted—it was the *Concepcion,* under command of the trusty Serrão. Where was the other ship, the *San Antonio,* the most important of the fleet because it was the largest? Serrão could not say. On the first day it had outstripped him, and had vanished. For a little while Magellan did not guess that there was anything wrong. Perhaps the *San Antonio* had merely gone astray, or the captain had misunderstood orders. He therefore, with all three craft, explored the remotest corners of the main channel, now known as Admiralty Sound. He lighted beacons as signals; made cairns, marked with flags, and containing letters of instruction, in case the *San Antonio* should return after having lost her way. But she did not return. Some disaster must have taken place. Either the *San Antonio* had struck a rock and had foundered with all hands—but this was unlikely, for the weather had been remarkably calm—or more likely did it seem that Estevão Gomez, pilot of the missing *San Antonio,* who in a council a few days back had insisted upon the desirability of a prompt return to Spain, had now rebelliously followed his own rede. He and the other Spanish officers on board must have overpowered their captain, who was faithful to Magellan, and have deserted with all the stores they had on board.

Magellan did not know what had happened. All he knew was that it must be something terrible. The ship had disappeared—the best, the largest and most amply provided in his fleet. But what had become of it? There was no

one to inform him, in this forsaken region, whether it was at the bottom of the sea, or had deserted and was making for Spain with the utmost speed.

Once more Magellan was faced by the need for an important decision. For the second time within a few days he summoned a council and asked them their opinion as to whether the voyage should be continued, or whether they should return to Spain; and this time he demanded written answers to his questions.

Not in one hour, however, is confidence which has been lost for many months to be restored. His officers had been too seriously alarmed to risk candor. The only answer which has come down to us, that of Andres de San Martin, shows how little inclined he and the others were, now when the responsibility had grown so heavy, to take any part of the load off Magellan's shoulders.

Magellan, of course, had not consulted his officers in order to get their opinions, but only to provide evidence, for subsequent use, that he had consulted them. He knew that he had ventured too far to draw back. He could only return to Spain as a conqueror, for otherwise he would be lost. On November 22, 1520, the three ships left their anchorage; a few days later they emerged from the strait which would henceforward bear his name. From a cape which he gratefully named Cabo Deseado (Cape Desire) he set sail into the trackless Pacific. Somewhere beyond the horizon must lie the Spice Islands, the islands of wealth; farther on still must be China and Japan and Hindustan; and beyond them, in the vast distance, must be the homeland, Spain and Europe. Let them rest for a little while—the last rest before thrusting forth into an ocean which had never been traversed since the creation of the world. Then (on November 28, 1520) it was up anchor and away, flags flying. With a salvo of artillery, three lonely little ships respectfully greeted the unfamiliar seas, as a man chivalrously greets a great adversary who has challenged him to a life-or-death struggle.

CHAPTER IX

THE story of the first crossing of this hitherto nameless ocean—"a sea so vast that the human mind can scarcely grasp it," as we read in the letter of Maximilian Transylvanus—is one of the deathless deeds of mankind. The voyage of Columbus into the unlimited waste of waters has, by those of his own time and of all times, been regarded as courageous; but even that is not comparable to the one made by Magellan amid unspeakable hardships and privations. Columbus sailed with three ships fresh from the yards, newly rigged, and thoroughly well supplied. His outbound voyage lasted no more than thirty-three days. A week before he sighted land, San Salvador, the appearance of tufts of grass and fresh driftwood upon the sea and of land-birds in the air, encouraged him to believe that he must be approaching a continent. His crew were hale; his ships so provisioned that, in the worst event, he could sail home again even if he failed to reach the land of which he was in search. Though steering into the unknown, at his back he had his homeland as last refuge.

MAGELLAN was journeying into the void, while the land astern of him was not Europe with its safe and comfortable harbors, but the strange and inhospitable Patagonia. His men were exhausted by long months of hardship. Hunger and privation lay behind them; hunger and privation accompanied them; hunger and privation lay threateningly before. Their clothing was threadbare; the sails were rotten; the rigging was frayed. For weeks they had seen no new faces, nor felt the touch of a woman's hand. Although they may have kept their thoughts to themselves, they must in the depths of their hearts have envied the bold comrades who had deserted and made for home before it was too late, instead of being adrift or little better in an endless expanse of water.

Such was their mood as they sailed on for twenty days, thirty days, forty days, fifty and sixty, and still there came no land, nor any sign to give hope that they were drawing near the land. Week followed week, and week followed week until a hundred days had passed since leaving the Patagonian coast—thrice as long as the westward voyage of Columbus. For thousands upon thousands of hours did Magellan's fleet voyage into vacancy. Since November 28th, when Cabo Deseado had faded out of sight on the horizon, they had had neither maps nor means of measurement. False had proved Faleiro's estimate of distances. Long since, thought Magellan, he must have got beyond Zipangu (as Marco Polo had called it), beyond Japan, Dai Nip-

pon, the Land of the Rising Sun. Yet at the time when he believed this, he had not yet traversed as much as a third of the width of the vast ocean which, because it was so peaceful, he called the Pacific.

Peaceful though it was, its peace was cruel, for the monotony of its stillness was martyrdom. Always the same cruelly glaring daylight, offering the same unchanging prospect; always at night the same cold and silent stars which were fruitlessly questioned for their message.

UPON this unexpectedly long voyage, supplies were running out until there was a disastrous shortage. Muck rather than food it was which the purser was now able to serve. The wine, which while it lasted had moistened the lips and refreshed the mind a little, had been drunk to the last drop. The fresh water, heated by the pitiless sun, had grown brackish in the filthy containers, had (as sailors say) "gone sick," and gave off such a pestilential odor that the unhappy men had to hold the nose while swallowing the scant daily ration with which they tried to assuage the dryness of their throats. The biscuit, too, which as food was supplemented only by such fish as they could catch, had crumbled into a gray, dirty powder, alive with worms or maggots, and further contaminated by the droppings of rats which, themselves driven crazy by want, were ravaging the last pitiful remnants of food.

These repulsive creatures had themselves become coveted delicacies, and when the robbers of the last provisions were now hunted in all corners of the ships, this was done not merely to slay them, but to obtain the bodies as valuable dainties. "Rats were so much in request," writes Pigafetta, "that we paid half a ducat apiece for them."

We need not be surprised that even the most vigorous among these men of iron, though inured to suffering, could not long tolerate such a diet. Scurvy broke out for lack of fresh elements (vitamins we call them today) in the victuals. The gums swelled, bled and festered; the teeth became loose and fell out; sores formed in the mouth, and the palates of the sufferers became so painful that they could not take nutriment when they wanted, and some of them perished miserably of malnutrition. Those who survived were weakened by famine. Their limbs paralyzed or covered with ulcers, they hobbled about with the aid of sticks,

or lay exhausted in out-of-the-way corners. No less than nineteen, being about one-third of those still left with the expedition, died thus in torment on this dreadful journey across the Pacific.

For ages, as it seemed, the lonely fleet crept across the deserted waters, the men on board suffering all manner of torment, being not spared even the worst of these, the agony of disappointed hope.

One morning there came from the look-out man at the masthead a hoarse hail: "*Land ho!*"

Land for the first time after so many days and weeks! The parched and famished mariners rushed on deck; even the sick, who had not been able to rise for a long time, struggled to their feet. Yes, it was really an island which they were approaching. The boats were quickly manned. All dreamed of fresh water, and of lying in the shadow of the

trees. What a delight it would be to feel firm ground beneath their feet once more instead of these restless planks.

