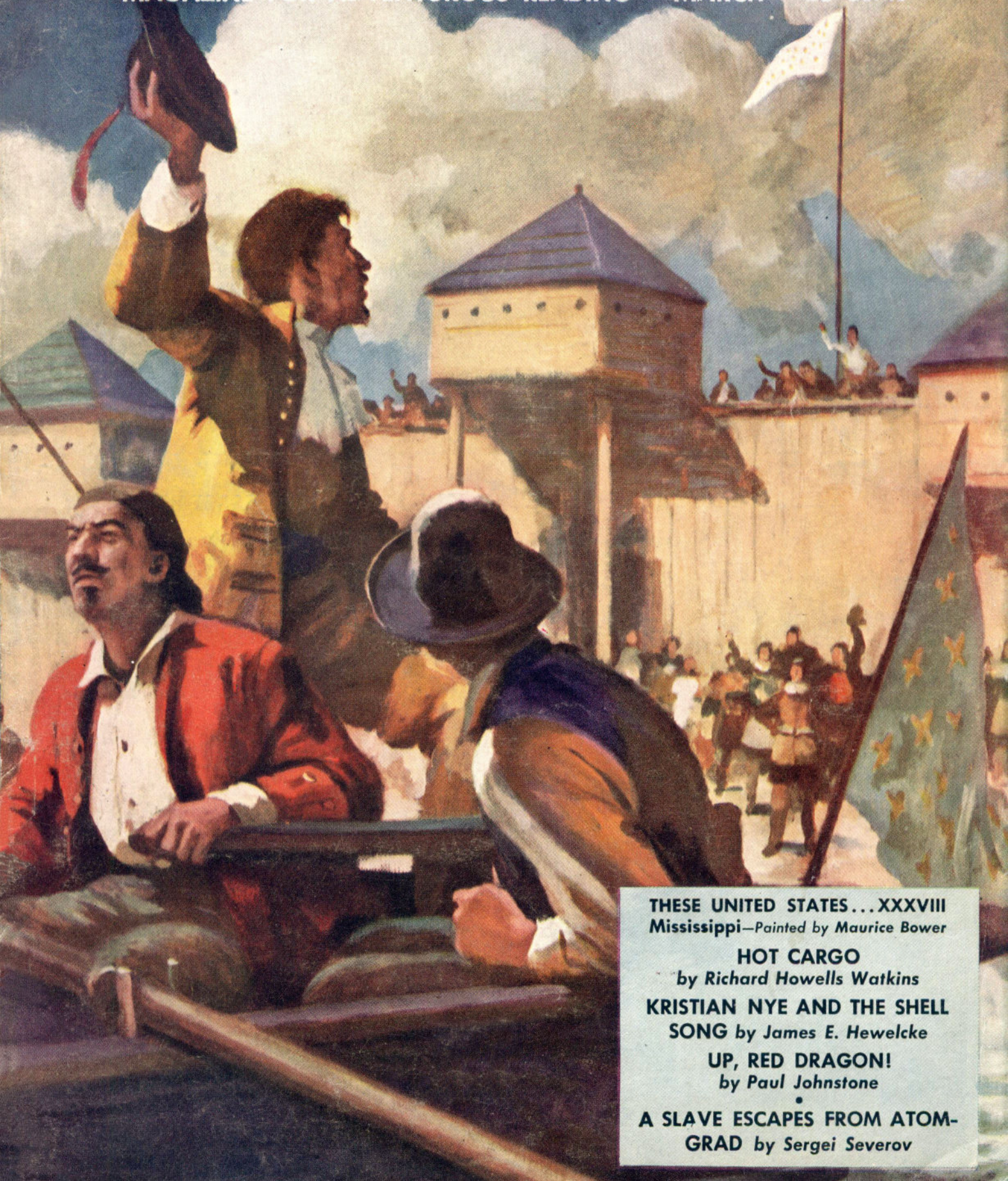


BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTUROUS READING ★ MARCH ★ 25 Cents



THESE UNITED STATES...XXXVIII
Mississippi—Painted by Maurice Bower

HOT CARGO

by Richard Howells Watkins

KRISTIAN NYE AND THE SHELL

by James E. Hewelcke

UP, RED DRAGON!

by Paul Johnstone

A SLAVE ESCAPES FROM ATOM-GRAD
by Sergei Severov



THESE UNITED STATES . . . XXXVIII—MISSISSIPPI

The Magnolia State

PIERRE LE MOYNE, SIEUR D'IBERVILLE, was dedicated to the ideal of expelling the English and firmly establishing the interests of the French Empire throughout the whole North American Continent. Although his imperialism in the Hudson's Bay area was defeated by English tenacity, he succeeded in founding, in the name of France, the colony of Louisiana. French influence which persists in our Southern Gulf States today can be attributed to the courage and vision of d'Iberville.

Mississippi was first explored by the Spaniard De Soto, but the first settlement was made by d'Iberville at Biloxi, which he founded as the capital in 1699. From that time until 1722, when New Orleans became the capital, Biloxi was the most important of our Gulf Coast cities.

France ceded Louisiana Territory in 1782, and it was officially under the Spanish flag until the American Revolution. Just 99 years after the founding of Biloxi, the Mississippi Territory was organized as separate from

Louisiana, but Biloxi was never re-established as the capital. Affairs of the Territory were administered from Natchez—then from a near-by Mississippi town, Washington, from 1802 till the site for Jackson, the present capital, was chosen in 1821, four years after the Territory was admitted as a State. The opening to settlement of Indian lands ten years later brought a rush of immigration, and in the two decades between 1820 and 1840 the population of the State increased from 75,448 to 375,651.

Agriculture was from the first the principal interest and activity of the State. In the north, small upland farms abounded. In the western delta country, large plantations established a way of life quite different, one which was to contribute largely to the tradition of the Old South. Much of the heaviest fighting of the Civil War was centered in Mississippi, since possession of the State was the key to domination of the Mississippi River.

The broad level acres of the Yazoo-Mississippi delta are the world's rich-

est cotton country. Cotton is planted in April. Picking begins in September, and, in years of bumper crops, may continue through January. Following the harvest come many town and country fairs, all more or less following the pattern of the famous Delta Staple Cotton Festival at Clarksdale. Mississippi is one of the two States in which more than half the population makes a living directly from the soil. Though Mississippi will always be principally an agricultural State, it reflects the South's trend toward industrialization. Oil is a recent, but increasingly important product.

VACATION season in Mississippi is twelve months long. Midwinter golf tournaments attract players from all over the United States. The yachting season in the Gulf opens in April.

Mississippi—the Magnolia State—bears the motto: "By Valor and Arms." By valor such as the Sieur d'Iberville's the State has always proved itself worthy.

Readers' Comment

A Reader Laments

WHEN Jacob first met his beloved Rachel, he kissed her—then “lifted up his voice and wept.”

“Why?” demanded a prominent Carolina lawyer. “Why?”

“That’s easy,” replied a retired Methodist preacher; “he was thinking of what he’d been missing all his life.”

I just recently “met” BLUE BOOK and, like Jacob, am lamenting, figuratively speaking, what I have lost. Count me a regular reader from now on.

—PIERCE WYCHE.

How Could We?

AFTER five long years, you still give Marche to the Germans! Colonel Dupuy’s otherwise excellent article on the Ardennes campaign did not give the lie to the German’s propaganda ultimatum to McAuliffe: “The fortune of war is changing. More German armored units have crossed the river Our near Ortheuville, have taken Marche,” etc.

Marche never was taken, and Railsplitters of the 84th Infantry Division held the town from December 20th until relieved by elements of the British XXX Corps in order to move farther north to assume the offensive.

The defense of this important road center has never been given its full importance, having been overshadowed by the magnificent stand of the 101st at Bastogne, but its fall would have changed the whole picture of the battle of the Bulge. Beyond Marche, there was nothing to stop the German advance to the Meuse.

Colonel Dupuy is in distinguished company, though. Twenty-one days after our 84th Division went in and held it, Marche was still in German hands in the daily situation map in *Stars and Stripes*, based on the most authoritative information available in Paris.

Twenty thousand ex-Railsplitters implore you: “Won’t you please give Marche back to us?”

—JAMES E. LUNNEY.

Reader Lunney need have no fear that the splendid record of the 84th (Railsplitter) Infantry Division is unrecognized. The village of Marche became one of the “hundred islets of resistance” mentioned by Col. Dupuy (See BLUE BOOK, December, 1949), when a combat team of the Railsplitters’ 334th Infantry Regiment entered it on the night of Dec. 20, 1944. An excellent account of the actions in and around Marche will be found in Lieut. Theodore Draper’s “The Battle of Germany.”

Since Col. Dupuy’s article did not quote the German ultimatum, he did not feel it necessary to refute its claims. We are glad, however, to take this occasion to do so.

BLUE BOOK

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Painted by Maurice Bower.

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

PHILLIPS WYMAN, Publisher

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The PET SHOP

THE faded sign read *John S. Beifrohns: Pets*. Keith Prentiss paused and stared at it and frowned. His lease said that he couldn't keep a pet—which only served to make Keith the more determined. It was his fancy to own one, he had the means to buy one, and he was not the sort to submit meekly to dictation. And in a world where dogs are the most popular of pets,

Prentiss meant to have one for his own.

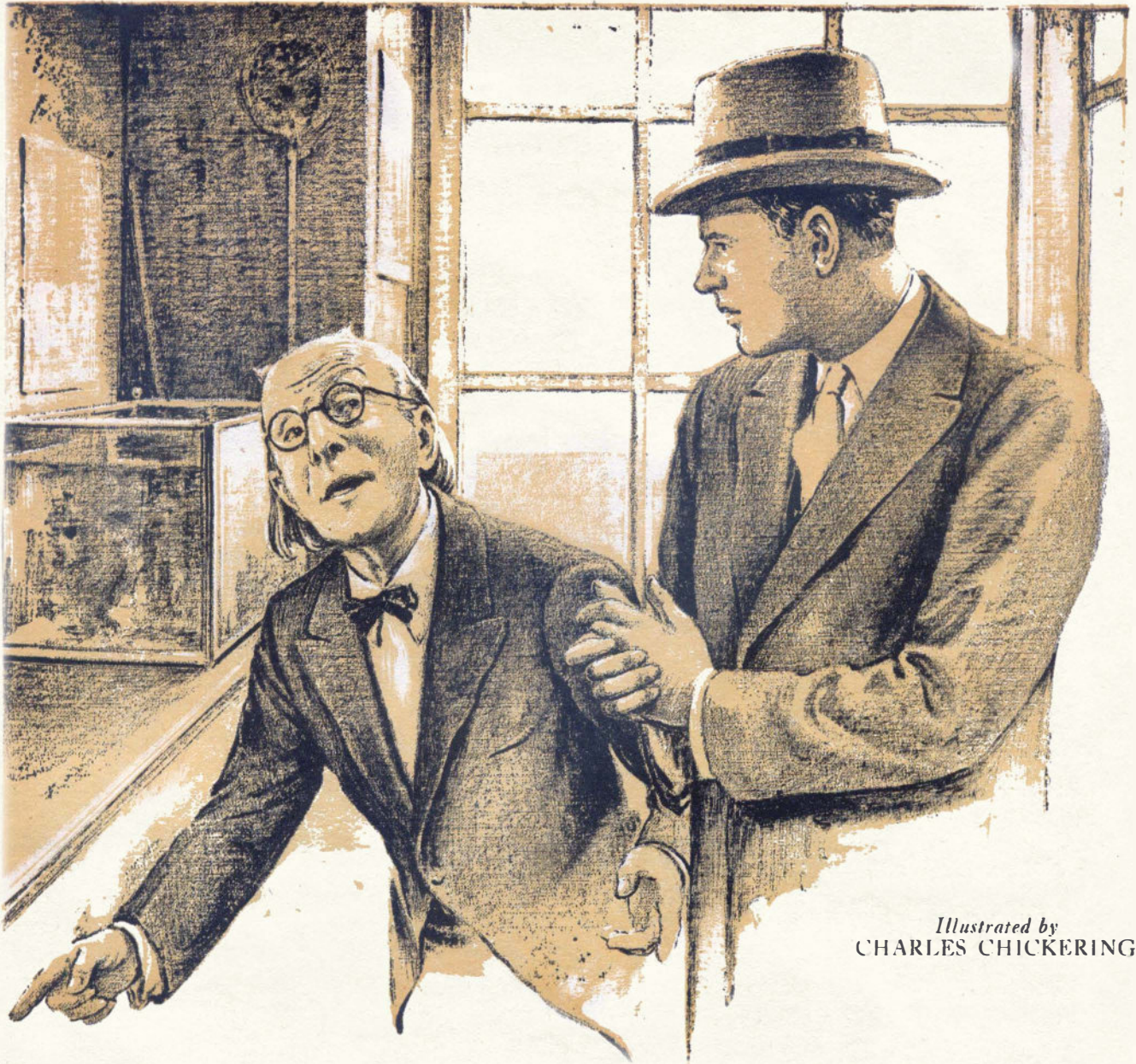
A crimson sun beamed brightly on the gray and dingy door as Prentiss turned and with abrupt decision stepped into the pet shop. . . .

As ancient and weathered as the shop itself was its proprietor. From the enshadowed well of the narrow but surprisingly deep shop he shambled forward as a tiny, invisible bell

tinkled announcement of a customer. He was a small man, shabby and unkempt, but in the eyes with which he questioned Prentiss' purpose there glinted a shrewd acumen, a curiously intent and keen appraisal of the man who stood before him.

"Yes?" he asked softly. "There is something I can do for you?"

"A dog," said Keith. "I want to buy a dog."



Illustrated by
CHARLES CHICKERING

SINCE WE PUBLISHED HIS "EXILES OF TIME" IN 1940, THIS SINGULARLY GIFTED WRITER HAS GIVEN US "THE MAGIC STAIRCASE," "THE SONG," "THE MASK OF MEDUSA" AND MANY OTHER WELL-REMEMBERED STORIES. THE WEIRD TALE WHICH FOLLOWS DESERVES TO STAND NEAR THE HEAD OF THAT FINE COMPANY.

by NELSON BOND

"Yes, sir. Had you any particular breed in mind? I have a very fine selection here. Scotties, cockers, bulldogs; or perhaps a Kerry Blue?"

"I hardly know." Keith glanced about him almost helplessly. His eyes, gradually accustoming themselves to the fusty gloom of the shop, identified shapes that had been vague outlines heretofore as cages, kennels, pens. From these emitted, with no great

clamor but as a dim, incessant undercurrent of sound, the muted mouthings of the inmate beasts: the fretful chirps of birds, the plaintive mewings of cats, the mingled whines and nervous barks of dogs, all voicing impotent protest at this confinement uncomprehended and unlike.

"I hardly know," repeated Keith. "A house pet of some sort? An uncommon breed, perhaps? I rather like

things that are just a bit out of the ordinary."

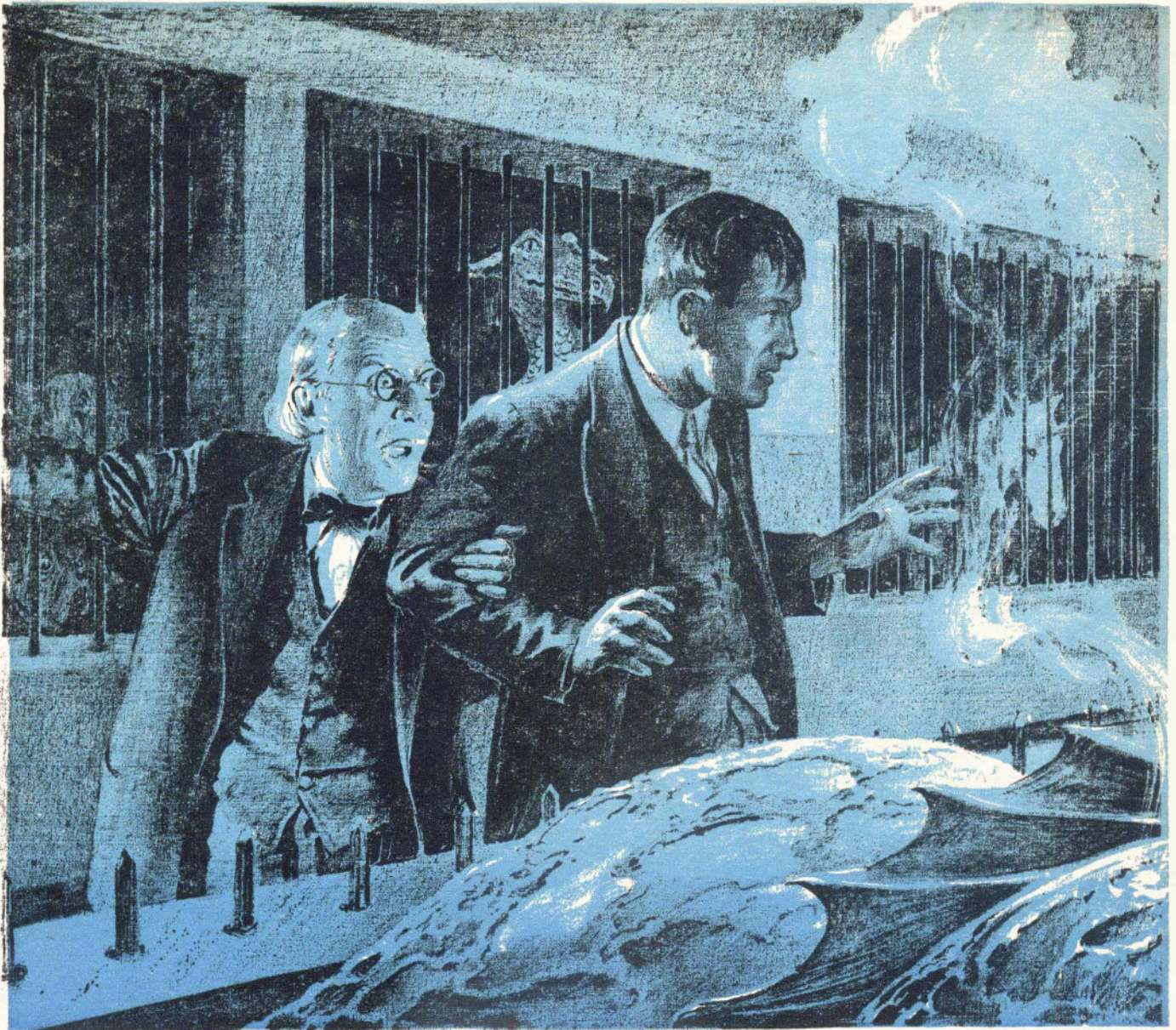
The semblance of a smile touched fleetingly the old man's lips.

"I see," he nodded. "But, then, what seems unusual to one may be another's commonplace. The purchaser; the purchase. The line between is but a passageway."

"I beg your pardon?" said Prentiss.

"Nothing. I am an old man, and I fear I talk too much. Now, let me see. An uncommon breed, you said? If you will follow me—"

HE led Keith past twin rows of screened enclosures, making no effort to influence his customer's decision, simply displaying his wares that Keith might make a choice. Which was no easy matter. Keith Prentiss liked dogs. All kinds of dogs. Each type and size had some appeal for him. He smiled in warm amusement at the antics of a kennel of spaniel puppies, nodded his



Keith thought he saw the pale form of a slim and naked girl. "Then that, too, is true?"

approbation of a clean-limbed Dalmatian which, as he paused to look at it, returned his gaze with a grave deliberation that matched his own. He muttered sounds of soothing to a quick, excited dachshund scrabbling futilely at the barrier between them. Then he shook his head in whimsical confusion at the proprietor.

"So many dogs," he sighed. "Where do they all come from? I've often wondered."

"From everywhere,"—the old man shrugged—"and nowhere. Who can say? You don't see one you like, then?"

"Many," acknowledged Keith. "But not *the* one. Do you know what I mean? I'd be happy with almost any one of them, but it's hard to decide."

"Something unusual, you said," mused the proprietor. "Well—let us look farther on."

He continued to lead the way toward the back of the shop. Keith followed, his dim surprise at the store's unsuspected depth lost in his greater wonder at the dealer's vast variety of offerings. Other than at important shows, he had never seen gathered in one spot so many different kinds of dogs. Here were displayed breeds so uncommon that some of them Keith had only heard of, and never before seen. Afghans and elk-hounds, Bruxellois and Samoyedes, schipperkes, Lhasa terriers, griffons; these were but a few of the rare breeds here represented.

"Your stock," said Prentiss, "is truly amazing. Do you actually have a demand for all of these?"

The owner smiled again. It was an oddly disturbing flexion of the lips, that shallow mirthlessness which was his smile. It was at once secretive and taunting, obsequious and derisive. "A

two-faced devil." thought Keith with a touch of pique. "Well, damn him! If he's laughing at me—"

But there was irreproachable respect in the owner's reply.

"Indeed yes, sir. There is a demand for every kind of pet if one has the proper—outlets." Beifrohn's hesitated briefly on the word. Then he repeated, nodding thoughtfully, "For *every* kind."

"No doubt," agreed Keith absently. "I must confess the unusual ones appeal to me most strongly." Then, a trifle defiantly, "I suppose you think it's a sort of conceit that makes a man want to own an unusual pet? A form of exhibitionism?"

"Not at all, sir. A very common trait. Altogether human." They had reached that section Keith had earlier conceived to be the back of the shop. Now the owner pushed back a curtain,



There are such things as werewolves."

revealing a doorway to a passageway beyond. "Now, if you would like to see some *really* unusual pets," he said, "just come with me, sir—"

THE factor in the rearward shop was strongly animal. Indeed the whole effect, thought Prentiss, was rather that of a zoo than of a pet shop. The scents back here were sharper, the sounds more ominous, the larger cages wrought of sturdier bars.

In a pen to his right a creature snarled, lifting its head from a grisly, half-gnawed bone to glare at him with red and angry eyes. Keith stared at it, a grimace of sudden revulsion wrinkling his nostrils. He glanced swift query at his guide.

"A husky?" he suggested. "A wild dog?"

"Neither," replied the old man quietly. "A wolf."

"A wolf? But why? Surely no one would want a wolf for a pet?"

Beifrohns shrugged. "Perhaps not for a pet. But perhaps for—other reasons?" Again there was that cryptic hesitation in his words. "Men have made more than comrades of wolfkind in the past. A mighty nation boasted that its founders suckled at the dugs of one like this. Another race once deified its kind."

Prentiss frowned. "Surely you're not serious? The wolf that mothered Romulus was a legend, the Ferris wolf a monster out of myth."

"Perhaps," replied the old man. "And then—again—perhaps not. Would you insist that *he* is but a myth?"

He nodded toward a creature in the next enclosure. Keith turned and looked. Then he gasped. The thing at which he stared in raw astonishment was no member of the family of

dogs. It was equine in form, smooth-limbed and graceful as a gazelle. Its color, too, was that of the desert beast. But there the similarity ended. For from this creature's forehead incredibly projected a long, slim, delicately convolute spike. The animal was—a unicorn!

Keith cried, "But this—" Then he stopped, because the protest leaping to his lips did not make sense. Meaningless to say the thing was impossible, for it was there before him. He said instead, "Where—where did it come from?"

The old man's answer was a variation on his former words.

"There is a source for every kind of pet if one has the proper outlets. And I have those, you know. This way and that; hither and yon."

There was a disquieting significance to the way he bobbed his head alternately toward the front and back of the shop. A thin prickle of unease tingled Prentiss' spine. The man, he thought, was obviously mad. And yet—the creature in this cage?

HE stretched a hand tentatively toward the unicorn. It shied violently, withdrawing to the other end of its pen, where it stood nervously atremble, watching Keith warily with its great, soft, curiously colorless eyes. The proprietor smiled thinly.

"I fear you cannot touch it," he murmured. "Only a virgin clad in cloth of gold—" He shrugged. "But of course you know the rites. Shall we go on?"

Keith wet his lips in brief uncertainty. An impulse deeper than his thinking mind warned him that he had seen more already than it was wise to see. But Prentiss had the questing type of mind, and now his curiosity was strongly aroused. He nodded.

"Yes," he said. "By all means, yes."

"It is only fair to tell you," said the proprietor. "that this is the turning-point. Beyond here is but one direction—forward. You may go back now, or go on." And then, as Keith made no reply, "Very well. It is yours to decide."

He moved forward, and as in a dream Keith Prentiss followed him. And well it was that in a dream he walked, else what he saw might well have turned his mind.

The cage beyond the unicorn contained a scaly thing twice the length of a man. It was, thought Keith at first, a giant lizard. But as they passed, it raised the milky veil of its saurian eyes; its thin, cruel mouth split in an angry hiss. And perhaps it was only a long red tongue that for an instant showed between those rows of fangs—but Keith thought otherwise. Fire alone has heat. And flame, too, has a long and crimson tongue.

Still farther down the passage stood a tank. Keith could not see into its noisome depths, but a ceaseless churning roiled its greasy surface, and to Keith it seemed that they were squamous coils which undulated through the bubbling spume in some slow, horror-pregnant movement.

He was still wondering if it were a kraken or some sea beast he had glimpsed when Beifrohns spoke again.

"A moment ago I think we spoke of wolves? Here is a type that you may find—amusing."

His choice of words was something less than apt. It was hardly an "amusing" shape which hunkered in the next cage. It sat and watched them slyly as they passed, gray canine form with scarlet mouth cleft in bestial simulacrum of a smile. It made no sound, but when they had moved on from abreast its enclosure, Keith heard a furtive scraping from that grilled pen. He turned, and in the vague light thought he saw standing the pale form of a slim and naked girl, hands gripping the bars.

He turned to retrace his steps. But the old man's staying hand was on his shoulder.

"No, my friend. There is no turning back," he said.

"But—a woman!" cried Prentiss. "There was a girl in that cage where first I saw a wolf!"

Beifrohns nodded. "Even so," he said gently. "But surely you are not again surprised?"

Keith whispered dazedly, "Then that, too, is true? There *are* such things as werewolves?"

"Mankind has less imagination than it dreams," said the pet-shop owner. "The marvel is not that so many men have told of these creatures, but that other men have doubted their descriptions. There are all types of beings. All are real. And none are wholly fabled."

"But—" protested Prentiss.

"There is an ancient saying, 'No smoke without fire.' So is it with your folk tales and your legends. Not a one is without its underlying truth.

"Like this one—" said the old man. "And yet there are those who will contend his like has never been."

And he nodded toward a triple-headed dog that rose, stiff-kneed, to simultaneously growl and bark and snap at them as they approached its kennel.

It was then, at last, that Prentiss began to understand and fear. What had sustained him until now he could not say. A dread-benumbing mixture of inquisitiveness and doubt, perhaps; the anesthesia of surprise and incredulity. But now, abruptly if belatedly, he began to comprehend what he had blundered into. The cold caress

of terror touched his heart; he halted in his tracks and set his jaw.

"See here," he said, "I've changed my mind. I think I've seen enough. I'm not sure I understand *what* I've seen, and I'm even less sure I want to. But I'll be going now."

The old man nodded quiet acquiescence. "Of course," he said. "But forward."

"No, thanks. I said I've seen enough. I—"

"Forward," repeated old Beifrohns. "You will recall my warning that in this passageway there is no turning back?"

Keith Prentiss glared at his guide defiantly.

"Oh, no? Your mistake, my friend. I'm going back the way I came—right now."

"It is you who are mistaken," sighed the proprietor. "But if you must, then you may make the trial."

And he stepped quietly aside as Prentiss whirled and took three strides to—

—To nowhere. For there was no passageway. Where but a moment before had stood twin rows of cages, now Prentiss found but a blank, impassive wall. The kennels and their contents were no more; the door through which he had entered the corridor had disappeared.

"You see?" said the man Beifrohns. "There is but one way—and that is forward."

"Ridiculous!" snapped Prentiss. "This is a trick of some kind. An optical illusion. If you think I can't find my way out of this damned mirror maze of yours—"

But the walls against which at first he pressed, then ultimately beat with frightened fists, were as solid and unyielding as his host's unchanging smile. And as he beat upon the impossible barrier with increasing panic, the ancient guide repeated, "I'm sorry, my friend. But you were warned. From this passageway there is no turning back."

"Passageway?" cried Prentiss. "What passageway is this? What devil's trap or den—"

"Then still you have not guessed?" There was that in the old one's eyes which was at once sympathetic and without human understanding. "This is the way between; the meeting-place. The single passageway that links the worlds."

"That links—the worlds?"

"Surely, my friend, you do not share that blindness of mankind which leads men to believe their little world to be the only plane on which life may exist?" Beifrohns shook his head sadly. "Has it not yet dawned on you that these pets of mine, so strange and new to you, are denizens of yet another world?"

"Look here. And here—" The old man led him on. "Have you before seen beasts the like of these?"

Numbly, dazedly, Keith Prentiss stared at the cages stretched before him, beholding creatures of which before he had heard only in wildest fantasy. A winged horse—and a horse with human head. A bird with serpent's tail; a cockatrice. Another creature with a lion's head, the body of a goat—and dragon's tail; from its maned withers grew a second head, capric in semblance.

There was a silver stallion in one stall, another held a browsing yearling bull. It had a jet-black coat, did this young bull, but on its forehead was a white triangular spot, on its right side a spot like a half moon. And with a dreadful awe Keith Prentiss knew that could he see beneath its hidden tongue he would find a knot the shape and size of a beetle.

KEITH turned, perplexed, to face his aged host. "Is it—" he began, then chose another pronoun, "Is *he* too for sale?"

Beifrohns shook his head. "No. Osiris waits for his appointed time. But when his hour strikes, he will appear, as was foretold."

Despite his horror, Keith moved slowly on. There was a dreadful fascination to this place. He knew he should turn back, or at least try. He was younger than his guide, and stronger; when the time came, he could force the old man to show him the way out. But intrigued by the wonders he beheld, mutely he followed forward.

Pet shop or madhouse, Keith could not say which, but that which he saw here was like a catalogue of myth. Sirens and cecrops, aegipanes and sphinx—their half-forgotten names sprang to his mind as each revealed itself within some cage. The chimera was there, and hydra, too; harpy and satyr, roc and nereid. Increasingly humanoid in form became the beasts as strangely brighter grew the passageway. From somewhere up ahead spilled shafts of light, a gleaming in the shadowed corridor that was not the warm, golden glow of sunlight, but an odd and luminous blue.

As if in answer to his unspoken query, his guide—or warden—spoke.

"See, it grows light. We approach the end," he said.

"The other end of the passageway?"

Beifrohns nodded. Prentiss stared at him, his eyes narrowing and thoughtful.

"And when we reach there—"

"You will see the other world," said Beifrohns. And almost gently, "It is a sight not granted to many."

Despite his lurking doubts and grave suspicions, a resurgence of curiosity suffused Keith Prentiss. The

chance to view another world? Madness, of course. But, then, all this was madness. There was—there must be—some reasonable and logical explanation for all this. At worst it was a hoax; undoubtedly the greatest and most meaningless hoax ever perpetrated upon an innocent victim, but a hoax, nevertheless. At the end there would be explanations. And laughter. Laughter to wash away all foolish fears. Meanwhile. . .

Brighter and brighter grew the light about him. And now the passageway, it seemed to Keith, began again to widen. He pressed forward eagerly, feasting his eyes on each new wonder to be viewed, outdistancing his slower-moving guide.

Then, suddenly, he reached a barrier. With abrupt surprise he discovered that those bars which he had mistaken for the uprights of a cage before him were in reality a barrier halting his progress. He turned to the right: the way was blocked with bars. And to the left. Again the way was barred. He turned to Beifrohns.

"I say," he called, "there's something odd here—"

And then he stopped, shocked into silence. Because behind him his aged guide was quietly fastening the metal gate through which he had entered this last enclosure. There came the grate of steel on steel as a key turned in a lock. Then slowly, deliberately, and with a curious sort of kindness, the old man bent and placed two earthen bowls within the cage wherein Keith Prentiss stood. One of the bowls held water, and one food.

With a scream that was less fear than rage, Keith hurled himself on the unyielding bars. He roared, he howled, he swore—to no avail. The old man walked away, forward toward the strangely unearthly blue light.

Keith's fury was a dreadful spectacle. His cries, his threats, roused all his fellow beasts. Within the shop, for quite some little while, there was that din which frequently occurs when some newcomer takes poorly to confinement.

But at the end, Keith's screams of protest died in plaintive, sullen whimpers. And later still, he laughed.

THE faded sign read *Janus Bifrons: Pets*. Gryll Kyrkind paused and stared at it and frowned. His lease said that he couldn't keep a pet—which only served to make Gryll the more determined. It was his fancy to own one, he had the means to buy one, and he was not the sort to submit meekly to dictation. And in a world where men are the most popular of pets, Kyrkind meant to have one for his own.

A cobalt sun beamed brightly on the gray and dingy door as Kyrkind turned and with abrupt decision trotted into the pet shop. . .



A Slave Escapes from Atomgrad

THIS STARTLING RECORD OF LIFE AND DEATH IN A POLICE STATE COMES TO US FROM A RUSSIAN PUNISHED BECAUSE OF HIS ENFORCED WARTIME LABOR FOR THE GERMANS.

by **SERGEI SEVEROV**
Illustrated by Graiton Condon

(As translated from a manuscript written by a Soviet DP who escaped and recently came to Germany.)

THE Germans drafted me for labor during the war, and I was sent to work at some factory not far from Berlin, as an "Ostarbeiter" (Worker from the East). After the capitulation, we Russians were sent to a sorting center near Frankfurt am Oder. There the MVD was checking what people had been doing at home before the war, what they did when the Germans drafted them, who were their parents, and so forth. Finally I was called in by a MVD official, who told me:

"You are going to Siberia to pay for your guilt."

"What guilt?" said I, dumfounded. "I haven't done a thing against my people."

"You, shut up! Haven't you been working for the Germans? And your father also, in a factory! Therefore you have to pay for your own and for your father's guilt!"

Thus I was condemned to ten years of confinement because, against my will, I had worked for the Germans.

In the fall of 1945, about five thousand people of the same standing as mine were packed into freight cars and sent back to the USSR. We were sent to the Ural mountains to some defense works near Chelyabinsk. The conditions there were very hard, but had I known what my assignment was going to be, I would have considered them good indeed.

The End of the World

TOWARD the end of summer in 1947 about five hundred people out of our whole crowd (those who were healthiest) were picked out and sent

to Siberia. We spent a week in the train without knowing where we were going. There wasn't a single Siberian in our car to tell us which direction the train was taking. Only after Novosibirsk did we realize that we were heading toward the south, toward the Altai Mountains.

At a small forlorn station in the midst of a thick forest we were ordered out. When we got out, we were crowded into twenty trucks covered with tarpaulins. We were packed like sardines, thirty of us in each truck; and besides this, the vehicle drove on with all its openings shielded by tarpaulins, so it was as if we were in a prison. Before we started I noticed that there were several open trucks in which were many guards with dogs; several motorcycles with guards also accompanied us.

We rode for five or six hours. The road was like a washboard and we were tossed up and down. Toward evening the truck was stopped. The tarpaulin was lifted and we were ordered out. We crawled out and stood in amazement. Just picture a huge valley, some ten kilometers long and five or six kilometers wide: On three sides this valley is surrounded with high mountains covered with thick virgin forests. Looking at that, you have the feeling that you have reached the very end of the world, a place where the human foot has never been before. But looking farther down, you see another picture. The whole valley is dug all over with craters. Out of some of them pop up unfinished buildings, strange constructions with entangled wires. The works were crowded with people who looked as many ants. Steam shovels, bulldozers and excavators were steaming and moving all over the place. An ordinary picture of a big operation going on at full speed—but started

here by what miracle, in this forgotten part of the world? What can its meaning be?

At the foot of the mountain long rows of warehouses, tents, small houses. On the other side of the valley a lot of barracks, subdivided into three huge compounds. Those were ours. That's where we were led in groups of thirty.

Atomstroy

It was already dark when we came into these barracks, but they were empty. In three-tiered bunks some dirty linen was scattered. The whole looked uninhabited, but the heavy stinking air of dwellings where hundreds live and sweat was present. We thought of going out to have a breath of fresh air, but a guard ordered us back. We went to the windows and silently looked out. We were unpleasantly surprised by the large number of guards scattered all over the place.

The other prisoners returned home late at night. I have seen many Soviet slave laborers before but I never saw anything like that. Their faces were black with dirt; they all trudged along stooped over as if they could hardly move. It seemed that they would fall and never get up any more. All were strangely silent; not a single voice could be heard in all the barracks. Nevertheless the place was jammed, and there was no room on bunks for us, the latest newcomers. The inmates would come in, fall down on the bunk and go to sleep immediately. The fact that the only noise was the sound of tired feet, and that not a single word could be heard, upset me very much.

The overseer of the barracks was a gloomy bearded man of about sixty. (Afterward I learned that he was only forty.) He took down our names and said stonily: "Get yourselves some sleeping-place under the bunks. When someone dies, up there on the bunks, you'll take his place."

I found an empty space and crawled there. Inadvertently I pushed someone. He groaned. I got down next to him and asked: "Where are we?"

"Atomstroy," he mumbled, and snored.

Our Life

IF the initial impression was of a bad dream and unreality, the first days of work showed that we were in a world unreal indeed.

At 4 A.M. we were awakened by a noisy whistle. If someone was late in getting up, the guards would drag him out by the feet, and would mercilessly beat him with canes. After getting up we would run to the kitchen, swallow hurriedly a tin of thin soup, and

about five ounces of bread and would form up in front of our barracks. We were counted, and in groups of thirty or more taken out to work, heavily guarded.

Work started at five A.M. and kept up until noon. At midday there was a lunch period of one hour. This barely gave us time to get back to the camp, swallow the same amount of soup and about seven ounces of bread and get back to work. We worked again until seven or eight: and sometimes, if the assignment wasn't fulfilled in time, until nine or ten. After that we were led back to the kitchen, where we again would get the same soup and five ounces of bread; then we would be locked in our barracks. No days off, no free time for us. We weren't even allowed to get out of our barracks, for fear that we would speak with other inmates. All our "free time"—i.e., from nine or ten P.M. until four A.M., we would sleep like stones.

Guards were always watching us while we were working, and they kept hurrying us. But we hurried ourselves too, because we knew that in spite of the fact that our assignments were big, we would be beaten or even

shot if they were not fulfilled. After so many hours of heavy work, we would lose all capacity to think and understand, and felt as if we were doped.

Such life, day after day, night after night, makes of you a kind of robot, or sleepwalker. You lose interest in things. You have but one thought—finish your work as quickly as possible, drag yourself to your bunk and sleep, *sleep*. I understood why, at night, people did not talk in these barracks: they lose the power of speech: they are too tired, and they cannot think any more—so what would they talk about? It was like a bad dream.

Clad in rags, looking like skeletons, we even didn't feel any hunger. People were dying like flies. I understood this, because only five days after my arrival I found a sleeping-space on a bunk.

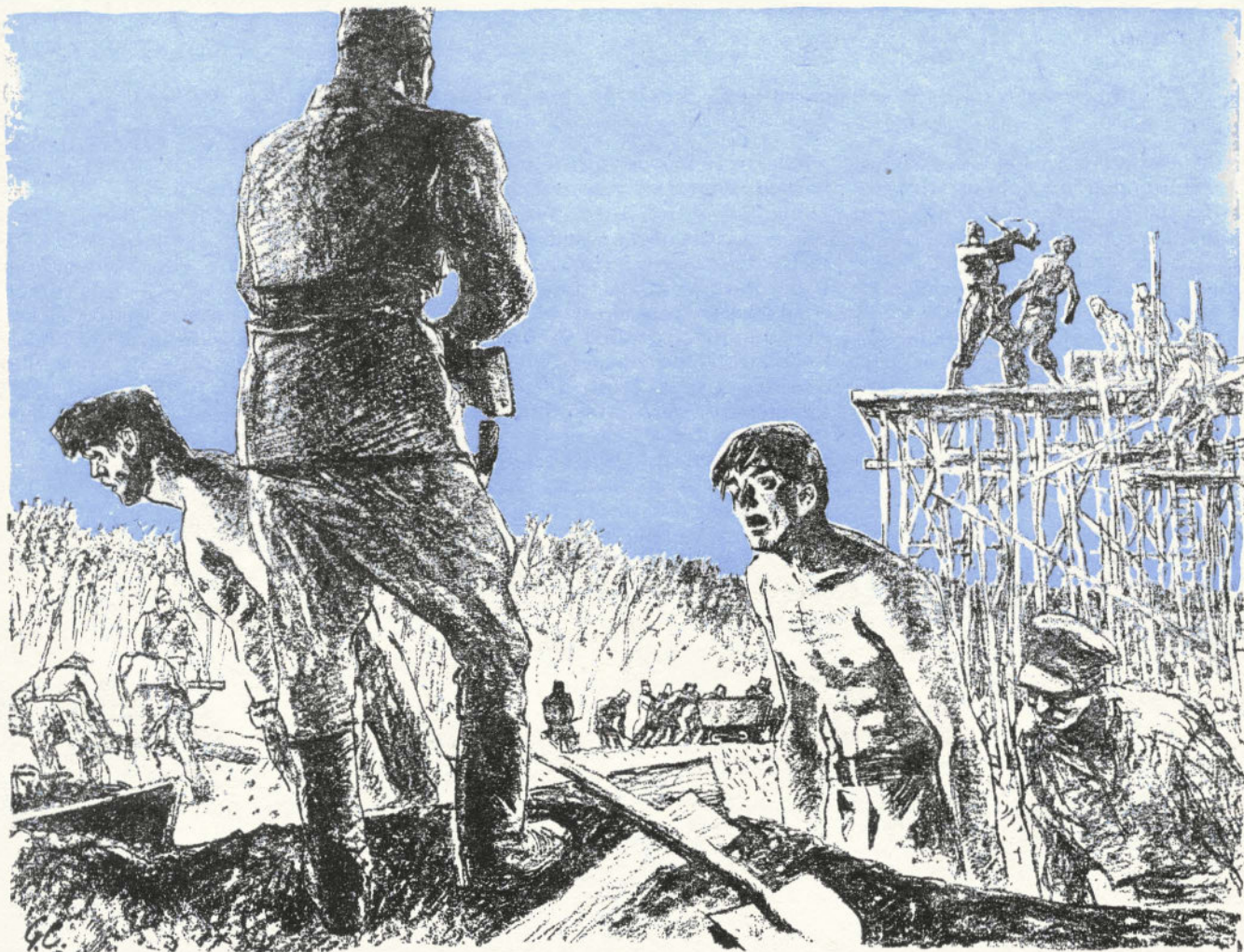
A World of Its Own

LIKE everyone else, I was moving in a kind of mist, without noticing what was going on around me, without realizing what we were doing. Things just seemed to go through my brain without leaving any imprint.

Only a few months later—after I was somewhat used to my new life—could I realize and understand what was going on around me.

The works were extremely huge. Sixty to eighty thousand prisoners were used. It was not possible to know exactly how many, for we lived in separate barracks, which were isolated one from the other. The inmates were entirely made from those who had been in Germany. There were two categories of them: (A) the "Ost" workers, who like me had seven to ten years of punishment, or those who had been with the Vlasov army. Those had from twenty to twenty-five years.

We never knew exactly what we were building. We were digging huge excavations—it looked as if some workshops were to be underground. We also built some kind of towers, made out of steel and concrete. We never saw anything like that before, and we didn't know what their purpose was. It was a very urgent job, for even before the completion of a workshop, the equipment was carried in. The equipment was brought in by another group of workers, with whom we couldn't communicate at all—it was



I slipped, fell and broke my wheelbarrow. The guard yelled: "You'll be shot tomorrow!"



Egorov was trying to say something . . . but the captain shot him three times in the head.

strictly forbidden. The workshops and equipment warehouses were heavily guarded, and it was impossible to approach them.

Every day hundreds of trucks brought in material, equipment, food and new inmates. No one knew what kind of equipment was brought in. Once, when unloading a truck, a group of inmates broke a crate inadvertently—they were immediately arrested, and shot the next day.

Everything was surrounded by a deep secrecy. Neither the guards, nor the technical personnel nor the truck-drivers ever told a word about anything. Everyone kept silent. And if any of the inmates should try to guess aloud, he would disappear immediately. There were many spies around who presumably reported our talks. That's why we preferred not to talk about the construction which we were working on.

BUT it's difficult to keep always the skeleton in its closet, and it was rumored steadily that we were building an atom plant. Too much secrecy and mystery was everywhere for just an ordinary factory. Not a single war plant ever had been guarded in such a way.

I learned later how the works were protected from the outside. The

whole valley was surrounded with barbed wire, and guards kept watch along the entire line. There was a line of guards in the woods also. And thirty kilometers farther, there were two or three other lines of guards. Apart from that, the whole area was continuously patrolled by horse- and foot-patrols with dogs. Not a single outsider could cross a zone fifty kilometers wide surrounding the camp; nor could one of the inmates try to run away. But we knew that somewhere, at about a hundred kilometers from our place, there was another construction going on. Some equipment was brought to our place from that place. But truck chauffeurs never gave any name to that construction—among themselves they just referred to it as "the town." Likely it was a contiguous construction, a complement to our Atomgrad.

There were also some free workers in our Atomgrad: skilled workers, technical workers and the like. The unskilled technical personnel was raised among the inmates and was under the direction of the hired (free) personnel. But the latter never came to the works without guards; they couldn't speak to us (except about our immediate tasks), and we couldn't question them. They usually gave curt orders, checked the work which

was done, and then would go away without any other word.

Those of the hired labor lived in small houses on the other side of the valley; there was also a huge laboratory built for them. It was rumored that big specialists as well as German scholars were working in that laboratory. But the fate of these "free workers" wasn't to be envied, either. They had no right to quit the valley, nor even to send letters to the outside world.

In the Name of the Atom

LAWS and rules which govern life in the outside world had no place in our valley. We had but one law: the blunt interests of the "stroy." We were its slaves, and the means of subjugation was the use of rough animal force and nothing else.

If in other camps coercion was hidden under the words of "reforming through work," here the mask was thrown away. The rod and the gun-butt were kings. One could only wonder where so many beastlike guards had been found.

The god of our valley was the director of the "stroy." We never saw him, but we knew that we were entirely in his hands. This I saw almost as soon as I came to the valley.

On my fifth day I was working with forty others at digging an excavation. (Comparatively little machinery was used in the Atomstroy—human labor was the chief power.) Some were digging and some were bringing the earth upward in wheelbarrows. The guards were standing on the upper part of the excavation. A little before lunch a group of people came down—six guards with tommy-guns, an MVD major in a brand-new uniform, and a captain with a very unpleasant face. We were ordered to stop our work and to form in two columns. The major took a paper out of his pocket, read it and yelled: "Prisoner Egorov!"

A thin man stepped forward and, obviously frightened, looked at the major.

"Stand over there," said the MVD man, pointing at two guards. Egorov walked toward them, and when they were standing at his side four other guards turned toward our group with their guns ready.

Then the major read aloud: "Order of the Director of the *stroy*. Prisoner Egorov doesn't fulfill his task systematically. I order that the wicked saboteur Egorov be shot. The order must be executed immediately." Gloomily he viewed us. We kept silent, for the tommy-guns were facing us. The major made a sign. The gloomy captain took out a revolver and walked toward Egorov. The latter probably just understood what was awaiting him. He shrieked, with an unhuman shriek: his face was dreadful to look at; he tottered and his two guards had to hold him. Egorov's outcry shook us; our ranks wavered; strange whisperings were heard. Then our guards lifted their guns—one movement, and they would fire.

Our guards turned Egorov's back toward us and dragged him to the wall of the excavation. He wasn't shrieking any longer; his arms were moving, and he was trying to say something—but he couldn't form his words; strange sounds were coming out of his throat. The captain, his revolver in hand, followed him.

Egorov was led to the wall. He couldn't stand on his feet any longer. The guards flattened him against the wall, his arms wide apart—as on a crucifix. The captain shot him three times in the back of the head. . . .

Then the major yelled: "All of you will be punished this way if you do not fulfill your norms" (quotas). We all ran back to our work. Egorov's body remained in its place during the whole day as a reminder to us. . . .

A few days later came another case—very early in the morning, before we even started to work. We were about to leave the camp when it was surrounded by guards, and tommy-guns were pointed at the crowd. We got

panicky. Were they going to shoot all of us? But the guards brought in eight people. Their indictment was read aloud: they hadn't fulfilled their norms; two of them had tried to run away. . . . Three MVD officers shot them in front of us. . . .

Such things would happen almost weekly, and we got used to them. They would show that we were entirely in the hands of our superior, who could destroy us whenever he wished.

Why People Get Gray Hair

THESE unhuman conditions, continuous fear, hunger—all this, it seems, would transform people into pure automatons, with no desires whatsoever. We had no hope. Sooner or later we were to perish. It was rumored that we were to be shot at the completion of the *stroy*, so that no witnesses would remain. Such a thing had already happened in 1942, when several thousand slave laborers were building a refuge for the Government near Kuibyshev. All of them were shot, in order that no one would blab about the secrets and mysteries of the refuge.

But in spite of all that, people still remain people. They had but one hope left: the hope of survival. Our conscience refused to reason; the flame, a very small flame of the instinct for survival, was still burning in our hearts. And we hoped.

There was no hospital in the valley, no medical treatment. The sick had to work also, and only the desperately sick were left in barracks to die. But people didn't want to die. I saw some moribunds getting up from their deathbeds through a last effort of their will power, only to be shot a few days later for "non-fulfilled norms." We were standing bad treatment—beatings, hunger, because we wanted to strengthen ourselves for a last effort: the effort to remain alive. But sometimes things would overflow. Once a young man jumped at a guard, trying to kill him with a spade; he was immediately shot by another guard.

My lust for life gave birth to the desire to run away. I understood very quickly that it was a matter of death—or escape. Many people tried to run away, and many of them were shot every week for trying to escape. I was wondering how many actually escaped. It seemed to me that it wasn't very hard to get over the barbed wire and hide in the woods. In the summer of 1948 I was almost ready to do it, but an accident saved me from quick, sure death.

Once I was working at an excavation. I was carrying dirt. When going down a narrow plank with my wheelbarrow I slipped, fell and broke the wheelbarrow. The guard ran to me: "What are you doing, wrecking state property!" And he hit me with his gun. When I tried to explain the thing, he yelled: "We know you dirty



I told him everything. He listened and said: "Yes, we know about it. We are forbidden to go in that direction."

swine—you try to evade work. You'll be shot tomorrow." Another guard came, and they both hit me with fists and then threw me down and beat me with their heavy shod feet. I lost consciousness.

When I came to my senses, I was on the cold floor of a cell. A man was sitting next to me, and he was keeping a wet rag on my forehead. "What have you done?" he asked me. He was about twenty-five, and had a clever and handsome face. I told him what it was, and asked about him. He answered readily. He had tried to run away. I was full of joy—at last I would know about escaping. The man told me also that he was sentenced to twenty-five years because he was an officer of the Vlasov army, and that he came to Atomgrad in 1947. Four days ago he had got through the barbed-wire fence, and avoiding the first line of guards, escaped to the woods. But not being as naive as I was, he was sure to meet another line of guards, so he proceeded very cautiously. Thus he avoided the first line of guards and the second also.

Twice he saw patrols with dogs. In three days he made fifteen kilometers, but then he was so tired that he fell asleep, and that's when the dogs found him. "There's no way of escaping," he kept telling me. "The guards have dogs, and the dogs lead them to the escapees. And if you go quickly, then you'll meet the patrols. So there is really no escape. I am not afraid of being shot tomorrow. Our life here is not a life."

"Who told you that you were to be shot?"

"I was told that yesterday," he said. "Too bad that I cannot take two or three guards with me But don't you worry—some day they will pay for what they've done to us."

We didn't sleep a wink that night. Just before they came for him, he said: "I have not eaten for four days, but I am not hungry. I would like to smoke, though; but there is no place here where I could get a cigarette." When the guards came, his face turned ashen. He tottered. Then he straightened up and told me: "Farewell!"

I SPENT a whole week in the cell expecting the worst. But I was set free. Just imagine what I felt, when I knew that I was not to be shot. The guard who led me outside looked at me and asked: "Hey, you, what did you powder your head with?" I did not understand him, but in the barracks they told me that my hair had turned gray. Once upon a time I had iron health—I could lift a hundred kilograms weight without effort; that's probably what helped me to survive Atomstroy. After one year and a half in there, I didn't see any longer a single person I came to the valley with. They had

probably died. My forces were also diminishing. I felt that in three or four months I would also die.

The building was going at the same speed. Several workshops were ready, some towers also. A power station was almost ready. But new excavations were continuously dug. It seemed that there was no end to the digging and building.

I was still thinking of running away. But all my plans were impractical. Then fate helped me.

Escape!

ON June 4, 1949, Fate took me under its wing. I'll never forget that day. That's when my unbelievable chance and luck began. There was something of a miracle.

On the 4th of June I was assigned to a comparatively easy task—the unloading of trucks. Twelve of them came loaded with boxes, which were covered with tarpaulins on the top. When the work was done, some people still remained at the trucks in order to load the tarpaulins back. The guards were far away at the warehouse. I lifted one tarpaulin on my back and climbed on the truck—no one was watching me, so I let the tarpaulin drop and remained underneath.

Several minutes of mortal anguish. . . . My heart was beating like a drum, and then the trucks started. . . . I realized they were leaving the valley. They were rolling at full speed. I was lying under the tarpaulin, and could hear some trucks following the one I was in. How could I get out of mine? But I had to get out, because, I was sure, there at the camp they would notice quickly that I had disappeared, and would probably send pursuers after me. I knew that the trucks were going to "town"—an Atomstroy like ours and so I had to get out. But I couldn't figure how.

And then another miracle happened. We had a flat. Our truck stopped, and the rest of them proceeded forward. It was a flat in a front tire. The chauffeur went down to repair it. Then I crawled out, slowly slipped down and ran to the forest.

I roamed through the woods for four days, heading westward. The fear of being caught forced me to proceed almost without rest. I was very weak, but I believe that I walked about sixty kilometers from the place the truck had to stop. It is not easy to go for four days through a virgin forest. There wasn't yet any berries nor mushrooms. I had nothing to eat, and my strength was leaving me. The panic of being lost seized me. But toward the end of the fourth day I came to a village. I watched it for many hours without daring to pro-

ceed. Would they give me away? But then I thought: "If I do not go there, I'll perish in the woods." And so I went.

I knocked at the window of the first hut. A bearded peasant looked at me, came out and said: "Come quickly." He led me into a barn and left me there. He locked me in and told me to wait. I sat there and thought: "Now he is going to bring the guards." But I was too weak to run away. Ten minutes afterward he came back with a dish of boiled potatoes, some milk and bread. He gave all that to me, sat next to me and watched. When I finished, he said: "I'll bring you more." He didn't ask me a thing, but I told him everything myself. He listened and said: "Yes, we know about it. We are forbidden to go in that direction. You're lucky that the truck broke after the zone. Otherwise you would have been caught. Now rest. And I'll come for you tomorrow morning."

I spent two days in the barn, eating and resting. Toward the evening of the second day the peasant brought me some old but still good clothing. I took off my own rags and dressed. I tried to thank him. But he didn't accept my thanks. In the small hours of the next morning he returned, brought me some food, led me to a road and told me how to go. I kissed him. I will never forget that kindly peasant.

I walked through the forest for two days, and came out to the railroad near Biisk. I do not know exactly where Atomgrad is—somewhere in the deep Altai, at one hundred kilometers or more east of Biisk.

AFTER that I traveled as a stow-away in freight trains, and came to Novosibirsk. From there I proceeded in the same way toward the west to Russia. I begged for my food, but there are so many beggars now in Soviet towns that the authorities do not pay any attention to them. I was just another one.