But as they drew near, this, and later another, was found to be a barren rock in the midst of the sea, providing neither fresh water nor fresh fruit; waste of time to land. "Since we found there neither people, nor consolation, nor sustenance of any kind, the name of Desaventuradas—the Unfortunate Islands—was given to this and to St. Paul's Island." The voyage across the blue desolation was resumed. On and on and on, for days and weeks, in what was perhaps the most dreadful voyage, the one most full of hardships and hopelessness, in the chronicles of human suffering.

AT length on March 6th, 1521, for the hundredth time since leaving Cabo Deseado, the sun rose to show what they had expected to be nothing more than the usual vacancy. This morning, however, there was again a cry from the masthead: *"Land ho!"* It was time! Two or three days more in the void, and probably no record of this heroic exploit would have come down to us. With crews dying of hunger, the ships—wandering cemeteries—would have continued an aimless journey until sunk by a storm or dashed to pieces on the rocks. But this island, praise God, was inhabited, and could supply water for the thirsty.

Hardly had the fleet entered the bay, dropping anchors and lowering sails, when agile prahus put off from shore, little painted boats, with sails made of palm-leaves stitched together. Nimble as monkeys, the nude children of nature scrambled on board, and so foreign to their thoughts were any of the conventions of civilized life, that these light-

fingered gentry were quick to appropriate anything that was not nailed down. In a trice objects disappeared as if by magic or a conjuring trick. The painter which attached the *Trinidad's* skiff having been cut, the tiny craft was paddled off in triumph to the shore. The skiff, entered in the inventory made at Seville as "purchased for the *Trinidad* at a cost of 3,937½ maravedis," was here, ten or twelve thousand miles away, of inestimable value. Their booty must be snatched from the skillful robbers.

THE next day, therefore, Magellan landed forty armed seamen to bring it back and teach the dishonest islanders a lesson. Some of their huts were burned, but they offered no serious resistance, being savages ignorant of the art of making and using deadly weapons.

Panic-stricken, they withdrew out of range and took refuge in the bush from the missiles of these detestable white barbarians. The Spaniards could get a supply of fresh water, and make an effective raid in search of food. From the abandoned huts they took whatever they could see—fowls, fish and fruit. Now that both sides had enjoyed a campaign of reciprocal thieving, the natives plundering the Spaniards and the Spaniards the natives, the civilized robbers punished the islanders by giving their habitat, for all time, the disgraceful name of "Thieves' Islands," the Ladrones.

Anyhow, this plunder-raid saved the Spaniards from destruction. Three days' rest, fresh fruit and fresh meat, and an abundant supply of fresh water, quickly restored most of the crew to health. And when, a week later, another and yet another island were sighted, Magellan knew that they were saved.

The sick were carried ashore, provided with fresh, sweet water; and one of the pigs which had been stolen from the Ladrone islanders was killed for them. Let them rest, and not be too impatient. Next afternoon, however, a boat containing friendly natives came over from Suluan. It brought fresh fruit, by the sight of which Pigafetta was greatly astonished, since never before had he seen bananas or coconuts, the milk of the latter proving wonderfully good for the sick. Trade now began: fish, fowls, palm-wine, oranges, and all sorts of vegetables and fruits were exchanged for a few bells, colored glass beads, and other trifles—and at length, after weeks and months of semi-starvation, both the sick and those still hale could satisfy their appetites.

Yes, Magellan believed that he had reached the Isles of Promise, the Spice Islands. But soon he realized he must have miscalculated. Had these been the Moluccas, Enrique would have understood the speech of the natives. He did not. They were not the slave's fellow-countrymen, so the expedition must have reached some other archipelago. Once more mistake had led to discovery. Magellan had directed his course too far northward, and had found his way to a completely unknown group of islands, to an archipelago whose existence had never been suspected by any European. In his search for the Moluccas, he had discovered the Philippines, thus securing for Emperor Charles a new province, which was destined to remain under the rule of the Spanish crown longer than any of the regions discovered by Columbus, Cortez or Pizarro.

Within a few days or hours, when the voyage had been resumed, there was an endless succession of islands on the horizon. At Mazzava, a tiny islet of the Philippine group, so small that only with a lens can one find it on the map, Magellan had one of the most remarkable experiences of his entire life. As soon as, under press of sail, the three large foreign ships drew near the shore of Mazzava, the inhabitants, inquisitive and friendly, flocked to the strand. Before Magellan landed, he sent his slave Enrique ashore as emissary, rightly supposing that the indigenes would have more confidence in a brown-skinned man of their own kidney than in the bearded whites, strangely clad and fully armed.

NOW came the wonder. The islanders surrounded Enrique, chattering and shouting, and the Malay slave was dumfounded, for he understood much of what they were saying. It was a good many years since he had been snatched from his home, a good many years since he had last heard a word of his native speech. What an amazing moment, one of the most remarkable in the history of mankind! For the first time since our planet had begun to circle in its orbit, a living man, himself circling that planet, had got back to his home-land.

No matter that he was an underling, a slave; for his significance lies in his fate and not in his personality. He is known to us only by his slave-name of Enrique; but we know, likewise, that he was torn

from his home upon the island of Sumatra, was bought by Magellan in Malacca, was taken by his master to India, to Africa and to Lisbon; traveled thence to Brazil and to Patagonia, and, first of all the population of the world, traversing the oceans, circling the globe, returned to the region where men spoke a familiar tongue. Having made acquaintance on the way with people of many tribes and races, each of which had a different way of communicating thought, he had got back to his own folk, whom he could understand and who could understand him!

MAGELLAN knew he had reached his goal—had completed his task. He was back among the speakers of Malay, among those whom, twelve years before, he had quitted on his westward course when he sailed from Malacca, to which he would be able to bring back this slave. What sages had suspected for thousands of years was now certain, thanks to the persistent courage of this one man. The earth was round, for a man had rounded it.

Magellan had found the route to the west, the route which Columbus, Vespucci, Cabot, Pinzon and other navigators had vainly sought. He had discovered lands and seas which none before him had seen; as the first European, the first man to do so, he had successfully crossed a new and mighty ocean. He had far outstripped all others in the exploration of our planet. After this splendid achievement, how trifling was that which still remained to do!

There was no hurry, no need for impatience. He could rest at length, could enjoy the happiness of fulfillment after the painful months of perpetual harassment. Let the Argonauts have a spell of repose in this blessed port.

The islanders were no less enthusiastic than were their hungry guests. What wonderful men had come to them across the sea, bringing such splendid gifts! Polished mirrors in which a man could see his own nose with his own eyes; glittering knives; and heavy axes which one could cut down a thick bamboo with one blow. The visitors had wonderful armor which made them invulnerable. On the Admiral's command, one of the seamen put on a suit of steel, and the natives were allowed to shoot at him with their bone arrows, while the mail-clad soldier laughed them to scorn.

What a splendid spectacle had these white gods prepared for the day which they called Easter Sunday! They placed on the shore a strange object, a sort of box which they called an altar, and above it a cross glittered in the sun. Then they all came, two by two, the Admiral and fifty men in their best clothes, and while they knelt before the Cross, lightnings flashed from the ships, and a noise like thunder (though the sky was cloudless) rolled across the sea.

Convinced that there must be something miraculous about these mighty white men, the natives timidly and reverently imitated their movements. They too knelt and kissed the Cross.

It was a glorious idyllic time, this week spent in Mazzava. But Magellan had rested long enough. The mariners were refreshed and encouraged; it was time to continue the homeward road. Why delay longer? What could it matter to him to discover another island more or less, since he had made the greatest discovery of the age? He need only visit the Spice Islands, fulfill his commission, discharge his vow; then let him make as quickly as possible for Europe, where his wife awaited him, and would show him the child born since his departure. Back to secure the punishment of the mutineers who had treacherously deserted him. Back to teach the world the courage of a Portuguese nobleman, the resolution and fortitude of a Spanish crew. He must not keep his friends waiting any longer, or leave in the lurch those who had trusted him.