Finally I came to Smolensk—my home town. I asked several cautious questions, and learned that in 1945 my father had been sent to a concentration camp, and my mother had died during the famine of 1946. I couldn't find what happened to my brothers and sisters. Therefore there was nothing for me to do in Smolensk, or in the USSR either. I had no papers; I couldn't get any, and sooner or later I would be caught. . . . Therefore I decided to proceed farther west.

It took me two months, but finally I got here (Germany). Now I am living in an entirely different world and recall Atomgrad as a real nightmare. But for that nightmare, I hope that those of the Kremlin will some day pay dearly.

Gertie Grooms *the* Bride

Gertie was a monster—one of those supermarvelous electronic calculating machines that can solve any problem. But when it came to the way of a maid with a man, Gertie needed more data.

by KENNETH CASSENS

YOU probably never heard of GERT; but Gert knows you. She knows you inside and out, forward and backward, from New Year's to Christmas and the six days in between. Because GERT—the Geared Electronic Rapid Totalizer—is tin sister to the mere half-dozen computers that do half the world's mathematical drudgery nowadays.

Gertie, like her tube-crammed predecessors, is limited to a highly specialized function, just as a pari-mutuel totalizer is tuned to the actions of many thousands of bettors. She has no connection, however, with a race-track; unless the general business world may be compared, as it often is, to a rat race. She does, however, feel the impact even of the races when they affect the nation's retail sales.

A department-store executive calls Tony Grescham—the Tony Grescham, Anthony D.—and pleads for a day's use of the Totalizer. If the plea accords with Gert's schedule, and is granted, over come the punch-card-coded sales records of the past five years. Everything is there: from a card of buttons to a diamond weighing in at just short of an ounce. Then Herbert Woodstall and his crew of actuaries feed the punch-coded data slips into Gertie's omnivorous electronic guts.

Her one hundred and twenty-eight integrally geared memories, which include census figures, weather reports, and the data on eleven thousand gadgets commonly offered for sale, begin chewing on the partly pre-digested data. Her 42,453-tube brain, just short of three times the size of ENIAC's 18,800-tube intelligence, begins to warm to her pleasant work. Lights flash on the control boards; and the actuaries smile happily as the hum of computation begins.

Customer cards are supplied or built in; the memory already integrated for that particular locality is switched on, and a mechanical typewriter begins pecking at a tape. Within six hours, usually, seldom more than seven, enough tape to paste up into a fifty-page booklet slides out. A

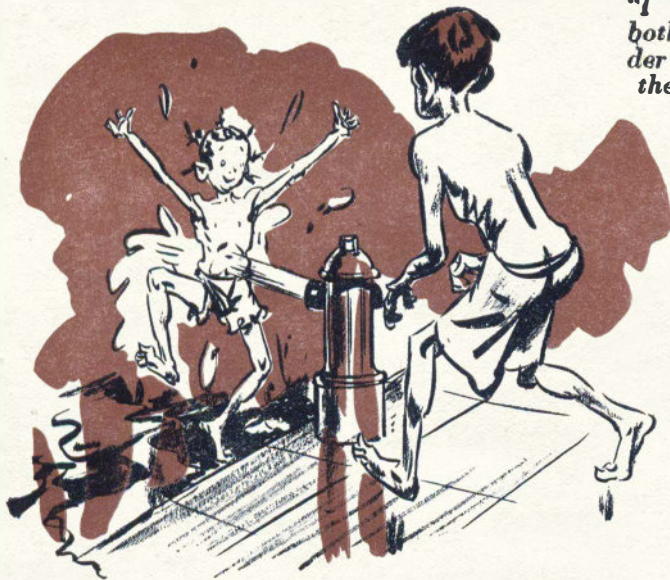
gleeful buyer grabs it eagerly, and then knows to the nearest ten how many of each item to buy for Christmas store-stocking. He knows, too, because of the built-in weather history and average-predictor, what sort of weather to expect, and when to advertise to the best advantage. Barring flood, earthquake or devastating fire, every customer will go away satisfied, and the store be sold out to the walls, if the executives cut things that close. And this information is available, not on December 15, but in July, August or September.

This, of course, isn't Gert's only function. She can project a political graph, moderated by every memory from retail sales to thirty-four-year weather cycles, that will give one politician a broad grin to equal his opponent's headache, and at the same time dish up a set of promises that can give a dark horse jet propulsion. Yessir, Gert knows John Q. Public better than a bill collector knows a slum.

Gertie can be stymied. In that case, she switches off her contented green panel lights, and flashes a dis-

A crew of actuaries feed the punch-coded data into Gertie's omnivorous electronic guts.





"I knew her when both of us stood under the spray from the same hydrant."

tress signal of red or amber, meanwhile pleading on her tape, "More data, more data." It may be a localized need; in which case she may specify, "More data, Class X," for whatever the classification may be in which she feels herself ignorant.

All of which was why, when Tony Grescham went into an emotional loop over Scythia Lennox, the big boss came to Herb Woodstall with a plea. Tony, stalking in to eye the control panels from his lean, fit height, was the complete picture of the successful executive. Brown eyes looked alertly from his clean-cut face; the closest possible shave failed to conceal the swarthinness of the beard beneath his carefully cared-for skin. His clothing was conservative; but even after taxes, Tony could have lived for life quite comfortably on any one year's income.

As for Scythia—who doesn't know Scythia Lennox? As a mere shadow on a screen, a voice on a sound track, she can bring any average male right out of his seat. Scythia has been responsible for more high blood pressure than any ten cigarette manufacturers combined. The funny part is, the gals love her too, in a percentage which Gert, alert to box-office figures among her many memories, places at 76.04, a scant .08 behind the American male.

"Herbie," said Tony Grescham, one fine spring morning whose weather Gertie said had only 13.457 chances in a hundred of holding for another day, "I want you to set Gert up for a new and revolutionary project."

"A phrase which is a polite and elegant way of spelling T-R-O-U-B-L-E," grunted Herb Woodstall, who liked to start his own revolutions. He cocked a quizzical gray eye at Tony, jutting his lean jaw out as if

he had an argument all marshaled and ready.

"I want you," continued Tony, "to set up Gertie to tell me how to court Scythia Lennox."

HERBERT WOODSTALL invoked the Deity at some length, in completely unmathematical language. Finally, he reached a solid core of argument. "Gert can't possibly predict an individual reaction," the chief actuary protested. "Ask me how to please a majority of ten thousand women in her position and economic bracket, and I can tell you to fourteen decimal places, if you want to pay the power bill to cut the thing that fine. Ask me to predict Scythia Lennox—and I've known her since she was Cynthia Brickermann—and I throw up my hands. No can do. Gert can't, either."

"You knew her, huh?" queried Tony, astounded. He had always considered Herbert Woodstall a part of his machine: born an actuary, with a slide-rule in his pocket, a pipe in his teeth, and seven pencils clipped to convenient spots about his person.

"Cynthia and I," said Herbie somewhat grimly, "grew up on the sunny—and hot—side of Brooklyn's tree. I knew her when both of us, stripped to our underpants, stood under the spray from the same hydrant. I knew her when her face was freckled, her teeth were crooked, and her larcenous little heart looked on a dollar bill as the price of lifelong happiness."

"Hey, that's luck!" cried Tony. "You can set up a card for Scythia all the better, knowing her so well!"

"Listen, bub," exploded Herbie, no man to thump his head on the floor for any boss, "I know what Gert can do, and what she can't. And she certainly can't court a moving-picture glamour girl for you. Or Nellie the Chambermaid, or Rosie the Riveter. Gert can predict the number of mar-

riages per month, day or hour for the next twenty-four months; she can extrapolate a weather cycle for the next six and a half; she can tell you whether black shoes or brown will be more popular next spring, and the percentage of each. But she certainly can't tell you what gifts to take to a girl, when to hold her hand, or kiss her, or smack her in her glorious calculating blue eyes. Sorry—no can do, Tony."

"Hey, wait, Herbie," pleaded Tony Grescham, nervously reaching for a cigarette.

"Hold it, Tony," warned Herbie. "Gert doesn't like smoke, or dust or ashes of any kind."

Tony walked over to the exhaust duct, and lighted his cigarette. "Look, Herbie," he begged, "can't you set Gert up to analyze ten thousand women with Scythia's background, and in her present situation? Can't you find out what gifts would be most unusual, most likely to please 'em? If it'll work for ten thousand, it ought to work for one, see?"

"Boss, a five-thousand-dollar swimming-pool would just clutter up our Cynthia's backyard," replied Herbert Woodstall grimly. "The last issue of *Glamour Guide* says she has seven, already. What could you give a girl like that—that she hasn't already got?"

"You read that claptrap?" queried Tony.

"When it's about Cynthia, yes," replied the actuary, flushing.

"I'll leave it to Gert to figure what would please her," urged Tony. "Come on, Herb—set her up, hey? As a personal favor, not an order, Herb. As an experiment. Just to see what Gert can do."

FOR Herb, the word *experiment* was the clincher. A half-hour later, ten thousand customer cards, identically punched for Scythia's known background and experience were fed into Gert's warming electronic brain. Relays clicked and lights flashed one by one as the pleased machine indicated willingness to accept the problem.

"Merchandise memory," punched Herbert Woodstall. "Unusual gifts." It came out as figure zero, column eight, followed by half-a-dozen figures on the card. Gert, exploring with sensitive electric fingers, would know infallibly what was wanted.

The Totalizer flashed her lights happily, and went to work. It was a short job; all the customer cards were identical, and the data more than usually complete. Finally, the typewriter gave an experimental chatter, and the typed tape began to feed from the answer reel.

"Position 1, jeweled medallion containing photo of cust. mother," typed

Gert. "Des. 59.47%, adv. 10:00 am. ed. wthr. fair bar. 29.7 rising foll. logy wthr. pattern."

"What the heck does that mean?" asked Tony, whose supervision was mainly of financing and operation. "I know the business end; but I don't try to keep in touch with this sort of stuff."

"It means that a hypothetical six thousand women out of our imaginary ten thousand would most desire a jeweled medallion, with a photo of the mother of each inserted. It could be advertised," continued Herbie, "in the ten o'clock morning newspapers, on a fair day following dull weather, with the barometer at 29.7 and rising, for maximum effect. I'd interpret that as the best time to present the gift to Scythia."

THE tape was sliding out steadily; Tony Grescham picked up a segment to read, "Photo of Garson Keith, solid silver frame. Des. 49.03%, adv. . . ."

Tony leaped as though jabbed in-
deep by a large and energetic wasp. "Garson Keith!" he yelled. "That guy's been squiring Scythia ever since he filed suit for divorce against Jeunine La Mothe. What gives on this doggone calculator, anyway? Is Gert trying to ruin my chances? And the figures don't add up, either!"

"The figures overlap, of course," rejoined Herb in a tone not the least intended to be soothing. "Out of any ten thousand women, a number would be equally pleased with a photo of Garson Keith in a silver frame. And many more would be pleased with it as a second gift."

"Not from me, she won't!" gritted Tony Grescham. He scanned the tape again, slipping several yards of unusual gifts through his fingers. "Hey, what's this one just coming out?" he sputtered. "A box of cigars, 18.7 per cent. For Scythia Lennox, for Gossakes?"

"You wanted unusual gifts," replied Herbie patiently. "They don't come much more unusual than that, for women. I'm surprised at the high percentage, but Gertie is never wrong."

"How many more will there be?" Tony inquired, eyeing the speeding tape.

"Probably about four hundred," estimated Herbie. "I preset Gert to cut off the bottom ten per cent. There's a lot of overlap. Shall I paste 'em up into a report when she's all done?"

"Store it on a reference reel," directed Tony hastily. "I'll have to put a detective on the trail of Scythia's mother's photo, I guess."

"Try the film fan magazines first," suggested Herbert Woodstall. The actuary turned back to his clicking calculator, and set a storage reel in

place to pick up the looped yards of tape. Tony, with a last frowning glance, went out in search of his photograph and a jeweler.

WHEN Tony Grescham came in the next day, jubilant over Scythia's reaction to his sentimental gift, Herbert Woodstall felt a minor ache in his heart. For the actuary remembered, not the sleek platinum-blonde, expensively sheathed actress who was Scythia Lennox; but the pig-tailed, freckled, grinning *gamine* who had been little Cynthia Brickermann. Herbert saw her in his secret mind, sighed, and eschewed the sentiment. But he couldn't quite subdue that remote yearning memory-laden corner of his inmost mind.

"Herbie," boasted Tony jubilantly, "Gert hit the nail on the head for sure! If I'd given her the Empire State Building, she'd have yawned and said: 'What, more real estate?' But did her eyes pop open at her mother's photo in that medallion!"

"You'll give her Garson Keith's picture next, I suppose?" needled the actuary.

"I will not," exploded Tony. "After all, Gert can't be expected to know the personalities involved. She's just a cold, inhuman machine, and her advice is completely objective."

"Cold?" asked Herbie, his eyebrows raised. "Do you know just how big a river of water we have to circulate through her jackets when Gertie is operating?"

"I ought to," grinned Tony. "I pay the power bills. But—Herb, you know what I mean. After all, Gert is

just eight or nine thousand miles of wiring, stuck all over with tubes; just a mechanical monster, after all. D'you know, I told Scythia about Gert's list of gifts last night. She got a great kick out of it, and said she could hardly wait to see what comes next. She wants to see the machine some day, too."

"Garson Keith's photo comes next," Herbie reminded his superior.

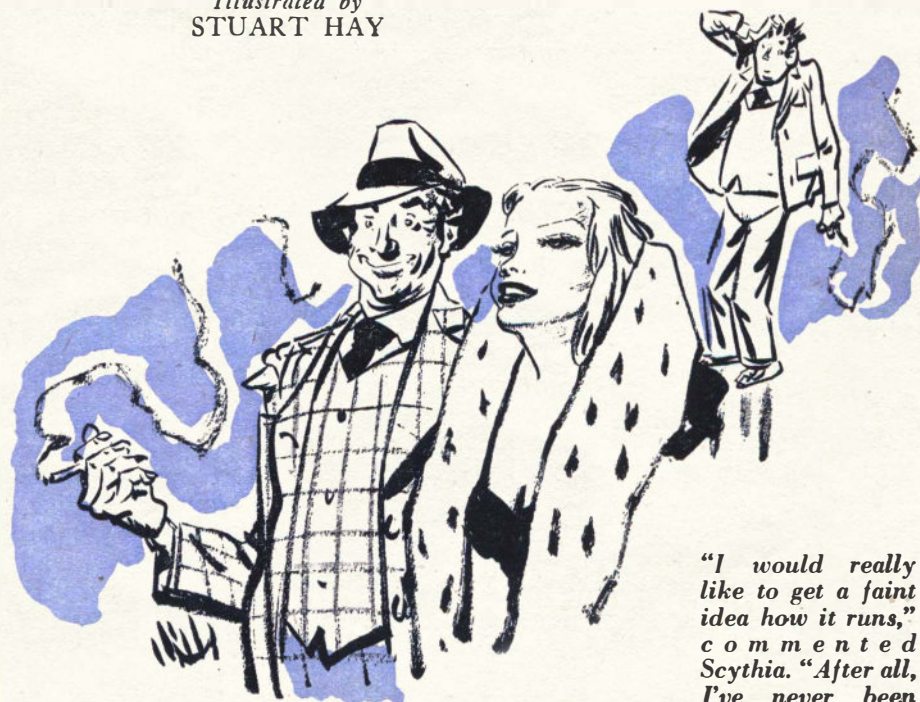
"Nuts!" growled Tony. "Gimme the list."

The day after Scythia had received a velvet-padded tempered-glass diving-board for her fourth largest swimming-pool, Tony Grescham brought the actress out to the plant that housed Gert.

"The plant" was the name used by every attendant; yet to the actuaries who fed her and the technicians who cared for her, Gert was a person, and her sheltering building of aluminum and steel little short of a mathematical cathedral: they, the monstrous calculator's votaries.

SCYTHIA LENNOX came in, her smooth face under the elaborately simple hairdo carefully unemotional. She gave the impression of an ambulatory ingot of Chromium (with a capital C) out to inspect a file of baser metals. Scythia's neckline plunged fashionably, stopping at the exact boundary of decorum. The furs that shrouded her straight shoulders would have regarded common mink as a poor relation, and spoken coolly to anything less than ermine. From her perfect, startling hat, to her elegant footgear that supported her small feet

Illustrated by
STUART HAY



"I would really like to get a faint idea how it runs," commented Scythia. "After all, I've never been courted by a machine before."

and very adequate gains, Scythia was in complete exactness the million-dollar creation Colossal Epic Films had groomed her to be.

But there was a covert flash of interest in the seemingly remote blue eyes as she looked at Gert's massive panels. And Herbie, anonymous in his gray-green duster, was sure he detected one remaining freckle under the flawless lacquer of her patrician nose.

"I don't suppose any one man could explain how it runs, Tony," commented Scythia intelligently, her voice carefully smooth and cool. None of the sultry tone that made the screens of a million theaters practically incandescent was apparent here. "But I would really like to get a faint idea. After all, I've never been courted by a machine before."

"Well, I—uh—well, Gert has 42,453 tubes," said Tony Grescham lamely. "And an awful lot of wiring. And it all works together, somehow, to produce results. Hey—Herbie, you tell her. Miss Lennox, this is Mr. Woodstall, our chief actuary. He says he knew you, long ago."

"Woodstall? Herbie!" Scythia Lennox abandoned her chilly pose, and her face and voice came alive with interest. "My gosh, Herbie," she said, the flawless diction lapsing into sudden vernacular, "I haven't seen you in a zillion years. So you work here, do you? How's your ma? I bet my ma—here's her picture—would like to gas over the back fence with yours right now!"

"GERT," said Herbert Woodstall, suddenly flustered, "has more than eight thousand miles of wiring in her integrally geared circuits. She correlates up to a hundred and twenty-eight electronically wired memories—"

"Oh, pooh for that!" interrupted Scythia. "Herbie, I'd like to forget I'm something enameled and wrapped up in a jewel box, for a while. I'd like to just remember we were kids together, and Gert knows nothing about that. Tony, would you mind awfully if Herbie and I ran out for a hot dog somewhere?"

"I can't very well protest," replied Tony stiffly.

"Gert," said Herbie helplessly, "has a list of more than eleven thousand products commonly sold in department stores, with new ones constantly replacing those subject to obsolescence. Every new detailed sales report is analyzed by Gert and integrated into her—"

"A hot dog, Herbie," insisted Scythia Lennox. "I want one, remember? And call me Cynthia, the way you used to, or even—gosh, what was that nickname?"

"Specklepuss," admitted Herbie numbly. "Gert has—"

"Specklepuss has a stomach," corrected Cynthia Brickermann. "A stomach that craves a hot dog. With the works. Come on, Lambie-Pie, and buy me one."

"I poked you in the schnozzle, Specklepuss, the last time you called me Lambie-Pie," growled Herbie.

"Get me that hot dog first, and you can do it again," proffered Cynthia, "provided Colossal Epic doesn't find it out. C'mon, cave-man."

TONY GRESCHAM was checking over the tape when Herbie Woodstall and Cynthia Brickermann returned, hand in hand.

"Hot dog. . . . Hot dog. . . . Hot dog. . . ." Tony muttered. "Hey, here it is. Number eight hundred and seven; preferred by 11.3 percent of women in Scythia's position. I knew Gert couldn't be wrong."

"Tony, shove over," said Herbie, his feet floating a full inch and a half above the mellow green of the floor. "We want to try another experiment on Gert. Cynthia and I have decided to get married; and we want to match punch-cards and see if Gert can give us a rating on our percentage chances of happiness."

Tony, more than a little punchy himself, stared at the pair. "You—huh?" he said, inanely.

"Yes, we—huh," agreed Scythia Lennox. "Sorry, Tony. It was the hot dog that won me; that, and the promise of a poke in the eye."

Gert was more than puzzled at the order to match tastes between her ten thousand Scythia Lennox cards and the equal number hastily punched for Herbert Woodstall's history. She flashed her red and amber lights.

"More data, more data, more data," she pleaded.

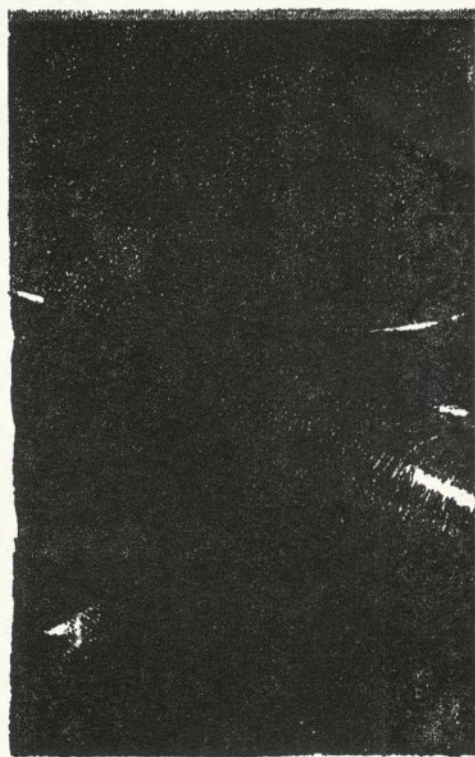
"Listen, Gert, you brat," challenged Herbie, "if you've got anything to hear with. Cynthia Brickermann and I are going to get married, see? And you get no more data from me until after the honeymoon, see? Ppppppppppttt!"

Tony Grescham tore at his once immaculate hair.

"Don't forget to come back, Herb," he groaned. "I forgive you; and we need you to run Gert. Me, I'm going to locate Garson Keith and get zoppoified with him."

Gert gave a small moan, and her clickings ceased. Lights flared, and winked out. There was a faint hissing, and a red warning resembling a parking-meter's flag flipped wildly on her control panel.

"That never happened before!" cried Herbie. "Gert must have just realized what was going on—she's blown a fuse! C'mon, Specklepuss; let's you and me get out while the technicians get to work on Gertie. I wanna buy you a box of cigars."



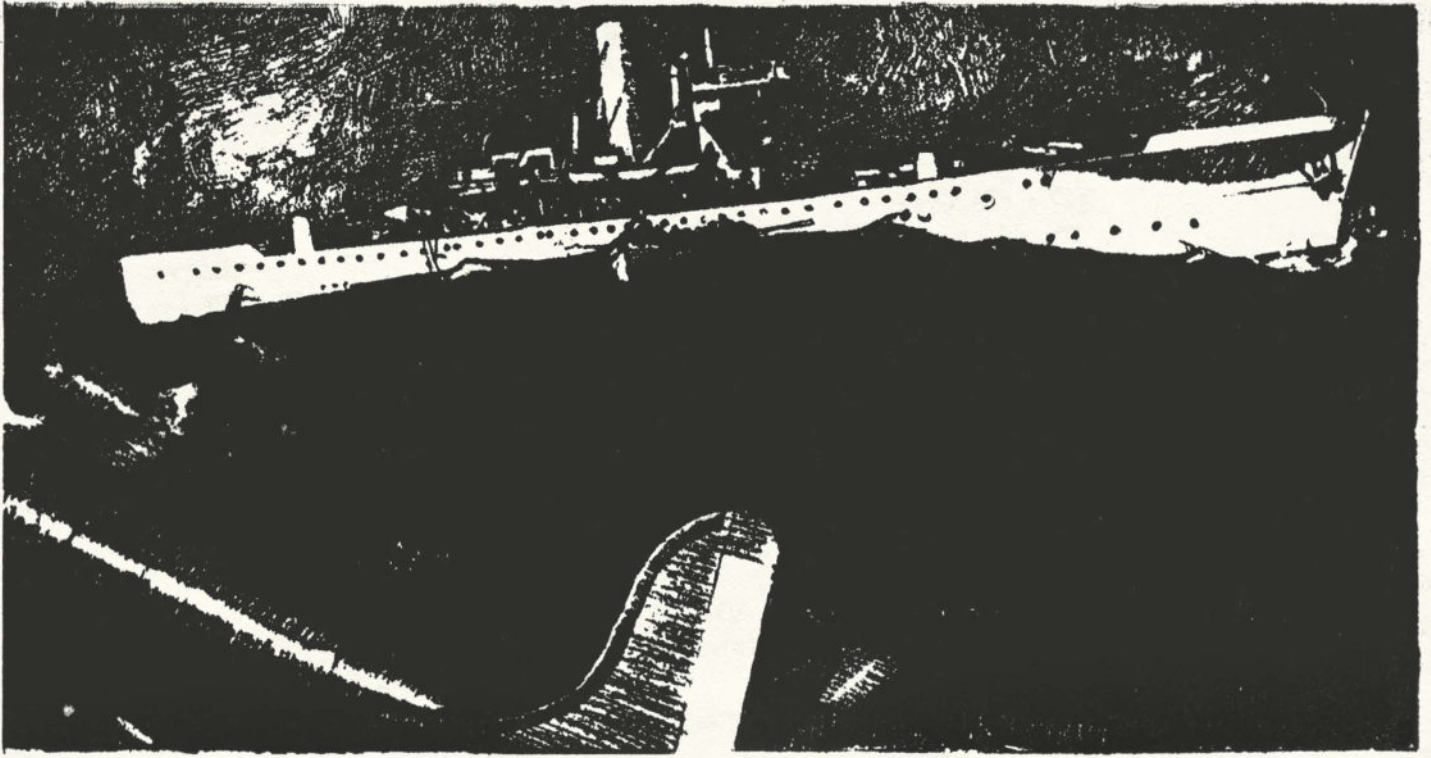
NORTH

A transatlantic pilot writes of the hazardous sea patrol upon which both air and ocean traffic greatly depend.

LAST night, over the North Atlantic, I spoke to a man who has not set foot on dry land for the last thirty days. He is Ensign J. D. Crowley of the U. S. Coast Guard Cutter *Duane*, now on weather duty at station Able. In the cockpit of our Skymaster we were above the clouds. Flight was smooth. Ten thousand feet below, the *Duane* was under way, holding a pinpoint position against gale velocity winds in a thirty-foot sea.

Mr. Crowley was not maintaining that position because he is fond of that particular stretch of water. He is part of an international project designed to make the Atlantic Ocean as safe as your own back yard.

Thirteen stations are involved in the plan which is intended to serve all possible routes. The expense of maintaining the system falls to each participating nation in an amount proportional to its volume of ocean air traffic. With three scheduled transatlantic airlines, the U. S. maintains 7½ weather stations. Great Britain, Norway, Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands and France share the maintenance of five stations and the remain; ½ is shared between Canada and the U. S.



ATLANTIC WEATHER SHIP

by **D. N. FAIRBAIRN**

The primary purpose of the weather ships is the observation and reporting of weather conditions at the station. Since the stations are in most cases along well-traveled air routes, the weather ships also provide transient aircraft with an excellent system of check points. To this end the vessels are equipped with radio beacons which operate during specified periods of each hour or continually upon request of any aircraft.

The radio beacon plays a large part in the third major duty of the weather ships, which is to aid in search and rescue operations. The value of this phase of weather-ship operation was demonstrated in the autumn of 1947 when the Bermuda Sky Queen ran short of fuel on a westbound crossing. Unable to reach the nearest point of land, her pilot headed for station Charlie, about nine hundred miles east of Newfoundland. The U. S. Coast Guard Cutter *Bibb*, commanded by Captain Paul Cronk, was on station at the time, serving an average of thirty planes daily with beacon service and radar fixes. The *Bibb's* radio beacon enabled the Sky Queen to fly a direct course to the exact position of the vessel. By making three complete circles with rudder

hard over, the *Bibb* was able to provide a relatively smooth landing area in the heavy seas. Everyone knows how the *Bibb* saved all on board the Sky Queen, some 69 persons. Much was learned during the rescue that would prove invaluable in any later emergencies of that nature.

According to Commander O. C. Rohnke, formerly commanding the Coast Guard Cutter *Sebago*, rescue operations require a standard set of procedures coupled with intelligent planning for any unexpected eventuality. In the event the ditching airplane is a land craft, speed of rescue action is also of utmost importance. Cargo nets slung over the side for survivors to cling to and trained swimmers equipped with life-vests and lines would be part of Commander Rohnke's preparation.

CHIEF YEOMAN D. A. MARSHALL served under Commander Rohnke for two and a half years on the *Sebago*. Much of that time was spent at weather station Able, a small plot of ocean about midway between Reykjavik, Iceland, and Cape Farewell, Greenland. Station Able, usually under the influence of the Icelandic low-pressure area, has some of the worst

weather of the North Atlantic. A routine tour of duty at that spot would be about as routine to most of us as an Arctic expedition.

It was on one such voyage that the *Sebago* left New York on January third, 1948, to relieve the U. S. Coast Guard Cutter *Spencer*. If you had been aboard with Chief Marshall when the cutter sailed from Staten Island at noon that day, you would have needed sea-legs and a strong stomach. At Argentia, Newfoundland, three days later, three Coast Guardsmen were put ashore for chronic seasickness due to the rough seas. The *Sebago* topped off her fuel tanks and took on supplies. Twelve hours later her crew watched the bleak shores of Newfoundland drop away. It was the last land they would see for over a month.

The five U. S. Weather Bureau meteorologists on board gave their equipment a hasty last-minute check. These men were the main reason for the cutter's voyage. Upon their observations depended the accuracy of the ocean weather maps, the flight plans and safety of hundreds of transatlantic airliners and their passengers.

As the *Sebago* pushed deeper into the low-pressure area around Iceland,

the weather became even worse. The cutter's speed was reduced to 10 knots. Four days out of Newfoundland the *Spencer* was sighted. The *Sebago* was on station. Radio contact was made and the two ships exchanged weather observations as a final accuracy check. In spite of the high seas, a line was shot across to the *Spencer* and a mail transfer made. The *Spencer's* crew would have letters to speed the long trip home. Then the traditional message, "Will you accept relief?" flashed across the water and the *Spencer's* answer: "Yes." The *Spencer* steamed for home and the *Sebago* battered down for three weeks on station.

Drifting with the current when the weather eased off slightly, maintaining a slight headway when the seas were roughest, the *Sebago* continued to serve the aircraft which passed overhead. An average of five airliners per day received beacon service and accurate radar bearings. And always the final message, "Is there anything more we can do for you?"

"Thanks," said the pilots. "Keep afloat. See you next trip."

The weather made it impossible to cook meals. Down in the sickbay all the medicine bottles broke. "Can't get much worse," said the deck crew hopefully. The gale tore a lifeboat loose and beat it against the ship. Tied with lines, the men tried to lash it down. No use. "It isn't worth a life," said the skipper. "Let it go." The velocity of the wind rose daily. Surface wind was recorded at 95 knots just before the ship's anemometer blew off.

At last the Coast Guard Cutter *Campbell* arrived as relief ship. Once again the message, "Will you accept relief?" and the *Sebago's* answer, "Yes." At this point the seas were so high that it was impossible to pass mail. The *Sebago* set her course for Argentina. West of Cape Farewell, Greenland, the *Sebago* hit the cold Labrador current. Ice coated the rails and halyards. Water washed over the decks and remained in glistening slippery sheets. Almost everyone on board was on duty chipping ice.

THEN Argentina and the last leg of the homeward voyage. On the way to New York, the *Sebago's* crew received an emergency message from Boston. "Proceed to George's Banks." The engine of a fishing boat had blown up. Her crew of nine men were adrift without power. Picking up to an 18-knot speed, her direction-finding equipment operating, the *Sebago* was on her way. A line was shot to the crew of the fishing craft and she was towed into Boston harbor.

A few hours later the *Sebago* entered the Nantucket fog bank on the

last lap of a 5½-week voyage. For the time being her task was accomplished. Four to seven weeks later, she and her crew would once again be heading out for their acre of water.

SOMEWHAT over three hundred feet long and displacing two thousand to twenty-five hundred tons, the average cutter is by no means a floating palace. Nevertheless, the food is excellent and the ingenuity of the men has provided them with a good deal of recreation. A different movie is shown each evening with two showings a day on weekends. Usually once each voyage the men organize an amateur show and once each voyage an evening is set aside for a mass bingo game, to which the Red Cross donates prizes. The men on the *Sebago* even set up a volleyball court on deck, when one ingenious crew member thought of tying a light line to the ball to keep it from being lost overboard. Ship intercom boxes carry music and news from four radios tuned to the various shortwave frequencies. A fifth channel is reserved for a broadcast station on the ship itself, which delivers local entertainment when the static is too severe for short-wave reception.

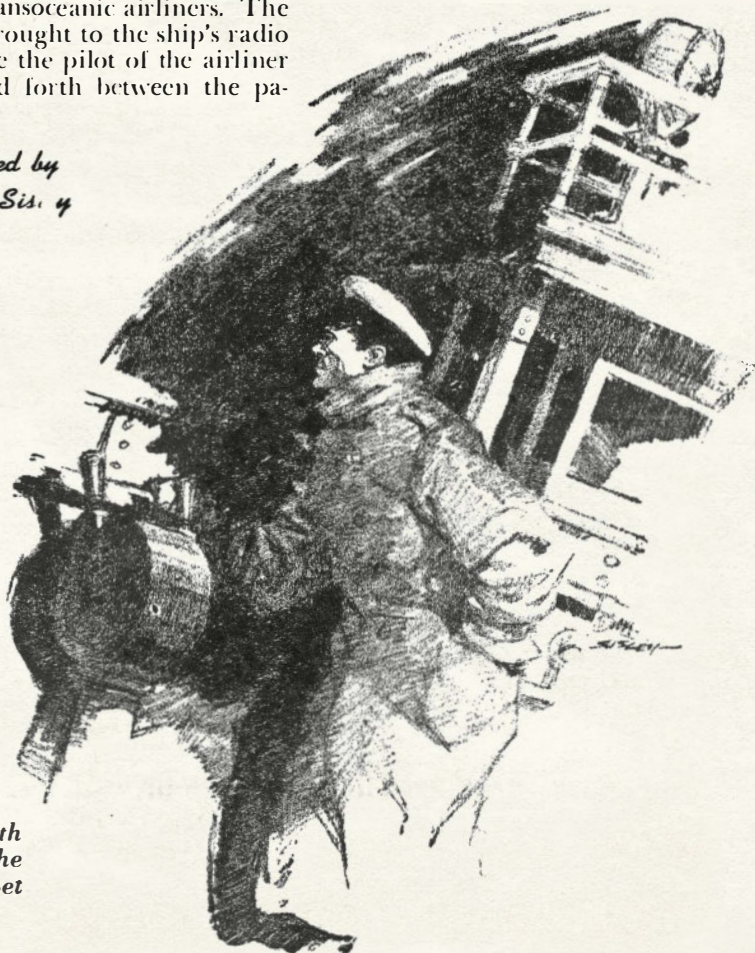
Occasionally an odd incident will help to break the monotony of patrol duty. A doctor on one of the British ships even treated a heart attack over the radio. A man had collapsed on one of the transoceanic airliners. The doctor was brought to the ship's radio room. While the pilot of the airliner ran back and forth between the pa-

tient and the cockpit, noting symptoms and administering medicines, the doctor diagnosed and treated the case—by proxy. Incidentally, the patient survived the attack.

Such air-sea cooperation also works in reverse. Many a Coast Guardsman's family has been pleasantly surprised by a postcard from him, which by all laws of space and time, it was impossible for him to send. Everything's genuine but the handwriting. Here's how it works. Many of the pilots flying the Atlantic carry blank postcards with them. When contact has once been made with the weather ship and all necessary business taken care of, a shift to the VHF frequency is made. On this frequency, which has too short a range to interfere with other radio transmissions, the ship's radio officers sometimes dictate short messages to their families and those of the other crew members. The pilot of the aircraft mails or telephones them in New York a few hours later.

ALREADY indispensable from the standpoint of weather reporting and air navigation, the weather ships have become more than that to the pilots of the transatlantic airliners. They are a friendly voice in the empty stretch of ocean and the radio contacts with them are a welcome relief from the monotony of flying the North Atlantic.

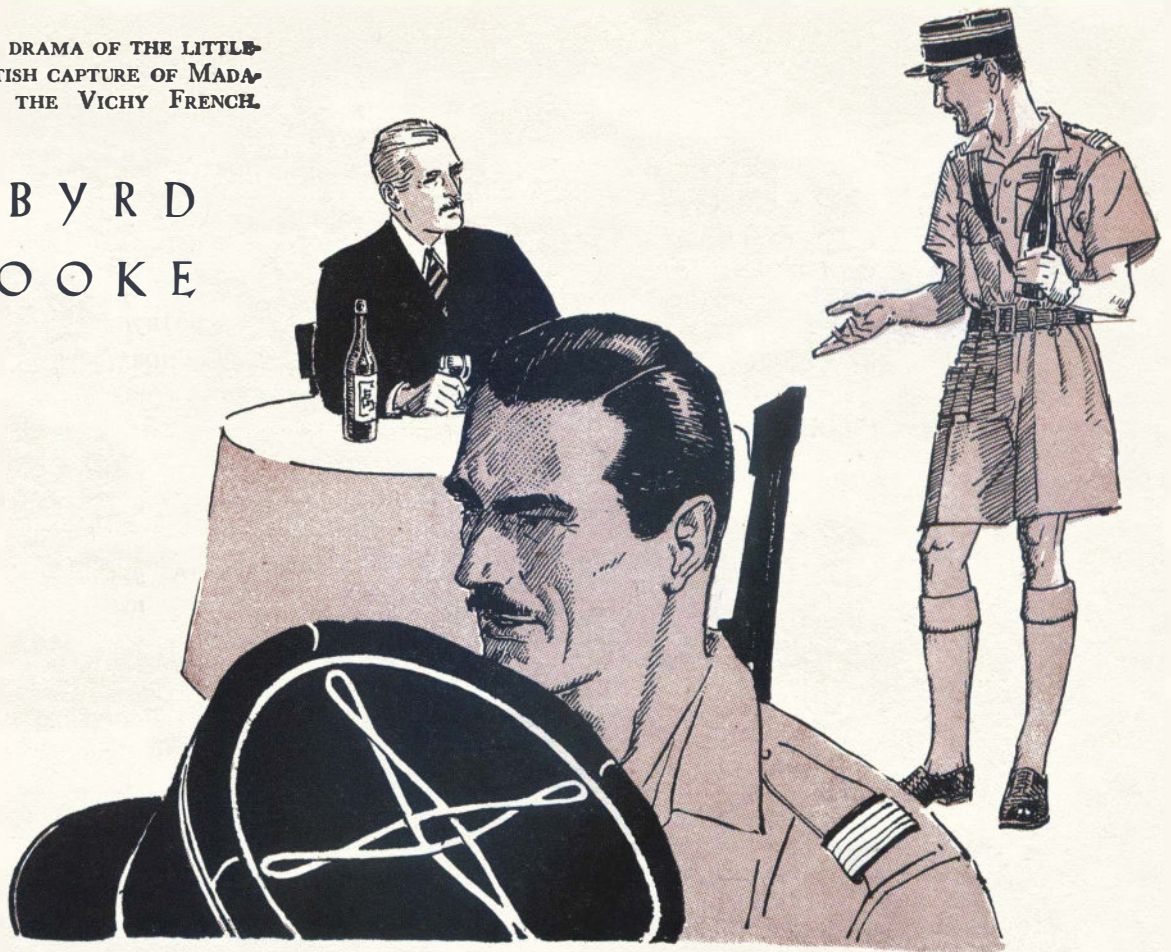
Illustrated by
Raymond Sis. 4



"It isn't worth a life," said the skipper. "Let it go."

A MEMORABLE DRAMA OF THE LITTLE-REPORTED BRITISH CAPTURE OF MADAGASCAR FROM THE VICHY FRENCH

by BYRD
BROOKE



Madagascar Landing

IT was an odd chance that took me to Majunga. I was *en route* to Colombo for Tunvax Rubber, and my schedule called for a business stop at Mauritius. My best bet was to catch the BOAC plane at Mombasa. We took off before dawn, and sunrise found us high above the Indian Ocean droning monotonously southeastward. It was after lunch as I was drowsing in my chair that I was jarred awake by the violent pitching of the plane. The rain was hammering fiercely at the windows, and all outside was billowing cloud. We were told to fasten our belts.

"No cause for alarm," the stewardess reassured us, "but the pilot thinks it advisable to make a landing. Weather conditions ahead are unfavorable. We're going down now."

I asked her where we were. "Over Madagascar. We're heading in to Majunga."

As our plane broke through the ceiling and banked sharply, I caught

a glimpse of the estuary of a great river, of a vast, red, eroded land unfolding to distant mountains, and along the coast, the rooftops of what appeared a considerable settlement.

At the field, we learned that there was no possibility of taking off again that day for Mauritius. A station-wagon arrived, and we were carried through the downpour to a hotel which was located on what appeared to be the principal thoroughfare of the town.

The Chez Louis was the usual tropical hotel, a wooden structure with tin roof, dilapidated, but roomy and airy. On the ground floor was a bar and a rather large restaurant with an open space for dancing. Sleeping accommodations were all on the second story. It was obvious that business was by no means pressing; the clerk with a most casual gesture told us to pick ourselves a room upstairs. The boy, he informed us in execrable English, was off somewhere.

I found a fairly decent room that gave on the front part of the hotel. My bags followed in due course, and after a shower and change of clothes, I went below. By this time the rain had let up considerably, and presently the sun broke through. With an hour or so remaining before darkness, I amused myself by hiring a *pousse-pousse* and getting pulled around town. I had heard dismal reports of Madagascar, this great island empire of the French—that it was for the most part primitive, barren and ugly; but I was pleasantly impressed by Majunga. It had clean streets and plenty of large shade trees. There was a very pretty coastal drive, and back of the city rose a hill that gave a panorama of Majunga. From there the European area lay neatly below you; at its left spread the native quarter, a tangle of masts encumbering its waterfront where the Arab dhows were clustered; still farther in that same direction you saw the Betsiboka River, broad, slug-

gish, red as the laud through which it had flowed. And beyond all, the Mozambique Channel, unrolling to the horizon like an immense blue carpet.

After dinner that evening I stood at the bar and listened to the musicians. It was Saturday, and there were a number of people in the restaurant. The murmur of French accents filled the air pleasantly. A few couples began to dance, and soon others joined them. My attention was diverted to a small child, a girl, who could not have been more than three or four, making her way along the bar. When she came near me, I bent down to talk to her. She was a pretty child, with pale, fragile skin and black eyes that looked enormous in her tiny face. Without thinking, I addressed her in English, and I was surprised to hear her answer me in the same tongue.

"I'm looking for my daddy. Do you know where he is?"

Someone came up behind the child and scooped her into his arms.

"You naughty girl," the newcomer laughed, "what are you doing here? Why aren't you at your table?"

"Daddy, I want to dance. Please let's dance."

HER father put her down again. "When you're through eating. Now run back to the table and finish your food."

He gave her a pat, and she skipped obediently to the dining-room.

"Attractive child!" I remarked, watching her.

He smiled. "She's a handful, I can tell you that." He glanced at me. "Are you staying at the hotel?"

"Just overnight." I told him about our forced landing.

"Yank, aren't you?"

I nodded.

"Thought I recognized the accent. We had a couple of your chaps with us in the invasion. Enlisted with us, you know. Couldn't wait for you to get in. Very decent sort, too."

"Then you were with the British troops here?"

"From the beginning. I got my discharge in Diego Suarez in the spring of last year, right after Hitler went under. They pulled the last of us out then."

I asked him if he'd been here since, and he said he had.

"I had some business to take care of, but I've wound it up. I'm getting away finally. My daughter and I are catching the boat next week for London."

Our talk got back to the British occupation of Madagascar.

"Was it a big affair—the invasion, I mean?" I asked him. "I read about it, of course, in the papers at the time, but I don't remember much of it now."

"We thought so. Bear in mind it was only '42, and the shows you chaps put on in the Pacific were still in the future. Actually, it wasn't a matter of just one invasion, but rather a series of them. We took Diego Suarez in May, and everybody thought that was as far as we'd go. Then, four months later, we banged in simultaneously on Nosse Bé, Majunga, and Morondava, six hundred miles of coast. I came in on the Majunga operation. Odd thing is that I never saw the actual invasion. Do you know where I was while it was going on? Right here in the Chez Louis. It wasn't planned that way, but that's how it turned out."

I waited for him to continue, but he said nothing more. He simply gazed straight before him, and his face grew almost angry. For the moment he must have utterly forgotten my presence, for when I suggested drinks, he stared at me as though surprised to see me there.

We sat down at an adjacent table. I wondered what had so disturbed him. I had the feeling that he had slipped back among his recollections, and they did not seem to be happy ones. Then quietly, as though there had been no lapse, he began speaking again.

"It's not a pretty story. I don't know why I should burden you with it—" He shook his head as I began to protest. "But these things do come back, and sometimes it does one good to talk about them."

I did not know quite what to say, so I did what was probably the best thing and said nothing. It was clear that, whatever his tale, he had made up his mind to tell it.

"You see, to go back to '42 again, although we had Diego, the Japs were still using the west coast for refueling submarines. It was about time to settle the business. For once we had loads of stuff for the operation, and we were pretty sure the thing would be a surprise. I was attached to British Security. My job was to get to Majunga the day before the attack, and make sure the Vichy had no inkling of what was ahead. I was a logical man for the assignment. As you see, I'm average-size and dark; I actually think I look more French than English, and as a matter of fact I am French on my mother's side—I've spoken the language since birth.

"A mine-sweeper took me close to the coast. We launched a small boat, and I was rowed to a point of beach a few miles north of the town. It had been easy, ridiculously easy. In fact, it was this sort of thing that had the High Command worried; everything was going entirely too smoothly. It was important to know that this did not mean a trap. I was dressed in civilian clothes, of course, and carried my radio in a paper bundle under my

arm. The idea was to use the radio only in an emergency. If the situation was satisfactory, I was to maintain silence.

"Dawn broke as I came to the outskirts of the city. I knew its layout perfectly from the maps I had studied. Even at this early hour there was a good deal of movement into and out of Majunga, and it was no trick at all to enter without notice. I soon found there was little risk of discovery. The town was overcrowded with military personnel, many of them newly arrived. Nobody would be likely to ask questions. My plan was to spend the day moving around the city, keeping my eyes and ears open, and my mouth shut. I had one specific piece of business to perform that night, and after that, if all went well, I could get a few hours' sleep and wait for our chaps to arrive. I wasn't fussy about a bed. There was plenty of beach around, and I'd slept on considerably worse things than that.

"I had a good day. So far as I could tell, the French were as innocent of suspicion as babes. Our fleet was perched on their doorstep, and a single reconnaissance plane might have spilled the beans. Luckily they never thought of sending one up. All I wanted now was a final confirmation, and at eight o'clock that night I set about getting that. I knew we had a Free French contact in Majunga—a woman. My information was that she was living at the Chez Louis—she had a job in the place; and I wanted, if possible, to get in touch with her.

"SECURITY had had no word from the girl in some time, but appeared to have complete confidence in her. At any rate, she was on my agenda. When I entered the hotel, I was gratified to note that the restaurant was reasonably crowded. In the business I then represented, you get to like crowds; they're a protective coloration, if you understand me. Most of the tables were taken, but I managed to find one not too conspicuously placed." He pointed to a far corner on the other side of the terrace. "Right over there, it was. I ordered some dinner, and began to review the facts Security had given me.

"Her name was Pepette. She was a young widow with a child. Her husband, who had died the year before, had been one of our agents, and the girl had worked closely with him. I knew, too, what she looked like—Security had shown me a photograph of her. While this was not a great deal to go on, it was enough. Then too, I had one extra piece of information—something that kept me waiting impatiently for the orchestra to appear. Pepette was its pianist.

"I ate slowly. Then I saw the musicians straggling back to their chairs.



There was no woman. Instead, a man took the seat at the piano. Shortly the orchestra struck up a tune, and couples rose to dance. I shrugged my shoulders. That was that. Perhaps this was her night off. After all, Security had had no communication from her in some time, and it was quite possible that she no longer worked in the place. At any rate, since I could not possibly inquire, I decided I had better be clearing out. As I drank the last of my wine, I noticed someone standing across the table from me. I looked up, and my heart gave a bound. It was a French army officer. 'I've had it,' I told myself. Then I noticed he was smiling affably, and holding a bottle of wine in his hand.

"'May I share your table?' he asked—in French, of course. 'I'm alone, and there doesn't appear to be a free one.'

"'Please do,' I answered, rising slightly. I flatter myself that I behaved casually enough, but every nerve in my body was singing like a taut wire.

"'I'm just in from Diego,' he told me, as he took a chair. 'Delightful to get down to Majunga. I'm very fond of the city. You are perhaps a resident here?'

"I shook my head. 'Tananarive is my home.'

"'Operation Coventry,' I said, without moving my lips. I saw her stiffen, but she did not look at me."

"'Ah, fortunate man! What I shouldn't give for duty in the capital. But this is war, and one can't pick and choose. These English have us all nervous, don't they?' He called us by a vicious name, and my fists tightened. 'Where do you live in Tana?' he asked. 'I know the city well, of course.'

"I had been carefully coached for all such questions, but before I had a chance to answer, he gave an exclamation. 'There she is, lovely creature!'

"I turned my eyes in the direction he was looking, and then I knew I was seeing Pepette. She had taken the other's place at the piano.

"'You will excuse me—I believe I shall say a word to her,' said my companion. 'I knew her in Diego, and when I come to Majunga I always pay my respects to her.' He winked at me: 'A very eligible widow.'

"As he got to his feet, I had an inspiration. 'How about introducing me?' I suggested, with a smile.

"He hesitated momentarily and then shrugged.

"'Why not? Come along.'

"We threaded our way to the piano. 'Your name?' he asked. 'Destremaux,' I told him, 'Pierre Destremaux.'

"'Captain Roualt, at your service.'

"The girl turned slowly when he called her name—it seemed to me that she gave a slight start when she saw who it was. I felt her eyes light on me for an instant.

"'How good to see you, Pepette,' said Roualt, as he kissed her hand. 'You grow prettier each time. When are you coming back to us in Diego? We miss you.' He turned to me. 'I ask her that whenever I come here, but there's no persuading her. Of course, I can't blame you, Pepette. Diego is a wretched place.'

"I knew the girl to be in her late twenties, but she looked younger. Her face was quite without color, and against the pale, smooth skin her long mouth was startlingly red. I noticed her eyes—they were opaque, expressionless.

"Roualt remembered the introduction. 'Forgive me. This is Monsieur Destremaux, from Tananarive.'

"She inclined her head briefly to me, and chatted for a moment with Roualt. Then it was time for her to play again, and we returned to our table.

"'He'll come to,' I told her. 'Give me something to tie him up.'"



"Roualt had finished his wine, and when he could not get a waiter, went off himself to get another bottle. He shook his finger at me.

"'Wait. I'll be back in a moment.'

"I saw I should have trouble getting rid of this fellow, so I made up my mind to act at once. I rose from the table and edged my way to the piano. Since plenty of people were milling about, I felt perfectly safe. I leaned against the wall watching her play. If she noticed me, she gave no sign. Then I bent down as if I were reading the music.

"'Operation Coventry,' I said, without moving my lips. It was the countersign Security had used with her husband. I saw her fingers stiffen a moment, but she did not look at me. 'I must see you,' I whispered. She continued playing, perhaps more loudly than before, and then I heard her voice.

"'Room Eight, upstairs. Wait for me.'

"I turned nonchalantly away and lost myself in the crowd. It was easy to reach the vestibule leading to the

stairway—I had pigeonholed this detail when I first entered the Chez Louis—and then I faded into the dark passageway, and ran up the stairs. The light was dim. I had to peer closely at each door before I found Number Eight. Softly I turned the knob, automatic in hand. The door was unlocked, and I let myself inside. There was a lamp burning, and I stood for a moment, listening. No sound came but the music from below; I had not been followed. From where I stood, I examined the room carefully. There seemed nothing to cause apprehension. It was furnished in the usual style—a large bed with its canopy of mosquito netting, a bureau, sofa, chairs. Noticing a crib near the bed, I tiptoed over. A baby was fast asleep within—Pepette's child. There were a couple of doors that it seemed desirable to investigate; one led to the bathroom, the other to a closet.

"The music had ceased downstairs, and I wondered if this were an intermission. Pulling a chair into the shadow against the back wall, I sat there, facing the door, waiting for

Pepette. After a time, I heard the tap of high heels approaching along the corridor. They stopped before the door, and it opened. It was Pepette. She shut the door quickly after her, and I rose from my seat. After a swift look at her infant, she turned to me, asking:

"'Who are you? What do you want?'

"SHE gave a gasp when I explained my mission, and her face lighted up marvelously. 'I won't keep you long,' I said. 'I want to know only one thing. Do the French suspect the attack? Are they waiting for us?'

"She shook her head vigorously and gave a low, scornful laugh. 'You have little to fear from the Vichy. They are cowards. They talk loudly of fighting, but they have small stomach for it. Besides, most of the troops here are Malgache, and these are poor soldiers. No, I do not think you have much to worry about.'

"I asked her various questions about strength and disposition of forces, location of batteries, and so on. It was astonishing how much she knew, and in what detail. She had not been the

wife of an agent for nothing. What she told me confirmed the facts in possession of the High Command. I had what I wanted now. My job was done, and a good job I congratulated myself it had been.

"Now I must go down, or they will begin to wonder where I am," she said. "You must leave here at once, also."

"I wanted at least to thank her. 'Madame,' I began, 'you have been most helpful—'

"I stopped abruptly as the door swung open and Roualt stood there. He wore an ugly grin.

"What are you doing here, Captain?" said Pepette sharply. "How dare you enter without knocking?"

"Ignoring her words, Roualt stared at me. It was obvious that he'd had a lot to drink.

"WELL, Monsieur!" He bowed. "I congratulate you. You work quickly. Twenty minutes ago I introduce you to the charming Pepette, and already you are in her bedroom." He laughed loudly.

"Pepette stepped close and slapped him. 'Swine!'

"He raised his hand slowly to his cheek and looked at her, swaying slightly. I closed the door gently behind him.

"Why did you close that door?" He studied me. "You know, there is something I do not like here. Something I do not like at all."

"His glance moved back and forth between the two of us.

"Is it a little game you are playing? I do not believe after all that you are lovers. No, there is something else." He paused, and we said nothing. "You know what I think? I think you are maybe both—spies! His voice rose to a drunken shout. 'Yes, that is what you are. Sp—'

"I hit him with the butt of my automatic exactly between the eyes. He went over like an ox, and I caught him in my arms just before he hit the floor. Then I slid him easily down. Pepette watched me as I leaned over to examine him.

"He'll come to," I told her. "Give me something to tie him up, and then you must get downstairs before they begin to ask about you."

"I locked the door after her, and then I bound Roualt's arms and legs as securely as I could with the cord she had found. As a further safeguard I ripped up one of the bedsheets and reinforced the cord with that. I made a gag to fit over the man's mouth. The blood was running down his face, so I wet a piece of rag with cold water and bathed the wound. It was a nasty one, and when he woke up, he was going to have a rotten headache, but I had not crushed the bone. Going through his pockets, I removed his revolver and laid it on the bureau. In

lieu of a better place to hide the fellow, I pushed him under the bed. I cursed my luck. What the devil was I going to do with him?"

"The baby had slept through it all. It was breathing serenely, its tiny fists held up absurdly before it. I glanced at my watch—eleven-thirty. Pepette had said the orchestra would finish at midnight.

"Leaning on the sill, I gazed into the night. It was clear and still. The stars were like flowers in a black meadow. Out at sea the ships of the fleet must be moving silently into position; the men would soon be taking their battle stations. In a few hours the attack would be on. Unless I had utterly misread the signs, Majunga would be in English hands tomorrow.