YET always a man's genius is at the same time his innermost danger; and Magellan's genius was patience, his power to wait, his capacity for silence. Stronger in him than his longing for a triumphal return that he might win thanks from the lord of the Old World and the New, was his sense of duty. It would not suffice him that he had visited and annexed one little island. He must enter into the same sort of treaty with the principal rulers of the archipelago as he had with this inconsiderable local chief Calambu, that the flag of Castile and Aragon might wave everywhere, and the Cross stand as a permanent sign of supremacy.

When he asked Calambu which was the largest of the islands, he was told that it was Zubu or Cebu; and when the Admiral demanded a pilot, the Rajah said it would be an honor to be allowed to guide him thither. And on April 4th the ships set out through quiet waters.

ON April 7, 1521, after a calm and pleasant three days' voyage, the fleet approached the island of Cebu. The sight of numerous villages dotted along the coast showed that the place was thickly populated. The royal pilot Calambu steered straight for the capital, the first glance of which taught Magellan that he had here to do with a rajah or king of considerably more importance than his present companion, seeing that in the roads there lay a number of junks from foreign parts, together with quantities of native prahus. It was desirable to make a big show and to disclose himself as the lord of thunder and lightning. Magellan signaled the fleet to fire an artillery salute—which, to begin with, aroused the horror of the unsophisticated islanders, who fled in all directions to hide. Thereupon Magellan hastened to send Enrique ashore as interpreter, with instructions to be diplomatic, and inform the ruler of the island that the thunder was not a sign of enmity, for the commander of the squadron intended by this magic to show his respect for the mighty King of Cebu. The lord of the fleet was himself only a servant of the greatest monarch in the world, on whose command he had sailed across the mightiest ocean in the world to seek out the Spice Islands. On the way, having learned how wise and courteous a prince the King of Cebu was, he had determined to pay a friendly call.

HUMABON, Rajah of Cebu, was no unsophisticated child of nature as were the naked savages of the Ladrones or the "giants" of Patagonia. He had already eaten of the tree of knowledge, knew about money and money's worth. This yellowish-brown prince on the other side of the world was a political economist who practiced the highly civilized art of exacting transit-dues from every ship that cast anchor in his port. A keen man of business, he was not impressed by the thunder of the artillery or flattered by the honeyed words of the interpreter. He coolly replied to Enrique that he had no wish to forbid an entrance to his harbor. The white strangers were welcome, and he would be glad to trade with them. But every ship without exception must pay harbor dues. Payment first, and friendship afterward! The foreigners could not be received unless the customary dues were forthcoming. There could be no exception. As witness, he summoned a Mohammedan trader who had just arrived from Siam in a junk, and had paid without controversy.

This worthy appeared, and turned pale. At the first glance toward the big ships with the cross of St. James upon the taut sails, he grasped the situation. Alas, in this farthest corner of the East, where hitherto trade had been carried on without interference from the *giaours*, these children of Shaitan had appeared upon the scene. Here they were with their terrible cannon and arquebuses, these murderers, the enemies of Mohammed. Peaceful trade and big profits for such as himself were over and done with. He hastily whispered to the King that caution was needed, and that a dispute with the unwelcome visitors must be avoided at all costs. They were the same, he explained (confusing the Spaniards with the Portuguese) who had pillaged and conquered Calicut, all Hindustan, and Malacca. No one could resist the white devils.

With this recognition another circle had been closed. At the other end of the world, under other stars, Europe had touched Europe once more. If Magellan still doubted whether he could really be close to his goal, he was now confirmed in his expectations. Sphere had touched sphere; the circle was closed; the world had been circumnavigated.

The Mohammedan trader's warning made a manifest impression upon the Rajah of Cebu. In his alarm, he instantly abandoned his claim for harbor dues. As a first proof of his hospitable intentions, he invited Magellan's envoys to a banquet. Now came a third unmistakable sign that the Argonauts were close to their destination. Food was no longer served upon mats or upon wooden platters, but on porcelain, which came direct from China, the semi-mythical Cathay of Marco Polo. Cipangu and India, at the heart of Oriental civilization, must likewise be close at hand. Magellan had very nearly realized the dream of Columbus, who hoped to reach the Indies from the west.

So soon as this diplomatic incident had been smoothed over, the official interchange of courtesies and goods could begin. Pigafetta was sent ashore as plenipotentiary, and the Rajah of Cebu declared himself ready to enter into a perpetual treaty of peace with the mighty Emperor Charles; while Magellan, on his side, did his utmost to promote amicable relations.

Trade was forthwith begun, and was carried on to mutual satisfaction. Above all, the islanders were astonished at iron, this hard metal brought by the foreigners, which was so wonderful for making swords and spears, mattocks and plows. They had comparatively little interest in gold, and like enthusiasts in the blessed war-year 1914, they were willing to give gold for iron. Fourteen pounds of this latter metal, so cheap in Europe, were worth more to them than fifteen pounds of gold.

Relations between the indigenes and the mighty strangers grew so cordial that the Rajah and most of his followers spontaneously expressed a desire to become Christians. What the other Spanish *conquistadores* achieved in the course of months and years with the rack and the Holy Inquisition, with cruel punishments, and with burnings at the stake, the profoundly religious but unfanatical Magellan secured in a few days without any violence whatever.

Seldom indeed has a deed been more splendidly accomplished. Magellan had gained his ends. He had discovered the strait leading to the other side of the world. New islands with abundant riches had been won for the Crown of Castile and Aragon; countless souls had accepted the true faith—and, triumph among triumph, these things had been done without shedding a drop of blood. God had protected this man ardent in the faith. He had saved Magellan from privations and dangers worse than those any other mortal had ever endured. The Admiral was permeated with a fervently religious sentiment of security. After the numerous difficulties he had overcome, what more difficult could remain to be accomplished, what, after this glorious victory, could still endanger his work? His mind was obsessed with the humble conviction that he could venture anything for God and the Emperor. This faith was to bring him to his doom.

MAGELLAN had succeeded in everything, as if angels had lighted his path. He had found the way; he had conquered new islands for his king; another, a vainer man than he, would have hastened home to wear the laurel crown. But Magellan, the precise and incorruptible calculator, was mainly concerned with the problem of how best to make the islands he had discovered permanent possessions of the Spanish Crown. He hoped and believed that the newly baptized King Charles would keep troth. But Charles Humabon was no more than one of many kings in the Philippines; and to visit all these islands, to win over and to convert all their chieftains, would have taken too long. The Admiral's duty was to reach the Spice Islands as quickly as he could. As far as consolidating Spanish power in the Philippines was concerned, there seemed to Magellan (always thinking far ahead) only one way, namely to make Charles Humabon, the only Catholic maharajah, liege lord of the other chieftains in the region. Thenceforward King Charles of Cebu was to rule as the Spanish monarch's viceroy, and must gain higher prestige than that of his fellow-rulers. A friend of the King of Spain could not stand on a like footing with other princes, but in virtue of his alliance with the lord of thunder and lightning, must hold unrivaled rank and authority throughout the archipelago. It was not in levity, but as the outcome of careful political reflection, that Magellan now offered the King of Cebu military aid, should any other rajah venture to rise against him.