"Once or twice I went over and looked at Roualt. He was breathing laboriously, and I saw his eyelids flutter a little. Soon he would be regaining consciousness. I wondered if anyone missed him downstairs.

"The music stopped at last. There was considerable scraping of chairs and feet and the buzz of voices as people took their leave. Those living in the hotel began coming upstairs. Steps sounded along the corridor and doors slammed.

"When Pepette came, I knew her footstep and unlocked the door.

"Where is he?" she asked, as soon as she was inside.

"I pointed. 'Still out cold,' I said.

"She opened the door of the closet. 'In here is better. One cannot tell who may come. There is enough air. He will not die there.'

"Her tone was hard. I asked her how long she had known Roualt.

"My husband was acquainted with him in Diego, and I knew him there. He comes to Majunga frequently—he's a French Security Officer."

"Security!" And I whistled grimly. "Lucky I nailed him."

"I got Roualt into the closet, and then I took a couple of Pepette's coats and threw them over him.

"That ought to hide him a little." I turned to Pepette. "I'm afraid you've got me on your hands," I told her. "I don't dare leave now. I've got to watch Roualt until the troops get here. Then I can let them take care of him."

"She nodded. 'He will hardly be missed till tomorrow, and there is no reason why this room should be thought of.'

"The child was stirring restlessly, and it whimpered a little in its sleep. Rocking the crib gently, Pepette soothed the baby in low tones.

"Why don't you get some sleep?" I suggested. "I'll wrap myself in this blanket over here."

"She shook her head. 'I could not possibly sleep. For a while, at least, I will sit up with you.'

"Better turn off the lamp,' I said. 'Somebody might think of asking questions.'

"I folded a couple of blankets lengthwise, and we sat next each other, our backs against the wall. For a time we said little, both of us occupied with our thoughts. And then, under the influence of the darkness or the silence or our proximity, I know not what, we began to talk, telling each other about ourselves. Her husband had been a bank clerk in Diego when they were married. 'We hated the Vichy,' she said. 'My husband was early in secret contact with your military in Mombasa. He became an agent for you, and I helped him. The work was delicate; in a small place like Diego every step you take is known. Charles began to have the conviction that the Vichy suspected something; in particular he feared this Captain Roualt. I thought it was perhaps only his imagination, but no, he was right. One night he did not return home.'

"Her voice trembled, and for a few moments she did not speak. 'They found his body on the beach,' she went on at last. 'He had been shot through the head.' She paused briefly again as though to steel herself to continue. 'It was all horrible after that—I was treated like a prisoner. They questioned me closely, but I said I could tell them nothing—my husband had gone out for a stroll, as he often did, and that was all I knew. Of course, he was on his way to meeting your agents. I think he found that someone was following him, and tried to lose him, and in the pursuit was shot. Your agents must have heard the shooting, and taken alarm. At any rate, I am sure nothing of them was discovered. The authorities announced they could discover no motive for the shooting, and had no clue as to who had done it. In a little place like Diego they had no clue!

"YVONNE, my baby, was born three months after Charles' death, and I made up my mind to get away from Diego as soon as I could. A few nights before my departure, one of your British agents came. I knew him. Charles had had him to the house secretly before. He had landed on the coast that night and was leaving again at once. He wanted to find out about Charles. His being there was hideously dangerous, because I knew I was watched constantly, but I told him what had happened, and of my plans to live in Majunga. He got safely away, thank God. I left Diego a short time after and came here.

"Charles did not leave me much; a bank clerk is not well paid. The position here with the orchestra is a blessing. It gives me my room and meals. I have enough thus to take care of my baby and myself, and even

to put a little aside. After the war, we shall leave here. I should like perhaps to go to America. There are opportunities for women there, I am told. I am still young and can do many things—I used to help Charles with his accounts at the bank, I can sew, I can play and sing. Yvonne will have a chance to go to a good school and grow up with nice children.

"You never learned who was responsible for your husband's death?"

"In the darkness I saw her look at me, and then I followed her glance.

"By Jove," I exclaimed. "You don't mean—"

"Roualt," she said intensely. "Even though I have no proof, I am sure he



"Roualt stiffened as the burst caught him. Simultaneously a British soldier lobbed a grenade into the open window."

killed Charles. He was the one my husband feared, and I think he has been watching me since I left Diego. He often comes to Majunga and the Chez Louis. Sometimes even when I have not seen him enter, I feel his glance. I loathe the man. He terrifies me. I wish that you had killed him.

"'He will be taken care of,' I told her. 'I'll hand him over to the British tomorrow, and file charges. Then we shall see.'

"'The British—tomorrow!' she repeated after me. 'How good that sounds, how good!'

"So there, in the darkness of that little room, the two of us talked and waited. We were strangers, from ten thousand miles apart, and yet—you know the feeling: it was as though we had shared a long past together, and understood each other deeply, entirely. Sometimes in this strange old world you meet someone like that. It isn't often.

"We must both have fallen asleep. I was awakened by a series of vibrations. Then I heard distant thunder from the north, one dull, heavy peal succeeding another.

"'Pepette,' I whispered, shaking her. 'It's come. The attack is on.'

"I scrambled to my feet and ran to the window. It was already light. My watch read five-fifteen.

"The cannonading increased. Pepette joined me at the window, and protected by the curtains, we peered outside. People were running out into the street, shouting to each other and pointing in the direction of the firing. At the strange noise, Yvonne awoke and began crying. 'Hush, baby,' Pepette called. 'Mother's here.'

I HEARD a scuffling in the closet, and when I opened the door, Roualt stared at me with dull eyes. He had a huge, mottled bump on his forehead.

"'You'll be all right,' I said to him coldly. I got some water, and removing the gag from his mouth, held the glass to his lips. He swallowed the water thirstily.

"'What are you going to do with me?' He spoke as though his tongue were too big for his mouth.

"'You'll see in good time,' I answered. 'Just relax and keep quiet. You've got a few hours ahead of you yet.' The boom of the guns came quite clearly, and with each concussion, the walls trembled.

"'What's that?' asked Roualt weakly.

"'The British,' I answered. 'We're taking over Majunga. You're a prisoner of war, Roualt.'

"He stared at me, and then closed his eyes.

"Excitement outside was intense. From a dozen different quarters came

the sharp notes of bugles, and groups of red-fezzed Malgache with rifles in their hands ran in a steady stream past the hotel to take their positions.

"The heavy firing from the north continued; then suddenly it broke out violently in a fresh quarter. This time it was close; you could hear the crack of rifles and the brisk chatter of machine guns.

"They're storming the harbor now," I told Pepette exultantly. "Coming at them from two directions—a pincers movement."

Now the air was filled with the drone of planes from the Fleet Air Arm, British fighters zooming over the rooftops, bombers cruising overhead, threatening Majunga with devastation from the skies.

"After that, things happened quickly. The street boiled over with fleeing soldiers—it looked as if the whole Malgache army was in rout. Our first glimpse of the British flag was atop an armored car, bristling with cannon, that rumbled menacingly down the Avenue. Then came a file of two-ton trucks, and soon after, motorcycles began whizzing by. Groups of helmeted British soldiers, in khaki shorts and shirts, appeared. They moved slowly down the Avenue, tommy-guns in their hands, alert for snipers.

"It's all over, Pepette," I cried. "I'm going down. I'll send up a squad for Roualt."

"I saw tears in her eyes. 'You're crying!'"

"She shook her head, smiling. 'It's just that I am happy. Go. Hurry. I'll wait here for you.'

"When I got to the street, I saw a staff car approaching, and I recognized the officers in it. They were of the South Lancashires.

"Welcome to Majunga," I shouted to them, raising my fingers in the Victory salute. The car pulled over, and as the officers piled out, I ran to shake their hands. In that instant there was the sound of a muffled report back of me from the Chez Louis. Then several shots rang out clear and sharp, and bullets zinged past my head. One of the officers clutched his arm. I spun about and saw Roualt leaning over the sill of the window above, a

revolver leveled in his hand. Then the bark of a tommy-gun cut the air. Roualt stiffened in a spasm of agony as the burst caught him full in the face. Simultaneously I saw a British soldier lob a grenade into the open window. I felt my insides go sick. An instant of silence and then a dull blast.

"My God!" I said. "My God!"

"I raced back to the hotel and tore up the stairs. The door was locked. I kicked through the panel, and turned the key from the inside.

"The room was filled with smoke. Yvonne was screaming, but a glance told me the child was unhurt. Roualt lay doubled limply over the sill. Then I saw Pepette. She was lying face downward on the floor. I turned her over and took her in my arms.

"Pepette," I pleaded, "Pepette—"

"I saw then that she was dead."

He paused. Then he continued slowly:

"The fragments from the bomb had not touched her. She had been shot through the head at close range."

"Roualt!" I said involuntarily.

He nodded. "It was my fault. I blame myself. I had pretty well forgotten Roualt near the end, and he must have worked himself free. His revolver was waiting for him on the bureau where I had left it. Hard to forgive myself for that." He stopped and finished his drink. "I tried to make arrangements at once to adopt Yvonne. We had an understanding brigadier who waived Army regula-

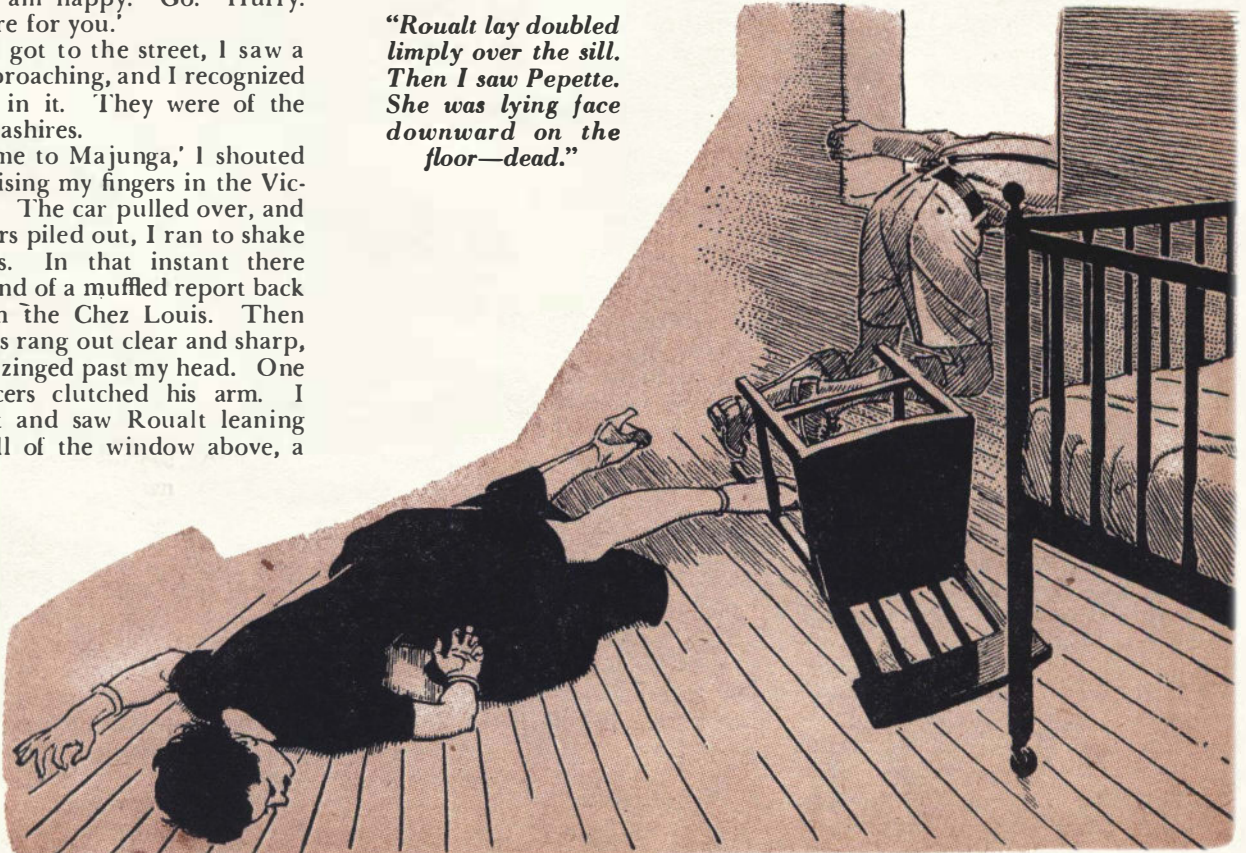
tions for me, and that was all right. But the relatives made trouble. They knew nothing about me, of course, and you can understand their objections. However, they were very poor, and when I told them Pepette and I were to have been married, I think they were relieved to escape the responsibility of the child. My biggest headache was the French laws. You can't believe how complicated the matter became. But I was determined to get Yvonne if I had to smuggle her out of the country, and in the end I won. She's my daughter legally now, and I'm taking her back to England with me. She's going to have all the things her mother wished for her. Perhaps I can make it up to Pepette a little that way."

A CHILDISH high-pitched voice reached us from the dining-room: "Daddy! Daddy! I've finished. You promised to dance."

His face softened. "Yes, Yvonne. Coming." He smiled at me. "It's extraordinary, you know, how like her mother the child is growing."

After we had said good-by, and wished each other luck, I stood at the door for a time and watched the two dance. Then I went up the stairs. My plane was taking off at four the next morning and it was high time I went to bed. As I opened the door of my room, I noticed for the first time on the panel something that glinted in the wan illumination of the hall lamp. It was the number *Eight*.

"Roualt lay doubled limply over the sill. Then I saw Pepette. She was lying face downward on the floor—dead."



Five Years *across*



IT was Christmas Day, 1929. A northwester had whistled in from Kotzebue Sound to whip icy slivers over the backs of the thirty-four hundred reindeer milling restlessly before the corrals at Nebaktulik. Through the midwinter gloom, a squat figure of a man waved his companions forward.

With shouts in Eskimo and the harsh language of their native Lapland, the drivers pushed the great herd out and started up the deer sleds. Shielding his swarthy face against the bite of the storm, Andrew Bahr said a brief farewell to Dan Crowley, field superintendent for the Lomen Reindeer Corporation, and set out after the straggling caravan, his chunky five-foot tall, two-hundred-pound body leaning into the wind. The greatest

stock drive in American history was under way. . . . Bahr was charged with driving the deer from the shores of Kotzebue Sound on Alaska's west coast to the east side of the Mackenzie River in the heart of the Canadian Arctic, a distance of more than a thousand airline miles, with awesome mountain ranges and bleak miles of untracked tundra on the route.

The story had started on May 8, 1929, when Carl J. Lomen, Alaska's reindeer king, dealt himself into the most fabulous jackpot in livestock history, one in which the final card was not to be turned for five full years. On that day the Lomen Reindeer Corporation had contracted with His Majesty George V to deliver to Canadian authorities three thousand

reindeer from the Lomen herds around Nome.

The stakes were high. The Lomens stood to get \$195,000. His Majesty would see the establishment of a never-failing food supply for his loyal Eskimo subjects, whose resources were dwindling as wolves teamed up with white hunters and trappers to cut down the wild game of the Northwest Territories. But while reindeer herds one-sixth the size had been driven successfully half the distance, no one had faced the problems of so large a movement over so many obstacles; it was an unprecedented venture.

Lomen knew the overall arrangements were safe in the hands of his field superintendent, a barrel-chested, rock-jawed Alaskan veteran and an old hand with deer and dogs. Work-

the Arctic

The epic story of a great reindeer drive

by

HERBERT C. FREEMAN



ing by plane from either end, Crowley could keep things moving, but Lomen was stuck for a chief herder who could shove men and deer over the wind-scoured wastes and hold his force together when summer thaws stopped movement.

And then heavy, stumpy-legged Andrew Bahr had come shyly into the Seattle office.

"Why don't you ask me?" he had inquired.

Lomen's ice-blue eyes snapped. Here was his answer. Born and bred a reindeer man, Bahr was one of the original Lapp herders who had come to Alaska to set the infant industry on its feet. He had joined the Lomen's in 1914 when they bought their first deer, and had only recently come "outside" to manage real-estate investments in Seattle. Now, like most old-timers, he was feeling the call of the North again, and with it, the challenge of the greatest reindeer drive in history.

Immediately, Crowley and Bahr set about assembling three thousand deer

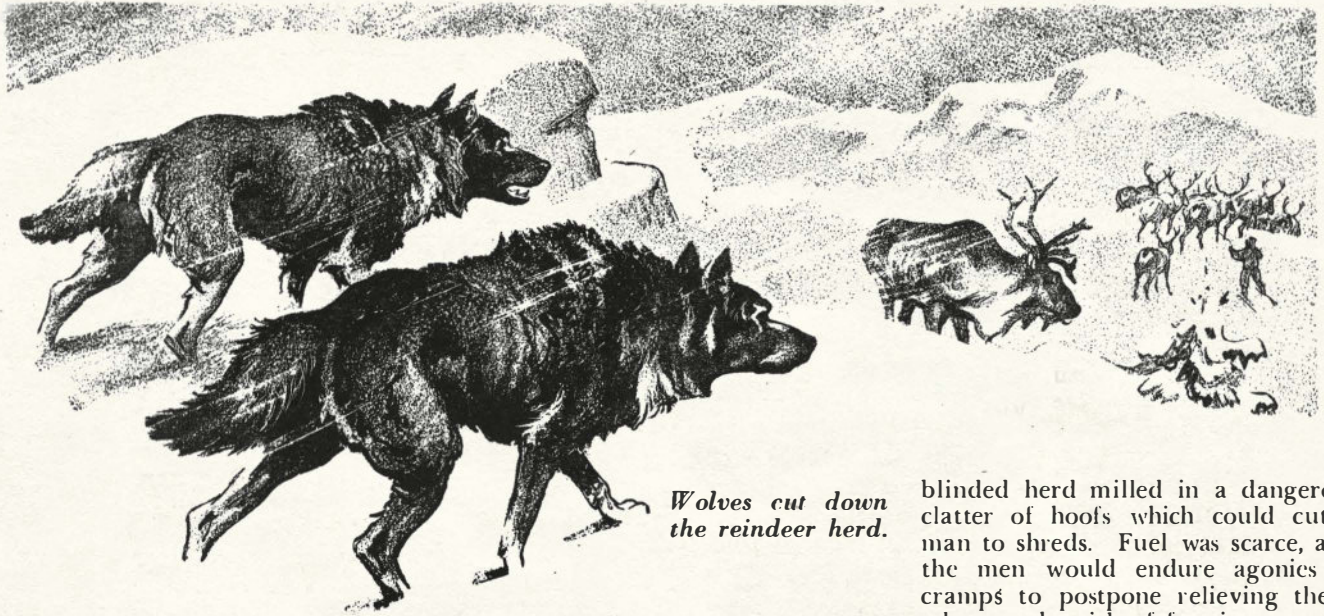
at Elephant Point and Nebaktuktulik. They were collected from every corner of the Buckland feeding grounds, range-wild and restless in the heady surge of the rutting season. And when they were assembled in a forest of clashing antlers, a blizzard flattened the corrals and scattered the herd, forcing a new round-up before the counting could begin.

By Christmas Day, Crowley could report: "We're ready!" Bahr set out under leaden clouds with ten men to drive the herd, eight reindeer dogs, a supply caravan of fifty sleds drawn by deer, and a dog-sled for communication along the line.

Heading for the Arctic, they quartered the screaming, icy northwester. Bitten by ice slivers, fur parkas heavy with matted snow, the Eskimos and Lapps pushed on across the Circle, which Bahr was not to see again for five years. Bred to the North, these men could take what it offered; but the sled deer began to fail in front of their two-hundred-pound loads.

Without supplies, the expedition was doomed. Bahr called a halt to break reliefs for the traces. When a hundred recruits had been trained, the herd struck out for the Kobuk. There, in the shadow of the jade deposits which give the river its Eskimo name, they stopped for the first season's lawning. In three months, they had covered only a hundred and fifty miles!

Soon the gentle slope of the tundra was dotted with sure-footed little lawns who scampered about and nuzzled their mothers for food. But as the ice released the swampy pools, clouds of mosquitoes hung over the herd, thick enough to sting a dog to death. Day after day, the deer milled in a maelstrom of clicking hoofs. Finally a thousand of the maddened beasts broke away to ford the river and bolt back to the relief of the salt breezes over their home ranges. Even with this loss, the lawning was so successful that another herd could be driven back to the coast, leaving a full twenty-five hundred head.



Wolves cut down the reindeer herd.

Meanwhile, Crowley was reconnoitering for a passage through the Baird Mountains to the north. Hunt River was the only pass known to trappers who had cruised the area, but it narrowed to a rock-shadowed cañon where he almost lost his life when the wings of his plane brushed the walls in a turn. The narrow defile would have been outright murder for the close-packed deer. Finally he returned to the camp on the Kobuk.

"I think you can make it up the Redstone River," he told Bahr.

And when freezing weather put a surface on the lowland bogs, Bahr did make it up the wide reaches of the Redstone. The expedition was living off the country now. The men ate ptarmigan, rabbits and caribou. Occasionally a crippled deer was put out of its misery, or a wolf-kill butchered for the pot. Even in strange territory, the deer, with uncanny instinct, pawed through the snow at exactly the right points to find the reindeer moss which is their winter diet.

TEN to twelve miles a day was considered good, for much time went into making and breaking a camp which would stand up against the Arctic weather. The two-walled tents had to be braced against the wind, and each morning all the equipment had to be beaten clean of snow and dried before folding, so that it would not freeze and crack when reopened.

Every day the men gathered what scraps of wood and brush they encountered for the nightly fires. These were only secondarily for cooking. A man can live on raw meat, but sweaty clothing will soon destroy him at Arctic temperatures. And sweat the men must, for they could not set their own pace as they raced to head strays back into the herd. Each night, to survive, they had to dry their fur garments and the hay padding of the curious Lapp

boots with the turned-up toes and non-skid fur soles.

From the Bairds, Bahr pressed on to the forbidding Brooks Range, last barrier before the desolation of the Arctic Slope. Here they drove through Howard Pass, where the funneled wind roared down from the polar icecap with such fury that the herders had to put their shoulders under the rumps of the weaker deer and literally push them through.

On the Slope, exposed to whatever cold might pour down from the Pole, the temperature was fifty below. The condensed breath of the deer hung over the herd in a dense cloud of steam. Each morning the drivers had to break ice from the nostrils and eyelids of their sled deer, while the

blinded herd milled in a dangerous clatter of hoofs which could cut a man to shreds. Fuel was scarce, and the men would endure agonies of cramps to postpone relieving themselves at the risk of freezing exposed sex organs in the inhuman cold.

By March, food was low. Bahr had had no contact with Crowley for months, and the Lomens had posted a standing offer of \$250 for a message from him. It was collected by bush pilot Joe Crosson, who was later to bring out the bodies of Will Rogers and Wiley Post. Crosson caught sight of the sprawling expedition while flying diphtheria serum to Barrow. On the return trip, he landed and waited impatiently, motor running to prevent freezing, while Bahr laboriously scrawled a few words requesting food.

When Crosson delivered the note, Crowley jumped from a sickbed to round up a thousand pounds of food and fly with him while he delivered it at one dollar a pound. With such a load, gas was limited. Landmarks were non-existent on the snow-masked Slope, and it was at the extreme limit of their fuel that the pair found the mile-wide avenue of tracks which led to the speck made by the herd on that infinite white expanse.

Resupplied, comforted by the candy, oranges and other luxuries Crowley had slipped in with the flour, sugar and beans, the men followed Bahr north with new confidence. But the work grew harder. As sled dogs fell, herd dogs had to be put in the traces, increasing the distance the men had to cover on foot or on their stubby skis. And the Slope is caribou country. Reindeer will wander off with their wild cousins, and so Bahr had to detail guards with binoculars and rifles to head off migrating caribou which might have rolled over the reindeer by the thousands and swallowed up the whole herd. Small bands of caribou were welcome. The males were shot for food, and the females allowed to mingle with the deer, adding to the number of the herd.

There was no wood to be found on the Slope. The men's clothes, stiffen-



"I think you can make it."

ing with sweat, were beginning to lose their insulating qualities when one of the Lapps skied triumphantly into camp with news of a bonanza more valuable than gold. On the banks of the Etivluk River he had found coal, so close to the surface the wind had swept it bare, so soft it would burn without kindling.

The warm fires of the Etivluk gave them courage for the two hundred miles to the coast which must be covered if the summer thaw was not to trap them in the middle of the pools and bogs of the Slope. On the coast were driftwood for fires, and trading posts for supplies.

But there again disaster struck. The great herd exhausted the food. Sleds had to be cached, sled deer loaded with packs, and a desperate drive made through the swamps. Rolling, ever-present fog blinded men and animals. Ivar West, driving pack deer with the other Lapps, was lost for ten days, to come in muttering deliriously of his adventures in the mosquito-ridden, foodless bogs.

Now Bahr was hard-pressed to hold his expedition together. The four Lapp herders were beginning to question his authority. Bad blood was beginning to develop between the Lapps and the six Eskimos. Disheartened, many of the original herders quit. Eskimos recruited locally to replace them were only partly satisfactory, and they too stayed only for short periods.

Then Crowley flew in the wives of Peter and Tommy Wood, Eskimo brothers who had been with the drive since its start. That helped. Just the sound of women's voices in camp made life seem better, and the women fell to and sewed new parkas and pants, mukluks and sleeping-bags to replace the ragged equipment of all the men.

FROM then on, the months dragged in an endless monotony of fighting for fuel, for food, for preservation of the herd, stopping in the summer, moving in the winter from one river bottom to another where driftwood could be found. Dependent on their own resources, the herders trapped the sly little white Arctic foxes to exchange for food at occasional trading posts.

Finally, in April, 1933, they saw the sullen flow of the Mackenzie. Exuberant, Bahr tried a crossing at its junction with the Blue River, only to find the dense willows along the bank too much of an obstacle for the deer. Clearing a trail for such a horde was impossible. The contract called for delivery on the east side of the river, so another year was lost.

Crowley joined the group in the Mackenzie valley. The only route, he decided, was down to the mouth of the river and around on the open ice.

It seemed a short distance. Three months should see it done.

With the trip so nearly finished, the Wood boys decided they had done their part. Their wives were sick. In addition to the normal rigors of the trip, they had given birth to three babies there in the shadow of the Pole. With only a three months' drive ahead, Crowley sent them back to their homes, with his thanks for their faithfulness since the start.

Three Lapp herders, fresh from the Old Country to help establish the Mackenzie River station, joined Bahr then. They were a picturesque lot, with the odd four-cornered hats which had earned the race the Eskimo name of "card people" from the resemblance to the headgear on the court cards in the old-fashioned decks sold in the trading posts. More important, they knew reindeer, for now, of the original herders, there remained only Bahr and Edwin Allen, an Eskimo.

BY December of 1933, the little army was ready to march. From the 7th to the 24th, their old bugaboo the blizzard pinned them down. Then a quick round-up, and the trip started. For two whole days and a night they plodded over the open ice. On the second evening the exhausted men stopped to brew a cup of tea in the lee of a barren little island. The animals turned their tails to the wind and bolted for the shore, where they knew they could paw down to the moss.

The men leaped up, strapped on their skis and dashed frantically after the herd in a desperate race to pass and head it back into the wind. But the animals, terrified by their shouting pursuers, dashed for the shelter of the shore.

Men and animals piled along the low dunes of the Arctic Ocean, exhausted and scattered. It would be impossible to reassemble for another drive before the ice pack shifted and broke. Another year was lost.

For the final drive, Crowley planned well. A trail was staked across the ice, with food and moss cached the length of the route. The start was delayed until February, when the weather might be more settled.

Finally, Bahr led his men out onto the ice. Warily the deer trotted over the slippery footing. And then the blizzard struck again, turning the herd with its fury.

This time, the men moved cautiously. Skiing along with the animals, checking them, soothing them in their panic, they held them together in a great straggling three-mile line. When the storm had blown itself down into the barrens, they set out again on the easy going of the wind-hammered snow.