As luck would have it, during these very days there was opportunity for such a demonstration. On a tiny isle called Mactan, close to Cebu, there ruled a rajah named Silapulapu who had always been inclined to rise in revolt against the Rajah of Cebu. Since the arrival of the Spaniards he had been doing what he could to prevent the other chieftains from supplying them with the necessary

stores of food. Silapulapu's animus against the Spaniards would appear to have not been altogether unjustified. Somewhere on his islet (probably because mariners of the fleet were cultivating the native women too eagerly) there had been a brawl, and several of the huts on Mactan had been burned down. The refusal of supplies seemed to Magellan an excellent reason for a trial of strength. Not only the Rajah of Cebu, but the other chieftains as well, should learn once for all how much better it was to support the Spaniards, and how grievous would be the fate of any who should resist the lord of thunder and lightning. Such a spectacle (which need not involve much bloodshed) would be more convincing than words. Magellan, therefore, informed Humabon of his wish to read this refractory princeling a lesson, that Silapulapu might behave better in future. Strangely enough, the Rajah of Cebu does not seem to have been very enthusiastic in his acceptance of the proffered aid. Perhaps he dreaded lest as soon as the Spaniards departed the subjugated tribe would rise against him.

Serrão and Barbosa likewise warned against so needless a military expedition.

MAGELLAN was not thinking of a serious campaign. All he sought to do was to insure the authority of Spain's new ally, Rajah Charles, over all the other princes and chieftains. If the rebellious Silapulapu did but lower his crest, so much the better for him and for everyone. The sworn enemy of needless bloodshed, the very antithesis of the other and more pugnacious *conquistadores,* Magellan began by sending his slave Enrique and the Siamese trader to Silapulapu, offering peace. Magellan asked nothing of Silapulapu than that the latter should acknowledge the suzerainty of the Rajah of Cebu and place himself under the protectorate of Spain. If he would agree to this, the Spaniards would show him close friendship. If, on the other hand, he refused, and repudiated the suzerainty of Rajah Charles of Cebu, then he would be taught how sharp were the Spanish lances.

Silapulapu answered that his men had lances of their own. Though these were made only of bamboo, the points had been well hardened in the fire, and the Spaniards, should they venture to attack, would find them to be formidable weapons. Having received this arrogant message, Magellan had no choice but to maintain Spanish supremacy by an act of war. He was compelled to have recourse to the argument of arms.

For the first time in Magellan's career, we find him lacking in what had hitherto been his most striking characteristics: caution and foresight. For the first time the good calculator apparently overlooked the best of his chances. The Rajah of Cebu had offered to send a thousand warriors against Mactan, and Magellan would have no difficulty in supplying one hundred and fifty of his own men for the assault on the island. Attacked by so preponderant a force, the rajah of this petty islet would have sustained a crushing defeat. But Magellan did not want a butchery. He was concerned, in this expedition, with something much more important, the prestige of Spain. An Admiral of the emperor of two worlds could not treat as equal adversary a brown-skinned rascal who had not a mat in his hut which was not worn into holes. It would never do to attack such a pack of islanders with a superior force. Magellan had other plans. What he designed to prove was that one valid and well-armed Spaniard could deal single-handed with a hundred such rapscallions. The myth of the invulnerability, of the invincibility of the Spaniards was to be established by this action, and tidings of the defeat of the bush-rajah who had dared to face the forces of the King of Spain would spread like wildfire through the islands.

What Magellan had shown a few days before on his flagship as a farce to amuse the rajahs of Mazzava and Cebu, was to be shown once more on a larger scale and in dead earnest—that twenty natives armed with lances and krises could attack a Spanish soldier in steel harness without being able even to wound him. This was to teach the refractory Silapulapu the same lesson. It was for these psychological reasons that a man usually so cautious took with him no more than sixty men, and requested the Rajah of Cebu with his auxiliary force of a thousand warriors, not to land on Mactan, but to watch the contest from the prahus. They would not have to fight, but merely to enjoy the instructive spectacle of how a few dozen Spaniards could easily get the better of all the chieftains and rajahs and kings on the islands.

Had the experienced calculator miscalculated this time? Not a bit of it. The teachings of history show that to send a score or so of Europeans in coats

of mail against a thousand naked savages, armed with fish-bone lances, was by no means absurd. With three or four hundred men Cortez and Pizarro, getting the better of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and Peruvians, conquered huge realms. In comparison with the difficulties these faced, Magellan's expedition against a petty island must have seemed little more than a military parade. We know, indeed, that Magellan did not anticipate danger, for the pious Catholic, whose custom it was, before any decisive action, to hear Mass, and with his men take Holy Communion, did not do this before attacking Mactan. A few gunshots, a few shrewd blows, and Silapulapu's poor fellows would be on the run like hares. Without any serious bloodshed, the inviolability of the Spanish warriors would be proved to these islands for all time.

ON this Friday night of April 26, 1521, when Magellan embarked with his sixty men to cross the small strait separating the two islands, the indigenes declared that they saw a strange black bird, looking something like a crow, perched on a roof-tree. It seems to be true that, no one knows why, all the dogs began to howl. The Spaniards, no less superstitious than the savages, crossed themselves anxiously. But was the man who had ventured upon the greatest voyage in history likely to turn back because a raven croaked, or to be afraid of a skirmish with a naked chieftain and his poor rabble of followers?

Disastrously for Magellan, however, this puny prince had a powerful ally in the structure of the shore. A little distance out to sea there was a coral reef, which the boat could not cross; so the Spaniards were deprived of the effective use of their best weapon, the murderous fire of arquebuses and crossbows, the mere thunder of the guns usually being enough to put the savages to flight.

Taking no trouble to cover their rear, forty of the heavily armed men disembarked to wade, leaving the other twenty in the boat. Magellan led the way, for as Pigafetta writes, "being a good shepherd, he would not desert his flock." Girdle-deep in the water, they waded a considerable distance to the shore, where a great number of Indians awaited them, shouting and swinging their shields defiantly. Soon battle was joined.

The most trustworthy of various accounts of this battle is probably that of Pigafetta, for the chronicler was one of the attacking party, and was himself wounded by an arrow. "We jumped into the water," he writes, "which was waist-deep, and then we had two long bow-shots to wade before we reached land, while our boat could not follow us because of the reef. On the shore we found fifteen hundred of the islanders divided into three bodies, of which one opposed our advance, while the others assailed us on the flanks. The Captain, accordingly, marshaled his men in two companies, as affording a better means of defence. Our musketeers and cross-bow men fired for half an hour from the boats, without effect, for from so great a distance our bullets and bolts and lances could not penetrate the wooden shields of the enemy, and at best could merely wound them in the arm.

"The Captain, therefore, ordered the marksmen to cease fire (obviously wishing to reserve the ammunition for a later stage of the encounter), but this order was disregarded in the confusion. When the islanders realized that our fire was doing them little or no harm, they ceased to retire. Shouting more and more loudly, and jumping from side to side to disconcert our aim, they advanced simultaneously, under cover of their shields, assailing us with arrows, javelins, lances with points hardened in the fire, stones, and even filth, so that we were scarcely able to defend ourselves. Some of them began to throw lances with brazen points against our commander.

"To instill terror into the hearts of the enemy, the Captain now sent some of our men to set the islanders' huts on fire. That only increased their ferocity. Some of them ran off to cope with the flames, which were raging in twenty or thirty of the houses, and there they slew two of our fellows. The rest attacked us with redoubled fury. When they became aware that though our bodies were protected by armor, our legs were exposed, they aimed chiefly at these. The Captain's right foot was wounded by a poisoned arrow; whereupon he issued orders for a slow and steady retreat. But nearly all our men fled headlong, so that no more than six or eight of us stayed with him—who, having been lame for years, could not withdraw quickly.