For three days and nights they pressed on. Fawns tottered and fell



Born and bred a reindeer man.

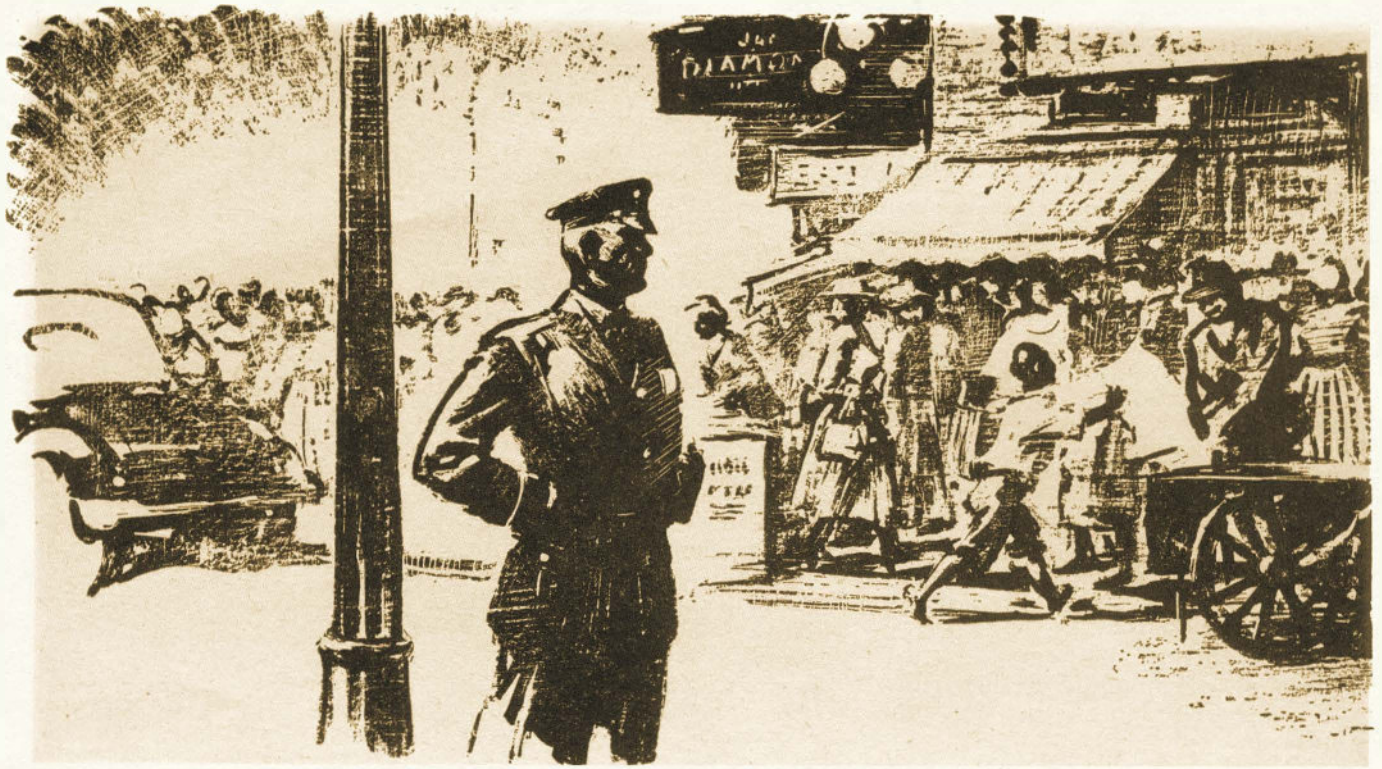
as they reached the limit of their endurance. "We'll carry them in!" Bahr shouted over the screech of the wind.

And so they went, carrying the weak, urging the strong. On the third day they saw the bulk of Richards Island looming white above the endless ice. The deer sensed that here was moss and shelter and relief from the rigors of the open ice. Wearily they broke into a weak gallop, and surged on to the shores of the island.

The battle was won. A channel only a few miles wide separated Richards Island from the mainland where delivery was to be made. A week's rest, and men and deer were ready to drive in.

Over five years from the start of the drive, 2,370 deer poured into the Canadian corrals at Killigazit. There were caribou does, but the Canadians refused to tally these. As the animals were checked through the chutes, an amazing fact developed. Of the deer, only ten per cent showed the earmarks of the original herd. Replacing those which had died, strayed or fallen to wolves, all the others had been born on the 2,500-mile wanderings necessary to cross the barriers on the route. And within a few weeks, a new fawning had raised the number above the three thousand agreed upon. . . .

History had been made. All profit for the Lomens had been lost in the unforeseeable expense of the trip which had been expected to take only two years. But Crowley had delivered the reindeer. And with the stubborn loyalty to employer and deer alike which had caused Carl Lomen to trust the expedition to him, the same Andrew Bahr who had trouble scratching a twenty-five-word note had scribed across the Slope an epic of the North which will live as long as men talk of the rugged souls who beat the Arctic on its own ground.



I Don't Want to Be

JOE EARL SLOANE was feeling good inside, like there was a big bird singing clear down to his toes. He watched the people swinging past him: not talking to them, but listening. You can learn a lot if you listen. You can tell if people are happy or sad. You can tell if they are going to eat fried chicken or salt meat tomorrow. At least, you can tell it on Beale Street. If a colored man feels chipper, he is bound to sing or shout a little. If he feels low, he wants to moan.

Joe Earl was standing in front of the Palace Theater, staring across at the place where Peewee used to have his famous saloon, and he remembered his father telling him:

"Why, son, it was right over there that Mister W. C. Handy wrote 'The St. Louis Blues.' Wrote it on a piece of paper wrapped around a cigar box."

Joe Earl was standing there thinking about his old man, wishing that he had not died of pneumonia while Joe was still in Italy; wishing that his daddy had lived to see him become one of the first Negro policemen on Beale Street.

"A colored cop in Memphis?"

Old Man Sloane sure would have laughed, not believing it at first. But he would have been proud. He would

have been prouder than he was the first day that Joe Earl had returned on leave from the Army, wearing a fighter pilot's wings; or prouder even than the night that Joe got his diploma at LeMoyné College. He would have said: "Lordy, Joe, you don't know how far you come!"

But Joe Earl Sloane knew, all right. He knew it every minute of every night and every day. He knew it every time that he looked another colored man in the face. The people around him spotted the black shoes first, then the uniform; and Joe Earl could see the wonder in their eyes when they found that his flesh was brown. A Negro cop? What funny doings was this? Colored folk had no dealings with cops on Beale Street. If you saw a Negro talking to a policeman, it meant one of two things: He was a stool-piggon, or he was getting ready for a hot-wagon ride.

Negroes liked the idea at first; especially the country visitors from Arkansas or Mississippi who gathered on Beale's broad sidewalks between Second Street and Hernando, who came to town every Saturday afternoon to buy in the cramped and dusty department stores. Joe Earl could see a smile near the edge of their lips. Then they would think about it, listen to

the tick inside their heads, and the smile never emerged into the open. Joe Earl knew they were asking:

"What kind of cop will he be? Will it change him? Make him different from us? That's what I want to know."

Joe Earl wanted to tell them:

"Okay, I'm a policeman. But I was just like you once. When I was a boy, I was a cotton-chopper. I'll do my job right. You behave, and you don't need to fret. There'll be no favors, though. I ain't going to hate you, and I ain't going to love you because of the color of my skin."

Joe Earl wanted to say this, to shout it out, but he kept his mouth closed. He was the Law and the Law had to be aloof; had to be dignified. Joe knew it would take a long time for some of his people to understand him, but that was all right. He had the rest of his life.

Joe was still feeling all full of music when a tall man named Wrong Number grabbed him by the arm. There was no other name for him. That's the way it goes on Beale Street. Everybody called him Wrong Number, and nobody worried about calling him anything else. Seems like, a long time ago, he was shooting craps one night and the Law knocked on the door.



a Hero

ONE OF THE FIRST COLORED POLICEMEN IN MEMPHIS,
HE JUST HAD TO MAKE GOOD—FOR HIS OWN SAKE, AND
THAT OF HIS PEOPLE

by ROBERT RICHARDS

The Law said: "You're going to the penal farm this time." He ran for a window and yelled: "Not me, boss. You got the wrong number."

"Joe Earl," he said, "you sure got to know something."

"Like what?"

"Like where is Pistol Jake. If you knew, what you do?"

JOE EARL suspected that Wrong Number was baiting him. He was having himself a time, laughing inside. Wrong Number was a kidder. He was a funny man with no smile to cushion his humor. He used words like some small boys use rocks. Wrong Number liked to hurt people, to make them look ridiculous. What was it that Lieutenant Graham had said? "Don't let them make you a laughing-stock. You can be ruined forever on Beale Street, Joe Earl, if they laugh too much." Joe looked at Wrong Number, tried to reach the secret behind his eyes, but there was no way to get at the truth. Was this a joke?

"Tell me where Pistol is," he said.

Wrong Number was a nervous man with a squint in his left eye. He kept looking over his shoulder and chewing at his lower lip.

"I seen him," he said. "He was on the other side of the street. I ain't

made no error, because I know Pistol well, known him for thirty years. I seen him hustling along, like he owned half this town and could sleep in red pajamas every night. He look me straight in the eye and he say: 'What you know, Wrong Number?'"

"How long ago?"

"Maybe fifteen minutes. I seen you right after I was talking to him, but I was afraid to come too fast. You know that Pistol. He would be up the side of my head before I could touch my nose."

"Where you think he's going?"

"Don't know," Wrong Number admitted. "Might be he's hankering after some hard-shelled crabs, dipped in red pepper. He's a man that loves them crabs. But I don't figure it like that."

"What you think?"

"I think he's gone to the La Belle. They got a horse opera. They got a double feature. That Pistol is sure a fool about a Wild West show."

"That's right," Joe Earl said. "I know that much about him."

"What you aim to do, Joe Earl?"

"I aim to get him." . . .

Pistol Jake had been a story around Beale Street almost as long as Joe Earl Sloane could remember. Pistol had served time in the State prison at

Nashville more than once, but he wasn't a mean-natured man, not when Joe Earl was growing up. Joe could remember how Pistol used to pick a guitar at the Baptist Church picnics and swagger around in a honey-colored vest. He was a teasing man and a loud-talking man, but Joe had never known him to damage anybody. Then later something happened to turn him bad all the way. Maybe it was something that was in him all the time, down at the bottom of the stack, and it just took age to pull it to the top.

Seems like Pistol got a yearning in him every time that he passed a liquor package store. He had put the gun on about fifteen stores in the past year. He had killed a man on Hernando, shot him smack between the eyes with a German automatic. The man had accidentally bumped into Pistol after a holdup, when Pistol was running to his car.

The last time out, Pistol was extra mean. Not just an I-got-me-a-head-ache meanness, but a brutal meanness. Pistol had unscrewed the cap from a pint of bourbon and he told the man behind the cash register:

"You drink it. And I mean drink it all."

The man had to swallow the whisky without pausing. He almost died be-



Something told Joe Earl that the manager was a coward. Joe knew he could force the man to do as he wanted. "Where is Pistol Jake?"

fore they could turn him inside-out with a stomach pump.

Pistol Jake was still appreciated in some quarters on Beale Street, even after that. He could pick a guitar better than any colored man north of the Mississippi State line, if he had a mind to. He was always making up songs like the "Quick Scratch Jive" or "Shake Your Hips, Honey. I Got Spots in Front of My Eyes." Seems like there were times (when he wasn't being pushed by the Law) that Pistol wasn't mean at all.

JOE EARL crossed Beale and left Wrong Number staring after him, muttering to himself. If this wasn't a joke, there was no telling why Wrong Number had ratted on Pistol Jake. Joe thought it might have something to do with a woman. That Pistol was a great hand to play around with another man's woman. He was gray-haired and he was getting on, but he was plenty alive. Joe started walking toward the La Belle. It was only three blocks away. He could see its neon sign blinking in the evening dusk. He thought:

There is no call for you to do this alone, Joe Earl. You sure know what Lieutenant Graham told you. "Don't try to be a hero if you can avoid it," the lieutenant said. "We buried most of our heroes a long time ago."

Joe could call the station-house and they would put an emergency signal on the short-wave radio. They would send a squad car hopping to help him. Luther Blaylock and Johnnie Alright, both Negro rookies, would come in a jiffy. Others would come too, when they heard who it was. Inspector Jim Lang would be there with his sawed-

off shotgun. Mister Brill Danvers would come with his submachine gun.

They would destroy Pistol before he could pull a weapon from his pocket, but that was just fine with Joe Earl. Pistol Jake was a blood-letting man who deserved to die. But what if Pistol was not at the La Belle? What if he was still hiding in some friendly cabin over in Arkansas? What if Wrong Number was making himself a joke, and most of Beale Street knew about it already? Most everybody—even the kids—would be watching, waiting for Joe Earl Sloane to stumble.

"Don't be a laughingstock," Mr. Graham had said. "Whatever else you do, Joe Earl, don't get them to laughing at you."

And there was another thought inside Joe, egging him on:

If you do it by yourself, if you take Pistol Jake alive, without hurting him, then Sarah Mae will be impressed. She might not listen to her daddy any more.

Sarah Mae was Joe Earl's girl. That is, she was his girl before the war and during the war. They had started going together at Booker T. Washington High School and they had kept it up while Joe was in college. Sarah Mae's daddy was David Daniel Dubois, one of the most successful insurance salesmen on Beale Street. He was a gentle man, gentle and generous. Dubois was proud of Joe Earl when the youth came visiting in his second lieutenant's uniform. He would get Joe out on the screened porch and say: "Now don't you fret about the future, Joe Earl. You got nothing to worry about. I'm taking you under my wing after the war." Joe Earl always answered: "Yes sir, Mister Dubois." He

didn't say it meaning that he would enter the insurance business, or anything like that. He just said it to be polite. After all, it was Sarah Mae's daddy, and Joe didn't want to make him sore.

The Army awarded Joe Earl the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with four oak-leaf clusters. He had shot down three German planes, with two others as probables. When he returned home, there were speeches and a king-sized parade. He was Beale Street's leading war hero.

"Now is the time to come with me," Dubois said. "There'll never be another time like the present, Joe."

But Joe Earl didn't want to sell insurance. It was a good work to be doing. He knew that. It was a fine work, but it just wasn't cut to his pattern. Joe had read about how they were going to try Negro policemen on Beale for the first time, and he knew that it was what he wanted to do. He wanted to do it more than anything else.

"You have been bit by the hero bug," Dubois said, and his voice was sad. He thought a lot of Joe Earl. "You can't be a hero for always, Joe. Don't let the spotlight blind you. Why, you know what that job might do to you? It might brutalize you. Teach you to go around pounding people with a club."

"Not if I'm a good policeman," Joe Earl said.

He did not try to argue with the older man, because Dubois was too smart. Joe Earl knew that he could talk and talk, but Mister Dubois would just catch the words and bounce them back at him twice as strong. Joe knew that he felt something inside him, something mighty close to a bugle call—and he had to do what it told him. He had to go.

"I won't change," he said. "I'll be the same."

But Sarah Mae believed her daddy. She didn't kiss Joe Earl good-night when he left. He could hear her crying as he passed through the door. He knew that he wouldn't be coming back for a long time. Perhaps he would never return at all.

It was no laughing matter to walk away from a girl like Sarah Mae. To Joe Earl, it was like taking a knife and cutting his finger to the bone. It was like being bitten by a Black Widow spider and maybe knowing that he had to die. He had the same hopeless feeling inside him. Joe felt as if he had stopped breathing, right there, and that his heart wouldn't push his blood any more. Joe Earl knew why he was doing it, but he couldn't put it into words. He couldn't spell it out in black and white. It had something to do with his old man, and the sourness of the

slum neighborhood they had shared on Florida Street. It had something to do with the fact that his mother had died of tuberculosis when he was three years old. It was a part of moving forward, getting along, and taking other people with you.

Even now, Joe Earl could remember Inspector Barney King's cold blue eyes and hear the qucer flatness of his voice: "You're carrying a lot of bricks in your basket," Mr. King had told the graduates at the police academy. "Some people would like to see you fail, you know. Even some people on Beale Street."

Joe Earl sure knew it, and he knew that the first Negro policemen had to be the best policemen—there could be no second best. He knew that it was a job for a man who had been to college and who had been to war. Joe Earl Sloane had known both places, so he had to do it—that's all.

JOE walked up and bought a ticket at the La Belle. The ticket girl looked him over, and there was fright in her eyes.

"Listen," Joe said. "You just sit tight and sell tickets. Don't you run back into the movie show."

The girl's face told Joe Earl that Wrong Number was not joking. This was the real thing. Pistol Jake was inside watching the cowboys. Joe still had time to make a telephone call from the theater lobby. There was a pay station on the wall. He saw the manager watching him, twisting his hands together, wringing them out as if he held a wet towel. Joe knew the manager was aching to run and warn Pistol. He knew that Pistol would be gone, high-tailing it through a side exit, before he could even dial the "O" for operator.

Joe Earl suddenly felt a cold wind blowing against his heart. It had never been any worse during the war, up there in the sky in a P-51. It had never been rougher even when the Kraut fighters found his tail. He had been trained for that: he knew how to handle it. He was trained for this too, but it was the first time. Would he know what to do? The theater was a shadowy place—filled with strange noises—and, for all Joe knew, Pistol Jake was already waiting for him with a weapon in his hand. Pistol had all the advantages, if anyone had slipped inside to warn him. If he didn't want to run for it, he could just remain seated and wait for Joe Earl to walk down the aisle. The bandit was accustomed to the darkness. Joe Earl would be as blind as a newborn kitten. Pistol could fire at least twice before Joe could locate the flashes.

Something told Joe Earl that the manager was a coward. It was in his uneasy hands and in his mobile face.

Joe knew that he could force the man to do as he wanted. He pulled his revolver and pointed it at the manager's stomach.

"Where is he?"

"Where is who?"

"Pistol Jake."

The manager swallowed and started to say that he knew nothing at all about anyone named Pistol Jake, but then he stared again at Joe's thirty-eight special. It was level with his belt buckle. He looked and he trembled.

"He's in there."

"How long has he been in there?"

"Thirty minutes. Maybe not so long."

"Is the movie nearly over?"

"First one is almost gone, but it's a double feature."

That was bad. Joe Earl had hoped the program might be near the end. He wanted the bright lights thrown on. He wanted to walk in on Pistol Jake when both of them were blinded. Joe wanted to catch Pistol when most of the audience was pushing and shoving to leave the theater. He knew that Pistol, a late-comer, would be sitting there trying to protect his toes from the departing customers. Joe Earl started to order the manager to flip on the lights, but then he realized it would be a clear tip-off to Pistol Jake. Pistol wouldn't be able to see,

but he might have cunning enough to fall flat to the floor. He would still get the first shot, and Pistol was accurate with a gun. There was no other way to do it. Joe Earl had to take his chances and enter the darkness.

"Where is he seated?"

"Don't know," the manager said.

"Who does know?"

"Reckon my usher might. If Pistol is here, I reckon David gave him the seat."

Joe Earl and the manager found David, a seventeen-year-old, leaning against the wall watching the movie. He was almost as frightened as his boss. He couldn't take his eyes off the revolver.

"Pistol Jake? I reckon it's him. Sure looked like him."

"Take your bright light and lead me," Joe said. "You take me straight to Pistol Jake, you hear? Don't you try to signal him, and don't you turn and run. If I sit down, you just put out your light and walk away natural."

"I'll do it," David said. "I know right where Mr. Pistol is sitting if he ain't moved."

Moved? Joe Earl had not thought of that, but it was a reasonable thing to expect. A hunted man like Pistol might shift his position two or three times during a double feature.



"Joe Earl," Wrong Number said, "you sure got to know something."

The boy took his flashlight, and the two walked toward the screen. Joe Earl didn't like leaving the manager behind, but he couldn't watch two men at once—and he would have to watch Pistol Jake. There weren't many persons in the theater. The flashlight stopped at a near-empty row of seats, and David motioned with his hand. Joe's eyes were almost accustomed to the darkness and he saw the little man sitting all hunched up, one leg half-curved beneath him. He was eating popcorn from a paper sack, and he had eyes for nothing but the film. Pistol was watching one cowboy creep up on another in the Arizona sagebrush. He was watching, chewing, mesmerized by a celluloid dream.

JOE EARL was surprised. He had thought that Pistol Jake would be a watchful man, with ears as sensitive as a good rabbit-dog's. He had believed that Pistol was the type of man who could not be surprised, or taken from behind. Joe had told himself from the start that he would have to walk right in and fight it out. He nodded for David to leave him—to get out of the way. Joe Earl slipped into a vacant seat beside Pistol and placed his thirty-eight against the little man's head. Pistol Jake shivered all over, and he kind of sighed—and Joe knew that this was the moment that Pistol had waited for ever since that hot afternoon when he had shot a man on Hernando Street. It was the thing that Pistol had dreamed about, even while safely sheltered in Arkansas. Maybe it had set him to yelling at night.

It was like touching a squirrel that you have wounded, feeling the final desperate beat of the pulse inside the thing that is about to die. Joe Earl told himself: *I know now what they mean about its making you brutal. I can see how it might make a man feel as powerful as a king, or like a hero, but I ain't going to feel that way. I'm going to remember that this Pistol is a human being, like me—but I got to do my job.*

"Don't try nothing," Joe Earl said. "This is the Law."

"The Law?" Pistol Jake spoke low, but Joe could hear the surprise in his voice. "You don't talk like the Law."

Joe Earl reached inside Pistol's coat and took away the pearl-handled gun. There was a razor-edged knife in the left-hand pocket. Pistol got a good look at Joe, and he nearly fell from his seat.

"You're like me," he said. "You're a colored man."

"I am," Joe Earl replied, "but I'm the Law."

"Lordy," said Pistol. "A colored Law? I sure didn't know about that yet. I been over in Arkansas."

"Maybe you should have stayed," Joe Earl said.

"It'll be that Big Chair this time," Pistol said. "You know that? They claim I killed a man."

"You shot him, didn't you?"

Pistol shook his head slowly, wagging it from side to side like a flag.

"I did," he admitted, "but it ain't like I was planning to do. I wasn't even thinking about that man. Until yet, I don't know his name. I didn't even see him. I was running away

from this store and he pops into me. I done pulled the trigger before I thought."

"Come on, Pistol," said Joe Earl, almost whispering because people around them were beginning to turn and stare. "We got to go."

"Listen," said Pistol, "this is a mighty fine movie. Ain't seen one in a long time. Over there in Arkansas I sure got me a burning to see a movie. How about letting me stay? I'll sit here quiet, and I'll sit here good. Just until the end of the first one."

Joe Earl remembered the Baptist Church picnics, and he remembered this little man picking at his guitar. Hernando Street was a long way off in those days. A million miles away. And so was the Big Chair. There was nothing but chuckles and green grass—and the sweetness of the guitar.

"All right," Joe Earl agreed, "but no funny stuff."

They sat there together, as quiet as two lovers, until the good cowboy had trapped the bad cowboy. But Pistol Jake could not keep his mind completely on the movie show.

"Colored cop," he muttered. "What d'you know about that? Why, when I was just a mite, I wanted to be a cop. I talk about it all the time, and my mamma she laugh. She said: 'You can't be no cop, and you know it, boy.' I knew it. I knew it as well as I'll ever know anything. How come you're one, son? How come they let you be a cop?"

"I passed the tests," Joe Earl said.

"Tests?" Pistol Jake shook his head again. "Well, what d'you know?"

THE bad cowboy was tied to a tree but he managed to get his hands untied, with the help of his horse, and he was trying to push the good cowboy from a cliff. Joe Earl got excited himself, watching it. He almost forgot to keep an eye on his prisoner.

"I never thought I would go this way," Pistol said. "I used to lay around at night and dream about it. I figured they might send a sheriff after me—a big fat sheriff. I figured me and this sheriff would fight it out in the middle of Beale Street. I figured I would shoot him for sure before they dragged me down. I'm too good a man, son, to be caught like this. Folks are sure going to laugh when they hear I was nabbed in a movie show."

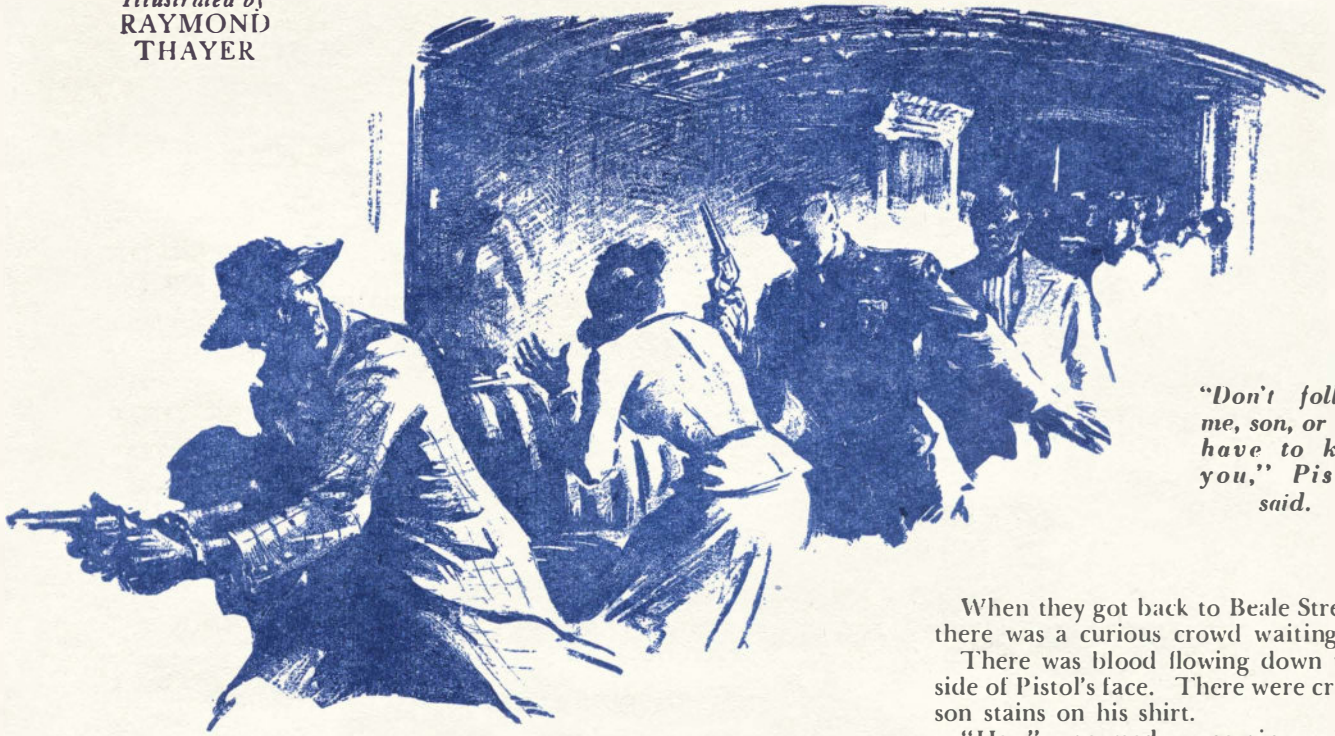
The good cowboy slipped to one side. He swung out with his fist, and it popped against the bad cowboy's jaw. The bad man's knees were limp and he turned in a slow circle—facing the camera at least twice—before he plunged to the rocks below.

"Served him right," Pistol said. "He was sure a no-good so-and-so."

"Sure," answered Joe Earl, "but it's over now. We got to go."



"I'm a policeman. But when I was a boy, I was a cotton-chopper. There'll be no favors, though."



"Don't follow me, son, or I'll have to kill you," Pistol said.

Joe slipped the steel cuffs over both the little man's wrists. He heard the firm click. They got up together and started out. Joe gripped Pistol by the elbow and few people in the theater appeared to notice that he wore a policeman's uniform or that he carried a gun. Joe kept the weapon close to his side.