"Now we were exposed to lances and stones hurled from all sides, and we were no longer in a position to resist. The bombard we had in the boat could not help us, for the range was too great.

Retreating, therefore, step by step, and fighting all the time, we withdrew from the shore, till we were a full bowshot away, and the water already rose to our knees. But the islanders followed us sturdily, continually picking up the spears they had already cast, so that one and the same spear could wound five or six men in succession. Recognizing the Captain, they aimed chiefly at him; and twice the helmet was struck from his head. He, supported by the few of us who had stayed with him, fought like a valiant knight at his post, without attempting further retreat.

"Thus we fought for an hour or more, until at length an Indian succeeded in wounding the Captain in the face with a bamboo spear. He, being desperate, plunged his lance into the Indian's breast, leaving it there. But wishing to use his sword, he could only draw it halfway from the sheath, on account of a spear-wound he had received in the right arm. Seeing this, the enemy made a combined rush at him; and one of them, with a long *terzado,* like a large scimitar, gave him a heavy blow upon the left leg which caused him to fall forward on his face. Then the Indians threw themselves upon him, with spears and scimitars and every weapon they had, and ran him through—our mirror, our light, our comforter, our true guide—until they killed him."

In this insensate way (like his great successor James Cook, one of the greatest navigators in history) when hard upon the completion of his imperishable deed, Magellan was slain in a petty skirmish with a horde of naked islanders. The man of genius who, like *Prospero,* had mastered the elements, overcome storms, and constrained men, was felled by a ludicrous human insect named Silapulapu. Though death could deprive him of life, it could not rob him of victory, and his mortal lot seems of little importance after so immortal a deed. But the tragedy of his heroic doom was followed all too quickly by a satirical episode. The very Spaniards who, a few weeks earlier, had been revered as gods from heaven and had then looked down upon the princeling of Mactan, now debased themselves so low that, instead of instantly summoning the rest of their forces and snatching the corpse of their leader from those who had slain him, they, like cowards, sent a negotiator to Silapulapu offering to buy the body. They wished to recover the mortal remains of their Admiral in return for a few bells and scraps of colored cloth. But the nude princeling who had triumphed over the Spaniards proved greater in spirit than the not very heroic companions of Magellan. Silapulapu would not surrender the corpse of his adversary in exchange for mirrors and glass beads and colored satin. He valued the trophy he had won, for now the news was spreading through the islands that Silapulapu the Great had destroyed the white lord of thunder and lightning as easily as he would have destroyed a fish or a bird.

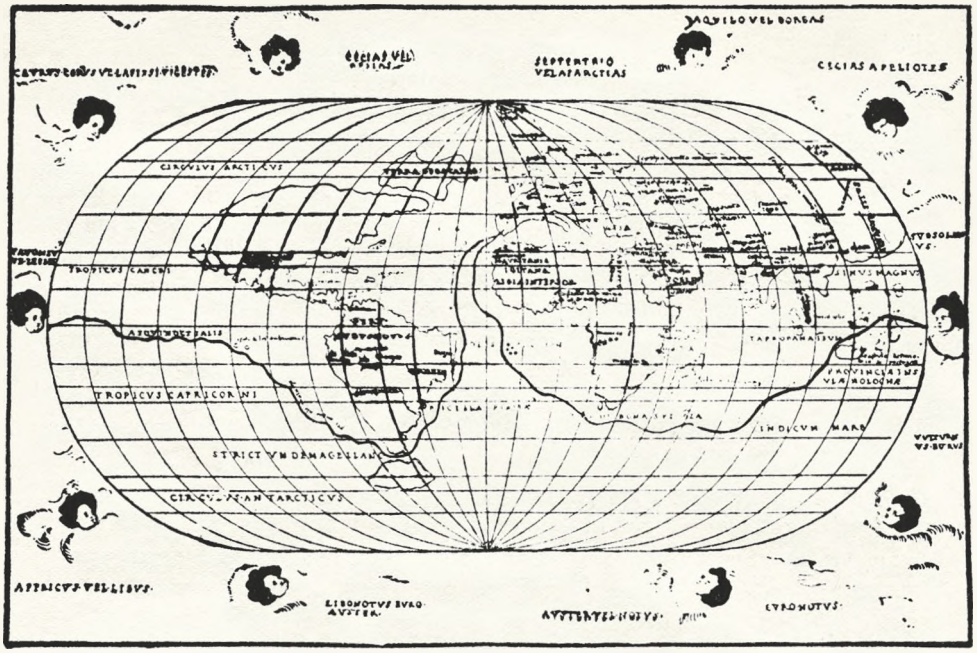
No one knows what became of Magellan's body, or to which element his mortal envelope was returned; whether to fire, to water, to earth, or to air. No witness was there to tell us; his grave, if he was buried, remains secret. All traces of the man who wrested its last mystery from the Unknown have vanished.

CHAPTER X

THE Spaniards lost no more than eight men in this trifling skirmish—a far from overwhelming proportion of their total forces. But the loss of their leader made the reverse catastrophic. With Magellan's death was dispelled the magical nimbus which had made the white strangers seem godlike to the simple natives. Only upon this nimbus depended the power and success of the *conquistadores.* Despite their bravery, their staying power, their strategy, and the strength of their weapons, neither Cortez nor Pizarro would ever have succeeded in overcoming foes by the myriad and by the hundred thousand, had not the myth of invincibility and invulnerability supported them like a guardian angel. These all-wise beings who could launch thunder and lightning from weapons which looked like bludgeons, seemed to the alarmed natives to be invulnerable; they could not be wounded, because arrows fell blunted from their armor.

The Rajah of Cebu had surrendered unresistingly to the lord of thunder and lightning. But now with his own eyes he had seen that thunder and lightning powerless; had watched the reputedly invulnerable men clad in glittering cuirasses fleeing ignominiously from the naked fighters of Silapulapu.

The Spaniards must have realized the increasing hostility of the islanders, for they speedily became impatient.



World Map by Battista Agnese—1538 (?). Courtesy of Harvard University Press.

Let them get together a stock of wares on which they could make a profit, and sail with all speed for the Spice Islands.

To hasten matters, they had urgent need of the services of Enrique, Magellan's slave, since he was the only man able to facilitate barter with the natives by talking to them in their own language. The faithful Enrique had fought by his leader's side to the last moment. He was brought back wounded to the ship, and lay motionless, wrapped in his mat —perhaps because of his wounds, or perhaps because, with the faithfulness of a dog, he was mourning his beloved master. Thereupon Duarte Barbosa, who, jointly with João Serrao, had been elected to the leadership, was foolish enough, by deadly insults, to alienate the loyal servitor. He bluntly told the poor devil not to fancy that he could play the idler after his master's death, or that he had ceased to be a slave. If he did not get up promptly and go ashore to act as interpreter for the exchange of goods, he should have a sound drubbing.

The Malays are a fierce and dangerous race, and will never endure contumely. He made no sign at the moment, though doubtless aware that in a will, drawn up before he left Spain, Magellan had provided that from the day of his death the slave was to be free, and had bequeathed him a handsome legacy.

The crafty Malay did not allow any sign of his secret intentions to escape. Obediently he betook himself to the market, and acted as interpreter. But he made another, a very dangerous, use of his native tongue. He told the Rajah of Cebu that the Spaniards had already planned to carry off the rest of the unsold goods to their ships, and disappear with them next day. If Carlos forestalled this attempt, he would turn the tables, seize the Spaniards' goods, and their three fine ships into the bargain.

On May 1, 1521, four days after Magellan's death, Enrique—with a radiant countenance—brought peculiarly agreeable news to the captains. The Rajah of Cebu, he said, had got together the jewels which the monarch purposed to send to his suzerain and friend the King of Spain. To hand over these gifts as ceremoniously as possible, he had summoned his chieftains and other principal subordinates; would Captains Barbosa and Serrão be good enough to come ashore with the most distinguished of their followers, and on behalf of King Carlos of Spain, receive the gifts of King Carlos of Cebu?

João Serrão and Duarte Barbosa walked heedlessly into their new Christian brother's trap. Pigafetta, wounded by an arrow in the battle of Mactan, kept his bed, and thereby saved his life.

In all, twenty-nine Spaniards went ashore, and among them were the best, the most experienced leaders and pilots. Honorably received, they were escorted

to a palm-leaf hut, where the feast had been prepared. Thereupon, precisely as had happened years before in Malacca, the indigenes attacked the Spanish guests before these had had time to prepare for defence. At one stroke the crafty Rajah of Cebu finished off his guests, and made himself master of their trade-goods, together with the arms and the armor which were supposed to make the Spaniards invulnerable and invincible. And like hunted criminals, the remaining Spaniards hastily sailed away from the island on which, under Magellan's leadership, they had landed as gods.

The three ships were now undermanned, and it was decided to abandon the *Concepcion,* which had long been leaky.

ON November 8, 1521, the crews of the *Trinidad* and the *Victoria* landed on Timor, one of the "happy islands" of which Magellan had so long dreamed.

And Serrão's enthusiastic description of the islands proved fully justified. Not only was the scenery splendid, not only was the earth here richly endowed by nature, but the inhabitants were friendly beyond compare. "What are we to say of these islands?" writes Maximilian Transylvanus in his famous letter. "Here everything is simple, and without high value, except for peace, comfort and spices. The best of these things, perhaps the best of earthly goods, to wit, peace, would seem, through the wickedness of man, to have been expelled from our world and to have taken refuge here."

Fortunate Isles! Everything the Spaniards could wish was provided in abundance: the costliest spices, food and gold-dust; and what the friendly Almanzor could not himself furnish, he procured from neighboring islands. The mariners were charmed by so much happiness after all their sorrows and privations. Frenziedly they bought spices and precious birds-of-paradise—giving their shirts, their muskets, their crossbows, their cloaks, their belts in exchange; for now they were going home, and would soon become rich men by the sale of these easily secured treasures. Many of them would have liked to follow Serrão's example, and remain in this paradise.

To a considerable proportion of them, therefore, the news was by no means unwelcome when it transpired, shortly before the time appointed for departure, that only one of the ships was sufficiently seaworthy to undertake the homeward voyage. Fifty of the mariners out of the hundred would have to stay on the Fortunate Islands. The *Victoria* continued her ever-memorable voyage of circumnavigation alone.

This homeward voyage of the battered galleon round the second half of the globe, after spending thirty months upon the first half of the journey, was one of the most heroic deeds in the history of navigation; the commander Juan Sebastian del Cano now compensated for his earlier behavior to Magellan by admirably fulfilling the will of the dead leader. At the first glance the task assigned him did not seem particularly difficult. At each port of call in the Indies and in Africa, at Malacca, Mozambique and Cape Verde, there was a Portuguese factor with other officials; stores could be obtained at each one of them.

But at Timor Del Cano had been told by a Portuguese refugee that King Emanuel had ordered Magellan's ships seized, and the crews arrested as pirates; and in actual fact, their unhappy comrades on the *Trinidad* were not spared this cruel fate. Thus what Del Cano had to undertake was to sail a worm-eaten, leaky and overladen ship across the wide Indian Ocean, round the Cape of Good Hope, and up the coast of Africa, without touching at any port.

This unexampled voyage from the Malay Archipelago to Seville began at the island of Timor on February 13, 1522.

NOT a sound did they hear, nor did they see an unfamiliar face during all these weeks upon weeks. Then there emerged from the depths of the ship a specter, hollow-eyed famine. For unforeseen calamity had frustrated Del Cano's careful calculations. They had taken ample food on board for five months, including large quantities of meat. But in Timor they had not been able to obtain salt, and under the burning sun of the tropics the inadequately pickled pork became putrid. Now they were reduced to a diet of rice and water; neither in storm nor in calm, neither by day nor by night, did their grim tormentor, the gray specter of famine, depart from them, and his assaults were accompanied by new tortures and mockery, the tortures of Tantalus. For the holds were not empty to the last crumb as they had been when crossing the Pacific Ocean. This time the ship was loaded to bursting. The *Victoria* was freighted with seven hundred quintals of spices—so the hungry men had in store enough of these flavor-

ing agents to render the meals of perhaps a million persons palatable. But who, with parched lips and empty stomach, can chew peppercorns, endure the nip of cinnamon, or swallow nutmeg instead of bread? Forty-one Spaniards out of the sixty-four had died, and nine of the thirteen natives, when, on July 9, 1522, after five months' voyage, they anchored off Santiago in the Cape Verde islands. Here was a Portuguese harbor in a Portuguese colony. But a landing meant to put themselves into the enemy's hands; and they had to put hastily to sea again with only the scantiest replenishment of their stores.

AND now came another catastrophe. The old ship's seams were letting in water. "All hands to the pumps!" was the order. But the water seemed to gain on them. Getting no sleep for night after night, they staggered and tottered at their posts. They were feebler, writes Del Cano in his report to the Emperor, than men have ever been before. Yet each must continue to perform a double, a triple task. At length, with the very last ounce of their failing strength, they reached the goal. On July 13th the eighteen heroes left Cape Verde. On September 4, 1522, (when the third year of the voyage was drawing to its close) there came a jubilant shout, for the lookout man had sighted Cape St. Vincent.

Now all crowded the deck, trembling with happiness. Yes, there was a silver break in the shore, showing the place where, beside San Lucar de Barrameda, the Guadalquivir entered the sea. From that anchorage, three years earlier, under Magellan's leadership, two hundred and sixty-five men had set sail. Now one ship, manned by eighteen survivors, was returning to the same port. . . . They anchored; they went ashore. The eighteen fell on their knees to kiss the good earth of the homeland. The greatest cruise in the history of the world, the first circumnavigation of the globe, was over.

Next morning the *Victoria* sailed up river. From the barques and boats she encountered came astonished glances and excited hails. At length, in the distance, shone the white bell-tower of Giralda. It was Seville! It was Seville! "Fire the bombards!" shouted Del Cano, and a salute resounded across the river. With the iron mouths of these guns, three years before, they had bidden farewell to Spain; with the same cannon they had solemnly greeted the Strait of Magellan, and again greeted the unknown Pacific. With the big guns they had saluted the newly discovered archipelago of the Philippines; so also, with the same thundering bombards did they announce the completion of their duty on reaching Magellan's goal, the Spice Islands. Thus did they bid farewell to their comrades at Timor, when the *Victoria* left the islands for Spain. But never did the iron voices sound so loud and so jubilant as now when they announced: *"We have returned. We have done what no one ever did before us. We are the first circumnavigators of the world."*

But Magellan, the man who had really done the work, was not on hand in the hour of triumph. It is always death which first reveals the last mystery. Not until this moment, when his idea had been victoriously fulfilled, was disclosed the tragedy of the lonely man who had throughout life been allowed only to bear the burdens and never to enjoy the fruits of success. From among millions upon millions, destiny had selected for a great deed this obscure, taciturn, reserved man who was ready to stake all his earthly possessions and his life on behalf of an idea. His mission called him to labor, not to joy, sending him forth like a journeyman, without gratitude or grace. Others received the credit of his work, others snatched the gain, others were acclaimed. No more was accorded to him than the doing of the deed; he was denied its golden shadow, triumph and temporal fame.