They returned to the lobby, out into the light again, and Joe Earl noticed the girl ticket-seller seated in one of the several plush chairs, as if she were resting after time out for supper. The manager came walking up, trying to say something, and Joe forgot about the girl. That was his mistake. She ran across the narrow distance that separated them and leaped at him before Joe could attempt to dodge her. The girl rammed into him with all her force, knocking him off balance, and she flipped a gun to Pistol Jake.

"Run for it," she yelled.

"Don't follow me, son, or I'll have to kill you," Pistol said.

Gripping his weapon with both hands, he raced through the theater's front doors.

By the time Joe Earl was back on even keel again, it was too late to fire. There were too many innocent bystanders walking past or pausing to stare at the film advertisements.

Joe cursed himself for forgetting that Pistol Jake had a way with girls. There was always one around to love him, or to fight for him.

Joe ran outside, and he saw Pistol crossing the street, sidestepping cars at a half-gallop. Pistol ran into an alley, next to a bakery that was closed for the night. Joe Earl thought:

He might shoot me, just like he said, but I got to get him now. If I don't arrest him quick, his friends will get him away. They'll file off the handcuffs and mail me back the pieces. I'll sure be a laughingstock.

When Joe Earl reached the alley's mouth, he felt the wind of a bullet as it passed his head. He heard the sound of its whine.

"You can't stop me, Pistol," he shouted. "I'm coming."

Pistol was running hard, but it was difficult for him to see. He kept stumbling and falling in the dark. His cuffed hands made it almost impossible for him to get back on his feet very quickly.

Joe Earl had long and knowing legs: they were educated at track in college. It was only a matter of minutes before he closed in on the little man. They were but a few feet apart when Pistol went down again. This time he whirled over on his back and fired twice. Both shots fanned the wind around Joe's right ear, but he kept coming. He could have killed Pistol without any trouble, without bothering to aim. The holdup man was an excellent target. But Joe Earl remembered in the far corners of his mind, how tough it had been for boys who had grown up on Florida Street, and how wonderful it had seemed to hear the man in the honey-colored vest picking at his guitar. Joe pulled a blackjack from his pocket and let fly. It caught Pistol Jake on the side of the head and he dropped his gun, but he was not unconscious. He lay there staring up at Joe Earl.

"I sure ain't dreaming," he said. "It's a colored cop." . . .

When they got back to Beale Street, there was a curious crowd waiting.

There was blood flowing down the side of Pistol's face. There were crimson stains on his shirt.

"Hey," screamed a sneering voice. "Look how our hero beat up the little guy."

Joe Earl knew who did the yelling. It was Wrong Number, having himself another joke.

Joe saw David Dubois in the crowd. More important, he saw Sarah Mae.

Mr. Dubois shook his head glumly. "You see what I mean, Joe Earl?" he asked. "See how ugly you had to get?"

Pistol Jake spoke up, quick and proud.

"We fought it out, fair and square," he said. "This here cop didn't brutalize me."

Then reaching across, he squeezed Joe Earl's arm.

"Let me do the talking," he whispered. "Hell, you'll be a hero, son."

OTHER policemen pushed through the onlookers and they took the handcuffs off Pistol Jake. They locked him inside the waiting wagon. Inspector Graham slapped Joe on the back, and he kept saying: "Why, if it had been me, down here by myself, I couldn't have done better."

Sarah Mae left her daddy, slipped away and ran up to take Joe Earl's hand.

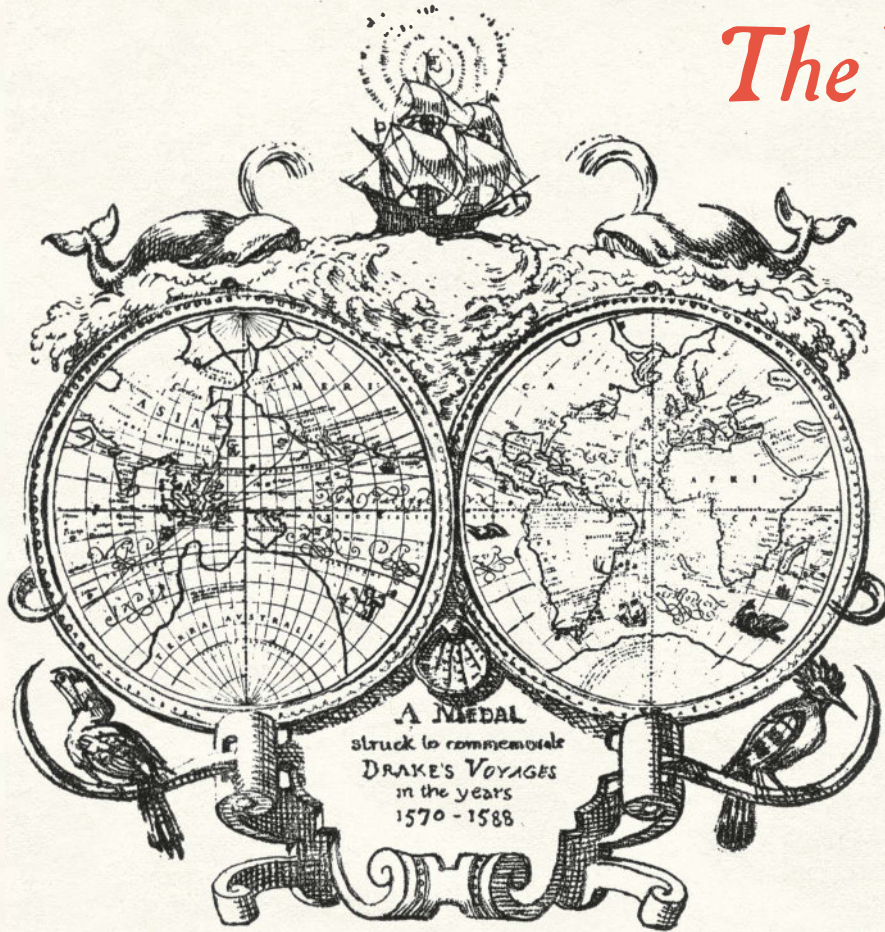
"I don't care what anybody tries to tell me," she said. "You'll always be a hero, Joe."

Joe Earl swelled up inside, fit to bust, but it quieted him down when he saw Pistol Jake waving good-by through the rear bars of the wagon. And he thought about the Big Chair.

"No," Joe said. "Tell me something else, Sarah Mae. Tell me that you love me."

He didn't want to be a hero. He wanted to be a husband.

The VOYAGE



A Faithfull History of the Great Voyage of Circumnavigation, Undertaken by Sir Francis Drake in the Year of Our Lord 1577

(Sir Francis Drake, with five little ships had crossed the Atlantic, had explored the coast of South America to the Straits of Magellan and then voyaged northward as far as what is now California, capturing treasure-laden Spanish ships along the way. Storm and mutiny had taken heavy toll; and now with only his own ship left, he has set out homeward across the Pacific. . . . Not until 1936 was the brass plate which Drake left to record his visit, rediscovered on the shore of San Francisco Bay.)

FROM these islands, presently upon the discovery of us, came a great number of canoes, having in each of them in some four, in some six, in some fourteen or fifteen men, bringing with them cocoas, fish, potatoes, and certain fruits to small purpose. Their canoes were made after the fashion that the canoes of all the rest of the Islands of Moluccas for the most are, that is, of one tree, hollowed within with great art and cunning, being made so smooth, both within and without, that they bore a gloss as if it were a harness most finely burnished.

A prow and stern they had of one fashion, yielding inward in manner of a semicircle, of a great height, and hung full of certain white and glistening shells for bravery: on each side of their canoes lay out two pieces of timber, about a yard and a half long, more or less according to the capacity of their boat. At the end whereof was fastened crosswise a great cane, the use whereof was to keep their canoes from overthrowing.

The people themselves have the nether parts of their ears cut round or circle-wise, hanging down very low upon their cheeks, wherein they hang things of a reasonable weight. The nails on the fingers of some of them were at least an inch long, and their teeth as black as pitch, the colour whereof they use to renew by often eating of an herb, with a kind of powder, which in a cane they carry about them to the same purpose. The first sort and company of those canoes being come to our ship (which then, by reason of a scant wind, made little way) very subtilly and against their natures began in peace to traffic with us,

giving us one thing for another very orderly, intending (as we perceived) hereby to work a greater mischief to us; entreating us by signs most earnestly to draw nearer towards the shore, that they might, if possible, make the easier prey both of the ship and us.

But these passing away, and others continually resorting, we were quickly able to guess at them what they were; for if they received anything once into their hands, they would neither give recompense nor restitution of it, but thought whatever they could finger to be their own, expecting always with brows of brass to receive more, but would part with nothing. Yea, being rejected for their bad dealing, as those with whom we would have no more to do, using us so evilly, they could not be satisfied till they had given the attempt to revenge themselves because we would not give them whatsoever they would have for nothing; and having stones good store in their canoes, let fly amain of them against us.

It was far from our General's meaning to requite their malice by like injury. Yet that they might know that he had power to do them harm if he had listed, he caused a great piece to be shot off, not to hurt them, but to allright them. Which wrought the desired effect amongst them: for at the noise thereof they every one leaped out of his canoe into the water, and, diving under the keel of their boats, stayed them from going any way till our ship was gone a good way from them. Then they all lightly recovered into their canoes, and got them with speed toward the shore. Notwithstanding, other new companies (but all of the same mind) continually made resort unto us. And seeing that there was no good to be got by violence, they put on a show of seeming honesty; and offering in show to deal with us by way of exchange, under the pretence they cunningly fell a-filching of what they could, and one of them pulled a dagger and knives from one of our men's girdles, and being required to restore it again, he rather used what means he could to catch at more. Neither could we at all be rid of this ungracious company, till we made some of them feel some smart as well as terror; and so we left that place, by all to be known hereafter by the name of the Island of Thieves.

Till the 3d of October we could not get clear of these consorts, but from thence we continued our course without sight of land till the 16th of the

of the **GOLDEN HIND**

by **FRANCIS FLETCHER**, one of the Expedition

With Illustrations by Robert Ball

same month, when we fell with four Islands standing in $7^{\circ} 5'$ to the Northward of the Line. We coasted them till the 21st day, and then anchored and watered upon the biggest of them, called Mindanao. The 22d of October, as we passed between two islands, about six or eight leagues south of Mindanao, there came from them two canoes to be talked with us, and we would willingly be talked with them, but there arose so much wind that put us from them to the Southwards. October the 25th we passed by the island named Talao, in $3^{\circ} 40'$. We saw to the northward of it three or four other islands, Teda, Selan, Saran (three islands so named to us by an Indian), the middle whereof stands in 3° . We passed the last save one of these, and the first day of the following month in like manner we passed the isle Suaro, in $1^{\circ} 30'$, and the 3d of November we came in sight of the Islands of the Moluccas, as we desired. These are four high-peaked islands: their names, Ternate, Tidore, Matchan, Batchan, all of them very fruitful and yielding abundance of cloves, whereof we furnished ourselves of as much as we desired at a very cheap rate. At the east of them lies a very great island called Gilolo.

We directed our course to have gone to Tidore, but in coasting along a little island belonging to the King of Ternate, November 4th, his deputy or viceroy with all expedition came off to our ship in a canoe, and without any fear or doubting of our good meaning came presently aboard. Who, after some conference with our General, entreated him by any means to run with Ternate, not with Tidore: assuring him that his King would be wondrous glad of his coming, and be ready to do for him what he could, and what our General in reason should require. For which purpose he himself would that night be with his King to carry him the news; with whom if he once dealt, he should find that as he was a King, so his word should stand: whereas if he dealt with the Portuguese, who had the command of Tidore, he should find in them nothing but deceit and treachery. And besides that if he went to Tidore before he came to Ternate, then would his King have nothing to do with us, for he held the Portuguese as an enemy.

On these persuasions our General resolved to run with Ternate, where the next day, very early in the morn-

ing, we came to anchor: and presently our General sent a messenger to the King with a velvet cloak, for a present and token that his coming should be in peace, and that he required no other thing at his hands, but that (his victuals being spent in so long a voyage) he might have supply from him by way of traffic and exchange of merchandise (whereof he had store of divers sorts) of such things as he wanted . . .

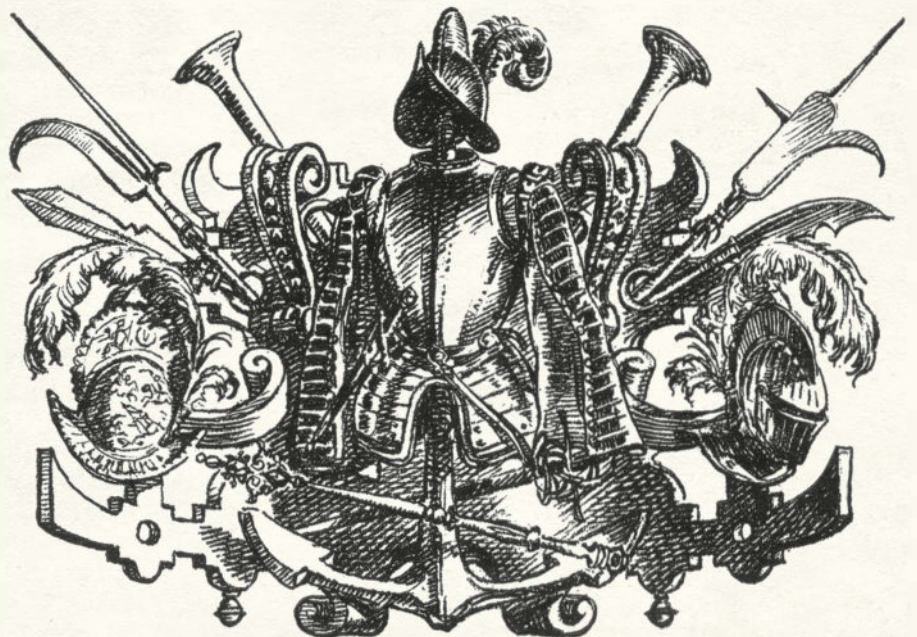
In hearing whereof the King was so presently moved to the well liking of the matter, that before our messenger could come half the way, he had sent the Viceroy, with divers others of his nobles and councillors, to our General, with special message that he should not only have what things he needed, or would require, with peace and friendship, but that he would willingly entertain amity with so famous and renowned a Princess as was ours; and that if it seemed good in her eyes to accept of it, he would sequester the commodities and traffic of his whole island from others (especially from his enemies the Portuguese, from whom he had nothing but by the sword), and reserve it to the intercourse of our nation, if we would embrace it. In token whereof he had now sent to our General his signet, and would within short time after

come in his own person, with his brethren and nobles, with boats or canoes, into our ship, and be a means of bringing her into a safer harbour.

While they were delivering their message to us, our messenger was come unto the Court, who being met by the way by certain noble personages, was with great solemnity conveyed into the King's presence; at whose hands he was most friendly and graciously entertained; and having delivered his errand, together with his present unto the King, the King seemed to him to judge himself blameworthy that he had not sooner hastened in person to present himself to our General, who came so far and from so great a Prince; and presently, with all expedition, he made ready himself, with the chief of all his States and Councillors, to make repair unto us.

The manner of his coming, as it was princely, so truly it seemed to us very strange and marvellous: serving at the present not so much to set out his own royal and kingly state (which was great) as to do honour to Her Highness, to whom we belonged; wherein how willingly he employed himself, the sequel will make manifest.

First, therefore, before his coming, did he send off three great and large canoes, in each whereof were certain of the greatest personages that were





THE KING OF TERNATE

about him, attired all of them in white lawn, or cloth of Calicut, having over their heads, from one end of the canoe to the other, a covering of thin and fine mats, borne up by a frame made of reeds, under which every man sat in order according to his dignity; the hoary heads of many of them set forth the greater reverence due to their persons, and manifestly showed that the King used the advice of a grave and prudent Council in his affairs. Besides these were divers others, young and comely men, a great number attired in white, as were the other, but with manifest differences: having their places also under the same covering, but in inferior order, as their calling required.

The rest of the men were soldiers, who stood in comely order round about on both sides: on the outside of whom, again, did sit the rowers, in certain galleries, which being three on each side all alongst the canoe, did lie off from the side thereof some three or four yards, one being orderly builded lower than the other: in every of which galleries was an equal number of banks, whereon did sit the rowers, about the number of fourscore in one canoe. In the forepart of each canoe sat two men, the one holding a tabrel, the other a piece of brass, whereon they both at once struck; and observing a due time and reasonable space between each stroke, by the sound thereof directed the rowers to keep their stroke with their oars: as, on

the contrary, the rowers ending their stroke with a song, gave warning to the others to strike again; and so continued they their way with marvellous swiftness. Neither were their canoes naked or unfurnished of warlike munition: they had each of them at least one small cast piece, of about a yard in length, mounted upon a stock which was set upright; besides, every man except the rowers had his sword, dagger, and target, and some of them some other weapons, as lances, calivers, bows, arrows, and many darts.

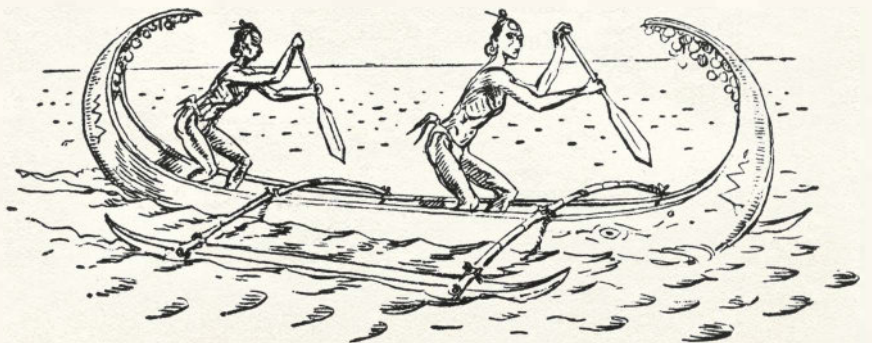
These canoes, coming near our ship in order, rowed round about us one after another; and the men, as they passed by us, did us a kind of homage with great solemnity, the greatest personages beginning first, with reverent countenance and behaviour, to bow their bodies even to the ground: which done, they put their own messenger aboard us again, and signified

to us that their King, who himself was coming, had sent them before him to conduct our ship into a better road, desiring a hawser to be given them forth, that they might employ their service, as their King commanded, in towing our ship therewith to the place assigned.

THE King himself was not far behind, but he also with six grave and ancient fathers in his canoe approaching, did at once, together with them, yield us a reverent kind of obeisance, in far more humble manner than was to be expected. He was of a tall stature, very corpulent and well set together, of a very princely and gracious countenance: his respect amongst his own was such, that neither his Viceroy of Motir alorenamed, nor any other of his councillors, durst speak unto him but upon their knees, not rising again till they were licensed. Whose coming, as it was to our General no small cause of good liking, so was he received in the best manner we could, answerable unto his state: our ordnance thundered, which we mixed with great store of small shot, among which sounding our trumpets and other instruments of music, both of still and loud noise: wherewith he was so much delighted, that requesting our music to come into the boat, he joined his canoe to the same, and was towed at least a whole hour together, with the boat at the stern of our ship.

Besides this, our General sent him such presents as he thought might both requite his courtesy already received, and work a further confirmation of that good liking and friendship already begun. The King being thus in musical paradise, and enjoying that wherewith he was so highly pleased, his brother, named Moro, with no less bravery than any of the rest, accompanied also with a great number of gallant followers, made the like repair, and gave us like respect; and, his homage done, he fell astern of us till we came to anchor: neither did our General leave his courtesy unrewarded, but bountifully pleased him also before we parted.

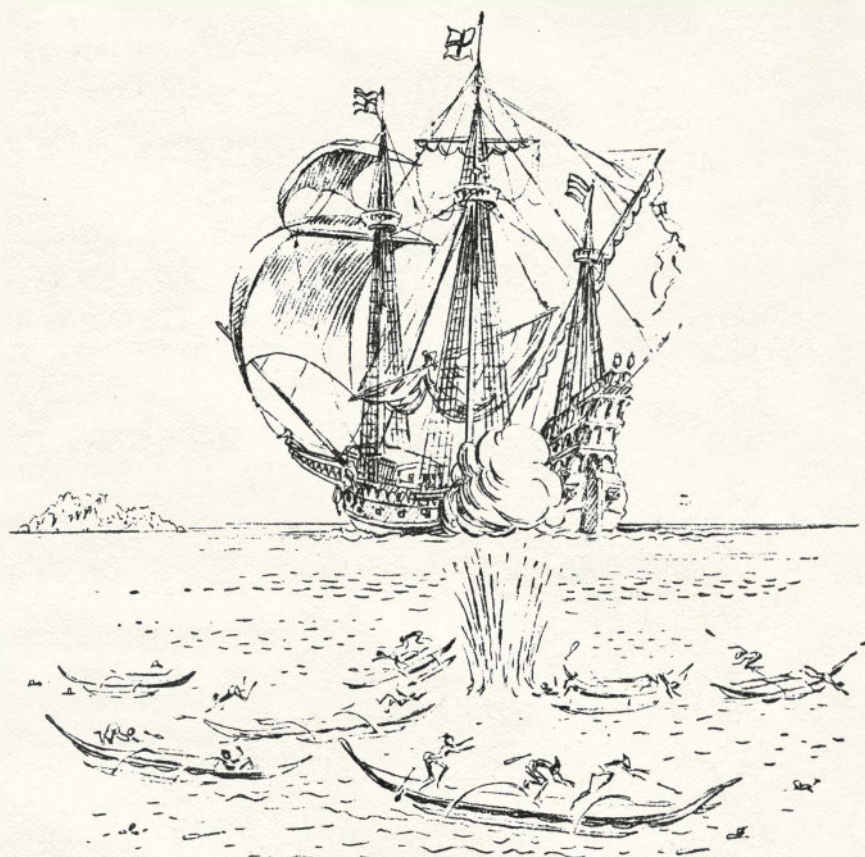
The King, as soon as we were come to anchor, craved pardon to be gone, and so took leave, promising us that



the next day he would come aboard, and in the mean time would prepare and send such victuals as were requisite and necessary for our provision. Accordingly the same night, and the morrow following, we received what was there to be had in the way of traffic, to wit, rice in pretty quantity, hens, sugar-canes, imperfect and liquid sugar, a fruit which they call Figo (Magellan calls it a fig of a span long, but it is no other than that which the Spaniards and Portuguese have named Plantains), cocoas, and a kind of meal which they call sago, made of the tops of certain trees, tasting in the mouth like sour curds, but melts away like sugar; whereof they make a kind of cake which will keep good at least ten years. Of this last we made the greatest quantity of our provision: for a few cloves we did also traffic, whereof, for a small matter, we might have had greater store than we could well tell where to bestow: but our General's care was, that the ship should not be too much pestered or annoyed therewith.

At the time appointed, our General, having set all things in order to receive him, looked for the King's return; who, failing both in time and promise, sent his brother to make his excuse, and to entreat our General to come on shore, his brother being the while to remain on board, as a pawn for his safe restoring. Our General could willingly have consented, if the King himself had not first broken his word: the consideration whereof bred an utter disliking in the whole company, who by no means would give consent he should hazard himself, especially for that the King's brother had uttered certain words, in secret confidence with our General aboard his cabin, which bred no small suspicion of ill intent.

OUR General being thus resolved not to go ashore at this time, reserved the Viceroy for a pledge, and so sent certain of his gentlemen to the Court, both to accompany the King's brother, and also with special message to the King himself. They, being come somewhat near unto the castle, were received by another brother of the King's, and certain others of the greatest states, and conducted with great honour towards the castle, where being brought into a large and fair house, they saw gathered together a great multitude of people, by supposition at least 1000, the chief whereof were placed round about the house, according, as it seemed, to their degrees and calling: the rest remained without. The house was in form foursquare, covered all over with cloth of divers colours, not much unlike our usual pentadoes, borne upon a frame of reeds, the sides being open from the groundsill to the covering, and fur-



nished with seats round about: it seems it was their Council-house, and not commonly employed to any other use. At the nether end of the house were placed a great company of young men, of comely personage and attire. Without the house, on the right side, stood four ancient, comely, hoar-headed men, clothed all in red down to the ground, but attired on their heads not much unlike the Turks. These they called Romans, or strangers, who lay as lidgiers*, there to keep perpetual traffic with the people: there were also two Turks, one Italian, as lidgiers, and last of all one Spaniard, who being freed by the King out of the hands of the Portuguese, in the recovering of the island, served him now instead of a soldier.

The King at last coming from the castle, with eight or ten grave Sena-

*Resident or permanent ambassadors; the word is spelled in various other ways, as "leger," "ligier," "legier;" it comes from the Anglo-Saxon "leigan," to lie or remain; and the word "ledger," a book that lies to receive entries, is from the same source. In "Measure for Measure," Isabella, informing her brother of his impending death, says:

"Lord Angelo, having affairs to heaven,
Intends you for his swift ambassador,
Where you shall be an everlasting
lieger."

tors following him, had a very rich canopy, adorned in the midst with embossings of gold, borne over him, and was guarded with twelve lances, the points turned downwards. Our men, accompanied with Moro the King's brother, arose to meet him, and he very graciously did welcome and entertain them. He was for person such as we have before described him, of low voice, temperate in speech, of kingly demeanour, and a Moor by nation. His attire was after the fashion of the rest of his country, but far more sumptuous, as his condition and state required: from the waist to the ground was all cloth of gold, and that very rich; his legs bare, but on his feet a pair of shoes of cordovan, dyed red; in the attire of his head were finely wreathed-in divers rings of plated gold, of an inch or an inch and a-half in breadth, which made a fair and princely show, somewhat resembling a crown in form: about his neck he had a chain of perfect gold, the links very great and one fold double. On his left hand were a diamond, an emerald, a ruby, and a turquoise, four very fair and perfect jewels; on his right hand, in one ring, a big and perfect turquoise, and in another ring many diamonds of a smaller size, very artificially set and couched together.

After a while, our gentlemen, having delivered their messages, and re-



A CHINESE EXILE

ceived answer, were licensed to depart, and were safely conducted back again, by one of the Chiefs of the King's Council, who had charge from the King himself to perform the same.

Our gentlemen, observing the castle as well as they could, could not conceive it to be a place of any great force; two cannons only there they saw, and those at the present untraversable, because unmounted. These, with all other furniture of like sort which they have, they have gotten them from the Portuguese, by whom the castle itself was also builded, while they inhabited that place and island. Who seeking to settle tyrannous government over this people, and not contenting themselves with a better estate than they deserved, cruelly murdered the King himself—father to him who now reigns—and intended the like to all his sons. Which cruelty, instead of establishing brought such a shaking on their usurped estate, that they were fain without covenanting to carry away goods, munition, or anything else, to quit the place and the whole island, to save their lives.

For the present King, with his brethren, in revenge of their father's murder, so bestirred themselves, that the Portuguese were wholly driven from the island, and glad that he yet keeps footing in Tidore. These four years this King hath been increasing, and was (as was affirmed) at that present, Lord of an Hundred Islands thereabout, and was even now preparing his forces to hazard a chance with the Portuguese for Tidore itself.

The people are Moors, whose religion consists much in certain superstitious observations of new moons, and certain seasons, with a rigid and strict kind of fasting. We had experience hereof in the Viceroy and his

retinue, who lay aboard us all the time for the most part during our abode in this place: who during their prescribed time would neither eat nor drink, not so much as a cup of cold water in the day (so zealous are they in their self-devised worship), but yet in the night would eat three times, and that very largely. This Ternate stands in 27' North latitude.

While we rode at anchor in the harbour at Ternate, besides the natives there came aboard us another, a goodly gentleman, very well accompanied, with his interpreter, to view our ship and to confer with our General. He was appalled much after our manner, most neat and court-like, his carriage the most respective and full of discreet behaviour that ever we had seen. He told us that he was himself but a stranger in those islands, being a natural of the province of Paghia in China; his name Pausaos, of the family of Hombu; of which family there had eleven reigned in continual succession these 200 years, and King Bonog, by the death of his elder brother—who died by a fall from his horse—the rightful heir of all China, is the twelfth of this race.