BUT never can it be forgotten, the splendid venture of these five little lonely ships which set forth on their voyage to play their part in the hallowed war of mankind against the unknown, and of which only one got back victorious after having circumnavigated the world. Nor will he ever be forgotten, the man who conceived this boldest of thoughts, and who, thanks to the mysterious transformation of energy which goes on in the human brain, was able to realize his dream in the world of fact. This one almost forgotten deed of Magellan has shown for all time that an idea, winged by genius and sturdily energized by passion, proves stronger than the elements of nature, and that a thing which numberless generations have regarded as impossible can become an eternal truth.

THE END

Courage or Bravery?

By MAJOR EDWARD

"THERE'S a new war in China. American troops have landed. Fighting near Tientsin."

It was in Nagasaki harbor that this rumor reached me, one of a small guard upon the transport *Logan*. Soon we received orders to proceed to Tientsin—and to the Boxer Rebellion, as it is now known.

After our ship dropped anchor in the mouth of the river at Taku, one of our officers, Captain Lawton, nephew of the famous General Lawton with whom I had long served in the Philippines, was detailed ashore as quartermaster, and he selected me as his orderly.

Tientsin lies fourteen miles up the river from Taku and fighting was going on midway on the road. The first relief column under the British Admiral Seymour and the American Captain McCalla, had been driven back in their first attempt to relieve the beleaguered city. Reinforcements had arrived including the Ninth U. S. Infantry from Manila, and a new advance was under way. Many foreigners and their families were besieged in Tientsin, constantly under fire from the Boxer hordes.

Captain Lawton was immediately assigned to the job of moving supplies and ammunition up the river to the American line. I was detailed as messenger in the quartermaster corps—and my troubles began. On the fourth day after coming ashore, I had been sent forward with a message to the adjutant of the Ninth Infantry. I received no directions except "they're up that way," with a vague wave of the hand toward the horizon.

Early in the afternoon I arrived at the place where the American troops should have been, according to my muddled directions, but they were not there. Instead I found a battalion of Russian soldiers, and at last succeeded in finding an officer who spoke English. He took me to the top of a mud wall and pointed out across the fields where in the dim distance I could see a crawling line of men and hear the faint rattle of rifle-fire. The American soldiers were somewhere along that line. Thanking him, I started hiking alone across the fields.

The fields were muddy and I followed winding trails, which gave a little better footing. To my left I could see occasional moving dots that were men, and now and then a bullet droned over my head.

I had traversed probably a mile of my journey, when a leg flew out from under me. I made a leap to regain my footing, and rolled off the path into the mud. Thinking I had stumbled, I tried to rise to my feet, but discovered that I had been wounded. A bullet had clipped me through the leg just above the ankle.

Sitting down by the side of the trail, I removed my legging and shoe, and ripped open the first-aid pack we all carried tied to our belts. Applying antiseptic pads to each side of the wound, I bandaged it as best I could and squeezed my numb foot into the shoe.

Far on my left I could see squads of men advancing nearer, and realized they were Chinese. I was in the middle of a bad fix. Using my rifle as a cane, I started to hobble toward a cluster of native huts surrounded by a mud wall, about half a mile away. But my foot would not behave and I was losing much blood. Finally I reached the road. The shacks seemed deserted, and I sat down on a low wall to adjust the muddy bandage.

Suddenly a welcome figure came trotting down a trail from the opposite direction. I could see that he was an American lieutenant and as he came closer I noticed that he was a young doctor. A first-aid kit and a haversack full of bandages hung at his side and his only weapon was a bamboo stick.

"Just taking a turn across the fields. Thought I might find someone wounded," he said. Taking my leg over his knee, he deftly wound a clean bandage.

"Come on," he said. "It's touch and go if we reach our lines. Didn't dream there were any Boxers along here."

While he fixed my wound I had drawn a "pull-through" through my rifle, cleaned the bolt, and loaded the magazine. But when I tried to stand I found I could not bear my weight on my wounded leg. It was without strength, badly swollen, and I was weak from loss of blood.

The bullets were coming faster now, and the Chinese were very close. I turned and looked back down the road where our line was supposed to be. It

While we have given a portion of the space usually devoted to our readers' Real Experience stories (for details of this contest, see page 3) to Stefan Zweig's story of Magellan, we are glad to give you also this record of an American soldier in China.

(TEX) O'REILLY

was at least a mile. The road was raised three or four feet above the fields, and as bare as a ballroom floor. No chance for cover there.

"Lieutenant, I can't make it," I told him. "If we get out on that road, we won't have a chance. Here at least there is good cover behind this wall. I've got plenty of ammunition and can hold them awhile. But your legs are all right, and you're unarmed. You can't fight. Beat it while you got a chance."

Tapping his leg nervously with the bamboo stick, he looked down the road, then gazed at the advancing Chinese.

"No," he said. "A doctor's place is with the wounded. I'm staying."

"But you're throwing your life away without reason," I protested. "I'm a lame duck. I've got to fight. You're not armed. You won't do me any good by staying."

He seemed to ponder this. It was his first fight. He flinched when the bullets zipped by. But he said;

"No. Don't argue. It's my duty."

I SAW that he would not go. Pulling my bayonet from the scabbard, I handed it to him. "Take this, then," I said. "Won't do you much good unless we come to close quarters."

We leaned over the wall, less than shoulder-high, and watched the oncoming Chinese, less than two hundred yards away. There were more than a hundred of them, and more coming.

Then something happened that gives support to that wise old proverb, "Truth is stranger than fiction." There came a babble of talk and drunken laughter from one of the shacks, and four Russian soldiers came trotting toward us. They were stragglers who had fallen behind to loot the houses. One of them had a heavy silver water-pipe stuck in his belt. Another carried a pot of *samshu,* fiery native rice whisky, swinging in a straw basket.

They gathered about us, grinning and jabbering. One of them pointed to the bayonet clutched in the Doctor's hand and patted him on the back. They sized up the situation and looked at the approaching Chinese. Then violently motioning for us to retreat, they scattered out along the wall and loaded their guns. Repeatedly they pointed down the road and motioned for us to go. The lieutenant seemed pondering a problem.

"The situation has changed," he said. "I think it is all right for us to retire. There is still a chance."

"Don't you think it's up to me to stick with these Russkis?" I asked. "One more gun would be a big help."

"No, you are badly wounded and should be taken out of action," he decided. "You said you have a message for our troops. It is your duty to deliver it. These soldiers are brave men, but it is their duty to fight. I am a noncombatant. No, the situation has entirely changed. I am an officer, and I order you to get up and try and walk."

I am free to admit that I never obeyed an order more cheerfully in my life. With my arm over his shoulder, we stumbled down the road, a hop at a time. The Russians opened up on the enemy, yelling like drunken Indians.

Slowly we made our way down that road to where a little bridge crossed a creek and there found another misplaced company of Russians who guided us to the American line. There I was sent in a litter to a field dressing-station.

Those four Russians fought until the last man was killed.

I have often been asked what is the difference between bravery and courage. I think this incident well illustrates it. Those soldiers showed bravery of the rarest quality. They were fighting-men, and they made a grand fight against hopeless odds.

On the other hand, that young doctor, although he was afraid, and could not even defend himself, had offered to lay down his life to aid a wounded soldier, because that was his duty according to his code. He had made the decision to die. That he lived was a freak of luck.

Two days later I was back aboard the transport in the sick bay. I had seen exactly six days of the Boxer war, and was sent to a hospital in Manila. . . .

Many years later I again met that little doctor. He is Dr. Thomas L. Harris, now a veteran practitioner of Detroit. To me his name is near the top of the list on my scroll of heroes.

The Blizzard

By BIGELOW NEAL

The simple yet memorable story of a commonplace Dakota adventure.

A STILL, cloudless morning, a brilliant sun and a thermometer around twenty below. I was six miles from home, on the best horse a man ever had. And the fact that I set out to a rendezvous with practically certain death was due to the youth and ignorance which led me to go calmly on when the danger signals of the prairies were flying at full mast. Perhaps this recital may save some other fellow from the fate I courted.

Under the sunshine a spotless mantle of undrifted snow covered the ground and spread like a limitless cape over the hills ahead. Like the ripple of wind over smooth water the snow stirred, swirled and hurried toward a common center. There it spiraled upward in a slender white column to move a little way across the plain and to collapse suddenly in a shower of sparkling crystals. Another column rose off to the right, climbing into the still air to drop softly back to the white blanket from which it came. Bryan pricked up his ears at the gentle hiss of falling particles.

A change came in the light. The yellow paled to a sickly white. I glanced up and saw the sun, a dull disk against a sky, turning from blue to gray. Streamers of mist shot across the sky, and the wind hurrying high above my head was cold, for frost fell like a shower of powdered ice.

We passed a jack-rabbit digging frantically in the snow; overhead a flock of prairie chickens hurtled toward the timber along the Missouri. I glanced to the west. A low gray cloud swept toward me, a pitching, tossing wall stretching beyond my vision to the north and south. This was the surprise attack of a prairie blizzard, and we were still three miles from home.

Bryan knew far more than I. His sensitive ears had catalogued the song of the storm. He broke from a trot to a lope and then to a gallop. Many a race he and I had won together, because no other horse for miles around could compete with him in speed. Now we were off on a race where the stake was a matter of life or death.

The light turned from white to green. Bryan lengthened his gait, and I jammed my cap low on my head. Suddenly the green turned to orange, the royal colors of the king of storms. A terrible wail sounded from the wind-stricken prairie. I bent my head and lifted my shoulder before my face. Then we struck head on, a wall of rushing air and flying snow. There were still two miles to go.

Bryan faltered; his head fell away from the blinding snow and he turned sideways to the storm. At that my heart sank, even as the temperature which dropped from twenty below to thirty-five or more with the first blast of the wind.

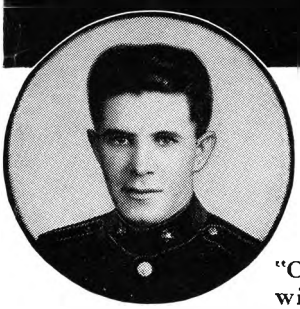
For the first time in my life, I knew the feeling of utter helplessness in the face of death. And in that moment of desperation, I did what many men have done before. I pleaded unashamedly, half with God and half with the horse. "Oh, God! Bryan, we've got to find home! We've got to, Bryan, or else we'll—" You'll say he could not have understood. I sha'n't argue. But I do believe that he knew from the tone of my voice that all responsibility had shifted from me to him. I felt him shake his head. He shook it again. He shook it a third time, savagely. And now he moved: his head went down; his nose came up squarely into the wind; and as I bent low against the blast, blinded, suffocated and all but helpless, I felt his speed increase to the long piston-like rhythmic movements that had carried us to victory so many times in a race.

And yet I knew he couldn't do it. He could see no more and no better than I. There was a creek across our path, and only one ford. To miss it, would be fatal. Knowing it to be hopeless, still I clung to hope. At least we were going against the wind, and somewhere in the teeth of that merciless storm lay—

WE were falling. We were going down under a sea of white. We struck. I heard the splintering of thin ice and the gurgling of shallow water. Bryan was flat on his side. The water was surging over us. Then he was struggling to his feet. Soaked to the skin as I was, I felt a thrill of triumph. Yes, he had missed the ford, but only by a rod. We were up on the level again with one more mile to go.

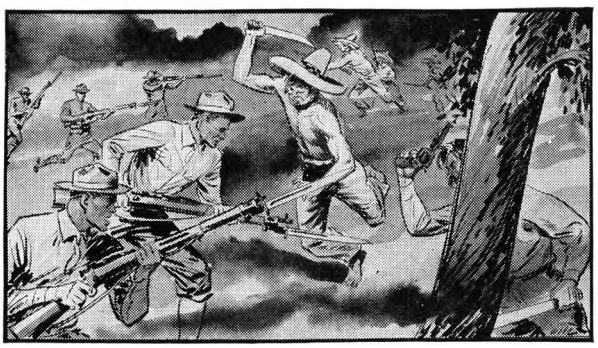
In an instant my clothes were frozen stiff. Sharp pain shot through my hands and feet. I knew they were freezing. I hooked my elbow under the horn and gripped the bucking-roll with my knees. Then my legs went numb, and I was holding only by my elbow. I had no sense of time—only that I could hold no longer. Slowly, I was slipping from the saddle. But even as I fell, a bright light burst out ahead. I felt warm air and steam, and then the munching quiet of the barn. . . . Sometime later, safely in bed, I awoke to hear the awful song of the blizzard. But there were sixteen inches of solid cottonwood logs between us. I pulled the blankets over my head and let her roar.

"You don't have to TELL IT TO THE MARINES they KNOW!"

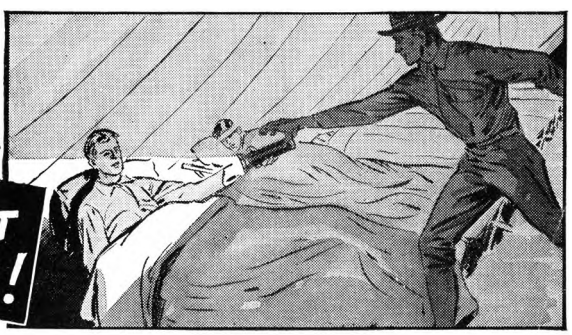


...WRITES HARRY E. REECE, FROM THE U. S. VETERANS HOSPITAL AT MEMPHIS, TENN.

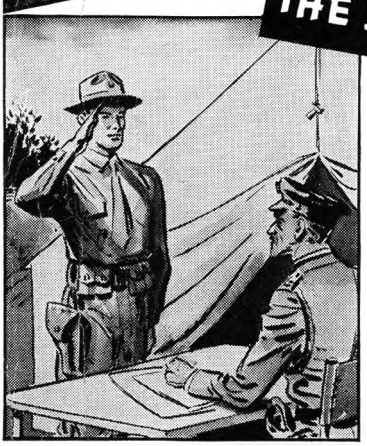
"On active duty with the Fifth Marines in the Nicaraguan jungles. I went to our field hospital with fever. One day a badly injured Marine was flown in...it was my buddy!



"His head had been bashed in by a machete. To save him, surgeons must remove fragments of skull pressing on the brain...a delicate operation anywhere, it was extra tough in a field hospital. I guess they didn't have much hope. Just when they started operating...



OUT WENT THE LIGHTS!



"Our small portable generator had failed! Hospital corps men rushed through the dark ward, gathered up flashlights some of the men had there, and with the light from *fresh* DATED 'Eveready' batteries, the surgeon finished his work.

"My buddy returned to duty, is still living and he thanks one *swell* Marine Corps surgeon and *dependable,* dated 'Eveready' batteries. They were the only kind our canteen sold, the only kind that could have taken what we gave 'em.

(*Signed*) *Harry E. Reece*"

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*DOLORES DEL RIO STARRING IN THE 20th CENTURY-FOX PICTURE, "SHANGHAI DEADLINE"