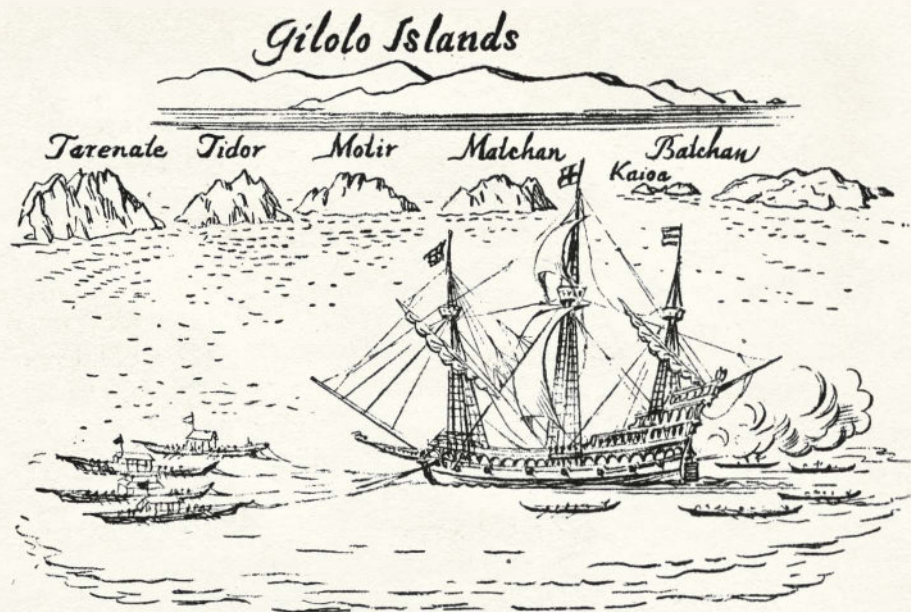
He is twenty-two years of age; his mother yet living; he hath a wife, and by her one son: he is well-beloved and highly-honoured of all his subjects, and lives in great peace from any fear of foreign invasion. But it was not this man's fortune to enjoy his part of this happiness, both of his King and country, as he most desired. For being accused of a capital crime, whereof though free, yet he could not evidently make his innocence appear, and knowing the peremptory justice of China to be irrevocable, if he should expect the sentence of the Judges; he beforehand made suit to his King, that it would please him to commit

his trial to God's providence and judgment, and to that end to permit him to travel, on this condition, that if he brought not home some worthy intelligence, such as His Majesty had never had before, and were most fit to be known, and most honourable for China, he should forever live an exile, or else die for daring to set foot again in his own country; for he was assured that the God of heaven had care of innocency. The King granted his suit, and now he had been three years abroad; and therefore he earnestly entreated our General to make relation to him of the occasion, way, and manner of his coming so far from England thither, with the manifold occurrences that had happened to him by the way. Our General gave ample satisfaction to each part of his request; the stranger hearkened with great attention and delight to his discourse, and as he naturally excelled in memory, besides his help of art to better the same, so he firmly printed it in his mind, and with great reverence thanked God, who had so unexpectedly brought him to the notice of such admirable things. Then fell he to entreat our General with many most earnest and vehement persuasions, that he would be content to see his country before his departure any farther Westward; that it should be a most pleasant, most honourable, and most profitable thing for him. Hereupon he took occasion to relate the number and greatness of the provinces, with the rare commodities and good things they yielded: the number, stateliness, and riches of their cities; with what abundance of men, victuals, munition, and all manner of necessaries and delightful things they were stored with: in particular touching ordnance and great guns—the late invention of a scab-skinned Friar amongst us in Europe—he related that in Suntien, by some called Quinzai, which is the chief city of all China, they had brass ordnance of all sorts (much easier to be traversed than ours were, and so perfectly made that they would hit a shilling) above 2000 years ago. The breeze would shortly serve very fitly to carry him thither, and he himself would accompany him all the way. Notwithstanding, our General could not on such persuasions be induced, and so the stranger parted, sorry that he could not prevail in his request, but yet exceeding glad of the intelligence he had learned.

By the 9th of November, having gotten what provision the place could afford us, we then set sail: and considering that our ship for want of trimming was now grown foul, that our casks and vessels for water were much decayed, and that divers other things stood in need of reparation, our next care was, how we might fall with such

a place where with safety we might awhile stay for the redressing of these inconveniences. With this resolution we sailed along till November 14th, at what time we arrived at a little island to the southward of Celebes, standing in $1^{\circ} 40'$ towards the Pole Antarctic: which being without inhabitants, gave us the better hope of quiet abode. We anchored, and finding the place convenient for our purposes, made our abode here for twenty-six whole days together. The first thing we did, we pitched our tents and entrenched ourselves as strongly as we could upon the shore. After we had provided thus for our security, we landed our goods, and had a smith's forge set up, both for the making of some necessary shipwork, and for the repairing of some iron-hooped casks, without which they could not long have served our use. And for that our smith's coals were all spent long before this time, there was order given and followed for the burning of charcoal, by which that want might be supplied.

WE trimmed our ship, and performed our other businesses to our content. The place affording us not only all necessaries (which we had not of our own before) thereunto, but also wonderful refreshing to our wearied bodies, by the comfortable relief and excellent provision that here we found, whereby of sickly, weak, and decayed, as many of us seemed to be before our coming hither, we in short space grew all of us to be strong, lusty, and healthful persons. Besides this, we had rare experience of God's wonderful wisdom in many rare and admirable creatures which here we saw. The whole island is a through grown wood, the trees for the most part are of large and high stature, very straight and clean, without boughs, save only in the very top; the leaves whereof are not much unlike our brooms in England. Among these trees, night by night, did show themselves an infinite swarm of fiery-seem-



THE KING OF THE MOLUCCA ISLANDS TOWS THE GOLDEN HIND TO THE SOUND OF TRUMPETS AND SALUTES FROM OUR GUNS

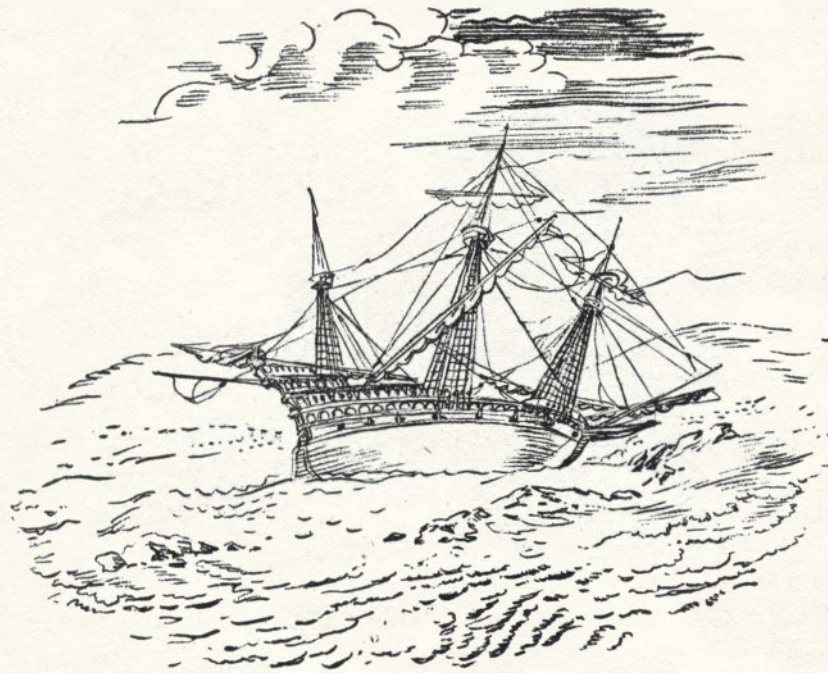
ing worms flying in the air, whose bodies, no bigger than an ordinary fly, did make a show and give such light as if every twig on every tree had been a lighted candle, or as if that place had been the starry sphere.

To these we may add the relation of another, almost as strange a creature, which here we saw, and that was an innumerable multitude of huge bats or rere mice, equalling or rather exceeding a good hen in bigness. They fly with marvellous swiftness, but their flight is very short; and when they light, they hang only by the boughs, with their backs downward. Neither may we without ingratitude, by reason of the special use we made of them, omit to speak of the huge multitude of a certain kind of crayfish, of such a size, that one was sufficient to satisfy four hungry men at a dinner, being a very good and restorative meat; the special means (as we conceived it) of our increase of health. They are, as

far as we could perceive, utter strangers to the sea, living always on the land, where they work themselves earths as do the conies, or rather they dig great and huge caves under the roots of the most huge and monstrous trees, where they lodge themselves by companies together. Of the same sort and kind we found, in other places about the Island Celebes, some that, for want of other refuge, when we came to take them did climb up into trees to hide themselves, whither we were enforced to climb after them if we would have them, which we would not stick to do rather than to be without them. This island we called Crab Island.

All necessary causes of our staying longer in this place being at last finished, our General prepared to be in a readiness to take the first advantage of the coming of the breeze or wind which we expected; and having the day before furnished ourselves with fresh water from the other island, and taken in provision of wood and the like, December 12th we put to sea, directing our course toward the West. The 16th day we had sight of the Island of Celebes or Silébis, but having a bad wind and being entangled among many islands, encumbered also with many other difficulties, and some dangers, and at last meeting with a deep bay out of which we could not in three days turn out again, we could not by any means recover the North of Celebes, but were enforced to alter the same towards the South. Thus were we forced to beat up and down with extraordinary care and circumspection, till January 9th, at which time we supposed that we had at last attained a free passage, the lands turning evidently in our sight about to





CAST UPON A REEF OFF THE COAST OF CELEBES

westward, and the wind being enlarged, followed us as we desired with a reasonable gale.

When lol on a sudden, when we least suspected, no show or suspicion of danger appearing to us, and we were now sailing onward with full sails, in the beginning of the first watch of the said day at night, even in a moment, our ship was laid up fast upon a desperate shoal, with no other likelihood in appearance but that we with her must there presently perish; there being no probability how anything could be saved, or any person escape alive. The unexpectedness of so extreme a danger presently roused us up to look about us, but the more we looked the less hope we had of getting clear of it again, so that nothing now presenting itself to our minds, but the ghastly appearance of instant death, affording no respite or time of pausing, called upon us to deny ourselves, and to commend ourselves into the merciful hands of our most gracious God. To this purpose we presently fell prostrate, and with joined prayers sent up unto the throne of grace, humbly besought Almighty God to extend his mercy unto us Presently, as soon as prayers were ended, our General encouraged us all to bestir ourselves, shewing us the way thereto by his own example. And first of all the pump being well plied, and the ship freed of water, we found our leaks to be nothing increased; which though it gave us no hope of deliverance, yet it gave us some hope of respite, insomuch as it assured us that the bulk was sound; which truly we acknowledged to be an immediate providence of God alone, insomuch as no strength of wood and iron could have possibly borne so hard and vio-

lent a shock as our ship did, dashing herself under full sail against the rocks, except the extraordinary hand of God had supported the same.

Our next essay was for good ground and anchor-hold to seaward of us, whereon to haul; by which means, if by any, our General put us in comfort, that there was yet left some hope to clear ourselves. In his own person he therefore undertook the charge of sounding, and but even a boat's length from the ship he found that the bottom could not by any length of line be reached unto; so that the beginning of hope, which we were willing

to have conceived before, were by this means quite dashed again; yea, our misery seemed to be increased, for whereas at first we could look for nothing but a present end, that expectation was now turned into the awaiting for a lingering death, of the two the far more dreadful to be chosen.

One thing fell out happily for us, that the most of our men did not conceive this thing; which had they done, they would in all likelihood have been so much discouraged, that their sorrow would the more disable them to have sought the remedy: our General, with those few others that would judge of the event wisely, dissembling the same, and giving, in the mean time, cheerful speeches and good encouragements unto the rest. As touching the ship, this was the comfort that she could give us, that she herself lying there confined already upon the hard and pinching rocks, did tell us plain that she continually expected her speedy despatch, as soon as the sea and winds should come

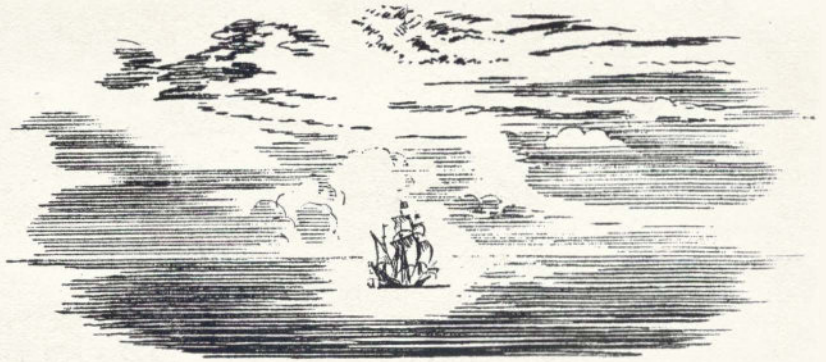
And whither, had we departed from her, should we have received any comfort? nay, the very impossibility of going appeared to be no less than those other before mentioned. Our boat was by no means able at once to carry above twenty persons with any safety, and we were fifty-eight in all; the nearest land was six leagues from us, and the wind from the shore directly bent against us; or should we have thought of setting some ashore, and after that to have fetched the rest, there being no place thereabout without inhabitants, the first that had landed must first have fallen into the



THE KING OF JAVA REVIEWS THE ARMED FORCES

hands of the enemy, and so the rest in order; and though perhaps we might escape the sword, yet would our life have been worse than death, not alone in respect of our woeful captivity and bodily miseries, but most of all in respect of our Christian liberty. . . .

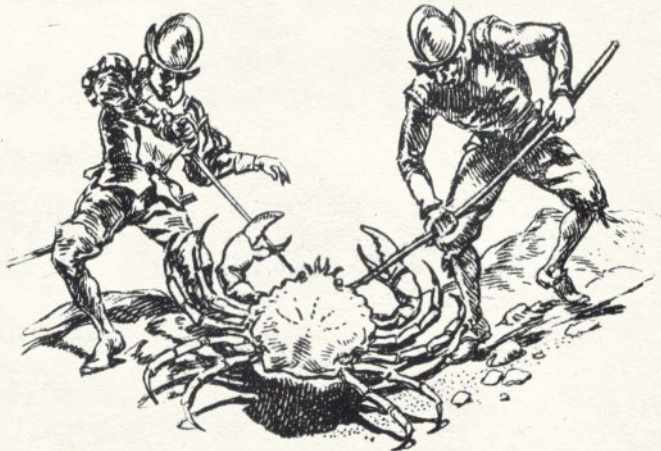
The day therefore at length appearing, and it being almost full sea about that time, after we had given thanks to God for his forbearing of us hitherto, and had with tears called upon him to bless our labours; we again renewed our travail to see if we could now possibly find any anchor-hold, which we had formerly sought in vain. But this second attempt proved as fruitless as the former, and left us nothing to trust to but prayers . . . And that our faith might be the better strengthened, and the comfortable apprehension of God's mercy in Christ be more clearly felt, we had a sermon and the Sacrament of the body and blood of our Saviour celebrated. After this sweet repast was thus re-



the one side above seven at most, wanting her prop on the other side, which had too long already kept her up, fell a-heeling towards the deep water, and by that means freed her keel and made us glad men. This shoal is at least three or four leagues in length; it lies in 2° , lacking three or four minutes, South latitude. The day of this deliverance was the 10th of January.

but we were very fearful of adventuring ourselves too far amongst the many dangers which were near the shore. The third day also we saw a little island, but being unable to bear any sail, but only to lie at hull, we were by the storm carried away and could not fetch it. February 6th, we saw five islands, one of them towards the East, and four towards the West of us, one bigger than another; at the biggest of which we cast anchor, and the next day watered and wooded.

After we had gone on thence, on February 8th, we descried two canoes, who having descried us, as it seems, before, came willingly unto us, and talked with us, alluring and conducting us to their town not far off, named Barativa: it stands in $7^{\circ} 13'$ South the Line. The people are Gentiles, of handsome body and comely stature, of civil demeanour, very just in dealing, and courteous to strangers; of all which we had evident proof, they showing themselves most glad of our coming, and cheerfully ready to relieve our wants with whatsoever their country could afford. The men all go naked, save their heads and secret parts, every one having one thing or other hanging at his ears. Their women are covered from the middle to the foot, wearing upon their naked arms bracelets, and that in no small number, some having nine at least upon each arm, made for the most part of horn or brass, whereof the lightest, by our estimation; would weigh two ounces. With this people linen cloth, whereof they make rolls for their heads and girdles to wear about their loins, is the best merchandise, and of greatest estimation. They



ceived and other holy exercises adjoined were ended, lest we should seem guilty in any respect for not using all lawful means we could invent, we fell to another practice yet unessayed, to wit, to unloading of our ship by casting some of her goods into the sea; which thing, as it was attempted most willingly, so it was despatched in very short time. But, when all was done, it was not any of our endeavours, but God's only hand, that wrought our delivery . . . The place whereon we sat so fast was a firm rock, in a cleft whereof it was we stuck on the larboard side. At low water there was not above six feet of depth in all on the starboard; within little distance, as you have heard, no bottom to be found; the breeze during the whole time that we stayed blew somewhat stiff directly against our broadside, and so perforce kept the ship upright. It pleased God in the beginning of the tide, while the water was yet almost at lowest, to slack the stiffness of the wind; and now our ship, which required thirteen feet of water to make her float, and had not at that time on

Of all the dangers that in our whole voyage we met with, this was the greatest; but it was not the last, as may appear by what ensueth. Neither could we indeed for a long season free ourselves from the continual care and fear of them; nor could we ever come to any convenient anchoring, but were continually for the most part tossed amongst the many islands and shoals which lie in infinite number round about on the South part of Celebes, till the 8th day of the following month. January 12th, not being able to bear our sails, by reason of the tempest, and fearing of the dangers, we let fall our anchors upon a shoal in $3^{\circ} 30'$. January 14th, we were gotten a little farther South, where, at an island in $4^{\circ} 6'$, we again cast anchor, and spent a day in watering and wooding. After this we met with foul weather, Westerly winds, and dangerous shoals, for many days together. . . .

February 1st, we saw high land, and as it seemed well inhabited, we would fain have borne with it, to have got some succour, but the weather was so ill that we could find no harbour,



are also much delighted with margarites, which in their language they call "Saleta," and such other like trifles. Their island is both rich and fruitful; rich in gold, silver, copper, tin, sulphur, &c. Neither are they only expert to try those metals, but very skilful also in working of them artificially into divers forms and shapes, as pleaseth them best. Their fruits and diverse likewise and plentiful, as nutmegs, ginger, long pepper, lemons, cucumbers, cocoas, figs, sago, with divers other sorts, whereof we had one in reasonable quantity, in bigness, form, and husk, much like a bay-berry, hard in substance, but pleasant in taste, which being sodden becomes soft, and is a most profitable and nourishing meat. Of each of these we received of them whatsoever we desired for our need, insomuch that (such was God's gracious goodness to us) the old proverb was verified with us, "After a storm cometh a calm, after war peace, after scarcity followeth plenty:" so that in all our voyage, Ternate only excepted, from our departure out of our own country, hitherto we found not anywhere greater comfort and refreshing than we did at this time in this place.

In refreshing and furnishing ourselves here we spent two days, and de-

parted hence February 10th. When we were come into the height of $8^{\circ} 4'$, February 12th, in the morning we espied a green island to the Southward; not long after, two other islands on the same side, and a great one more towards the North: they seemed all to be well inhabited, but we had neither need nor desire to go to visit them, and so we passed by them. The 14th day we saw some other reasonably big islands; and February 16th we passed between four or five big islands more, which lay in the height $9^{\circ} 40'$. The 18th, we cast anchor under a little island, whence we departed again the day following; we wooded here, but other relief, except two turtles, we received none. The 22d, we lost sight of three islands on our starboard side, which lay in 10° and some odd minutes. After this we passed on to the Westward without stay or anything to be taken notice of till the 9th of March, when in the morning we espied land, some part thereof very high, in $8^{\circ} 20'$ South latitude. Here we anchored that night, and the next day weighed again, bearing further North and nearer shore, we came to anchor the second time.

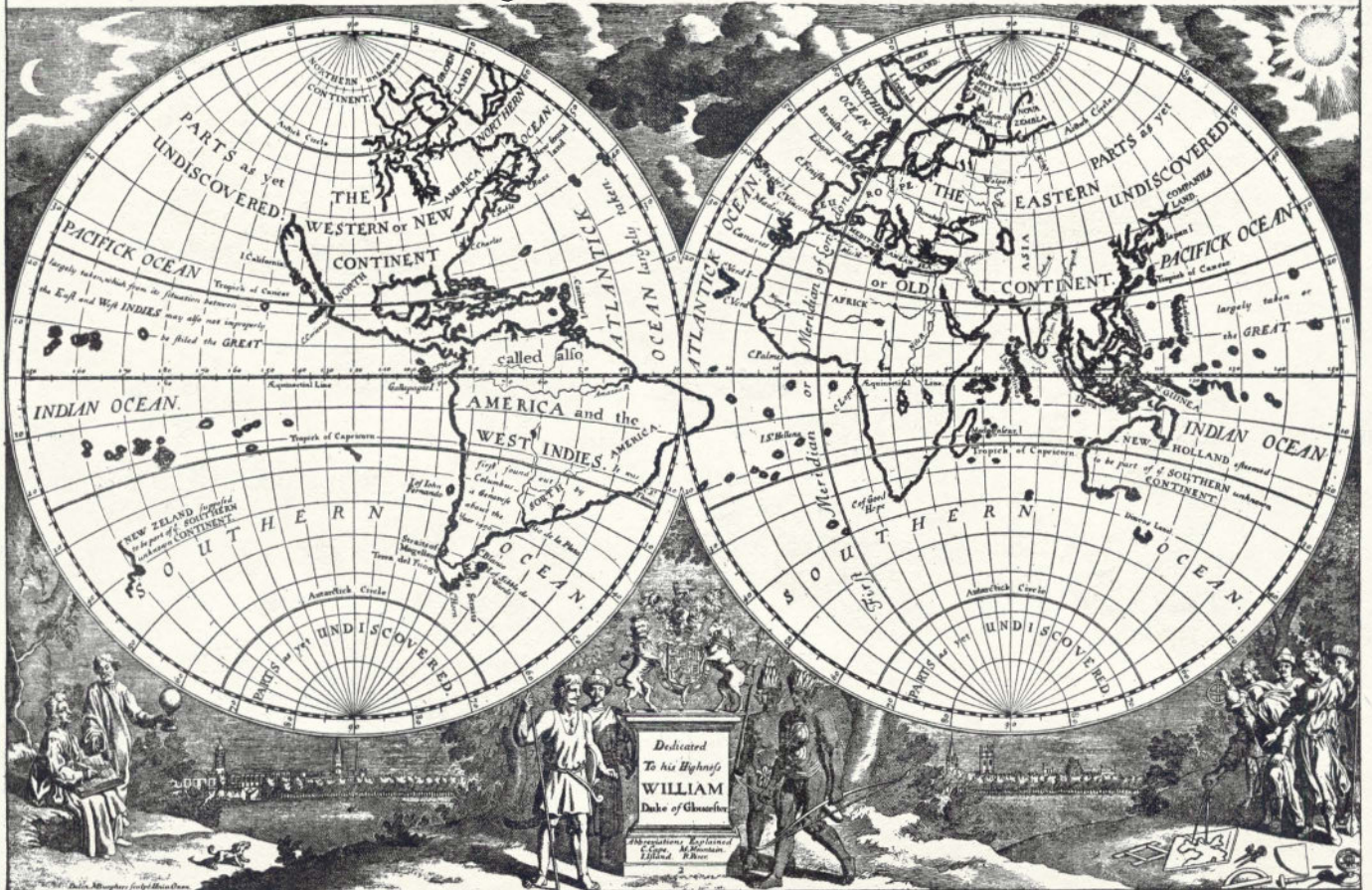
The 11th of March we first took in water, and after sent our boat again to shore, where we had traffic with the

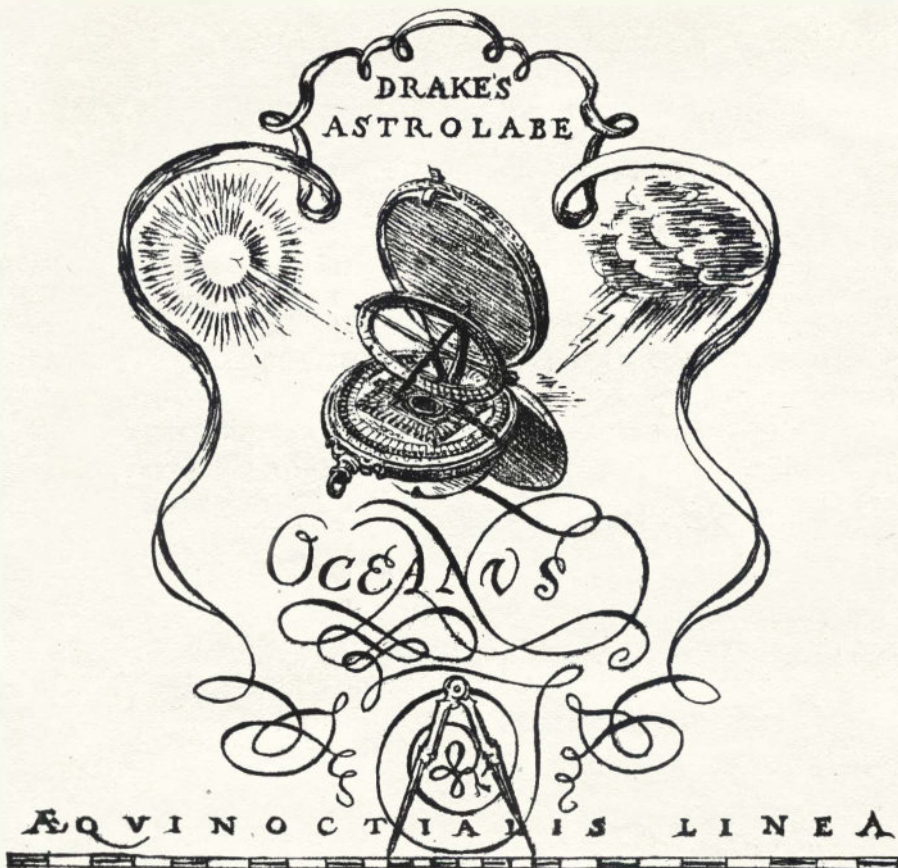
people of the country; our **General** sent his man ashore to present the King with certain cloth; which he gladly and thankfully received, and returned rice, cocoas, hens, and other victuals in way of recompense.

THIS island we found to be the Island of Java, the middle whereof stands in $7^{\circ} 30'$ beyond the Equator. The 13th of March our General himself, with many of his gentlemen and others, went to shore, and presented the King (of whom he was joyfully and lovingly received) with his music, and shewed him the manner of our use of arms, by training his men with their pikes and other weapons which they had, before him. For the present, we were entertained as we desired, and at last dismissed with a promise of more victuals to be shortly sent us.

In this island there is one chief, but many under-governors, or petty kings, whom they call Rajahs, who live in great familiarity and friendship one with another. The 14th day we received victuals from two of them; and the day after that, to wit the 15th, three of these kings in their own persons came aboard to see our General, and to view our ship and warlike munition. They were well pleased

A NEW MAP of the TERRAQUEOUS GLOBE according to the latest Discoveries and most general Divisions of it into CONTINENTS and OCEANS.





with what they saw, and with the entertainment which we gave them. And after these had been with us, and on their return had, as it seems, related what they found, Rajah Donan, the chief King of the whole land, bringing victuals with him for our relief, he also the next day came aboard us.

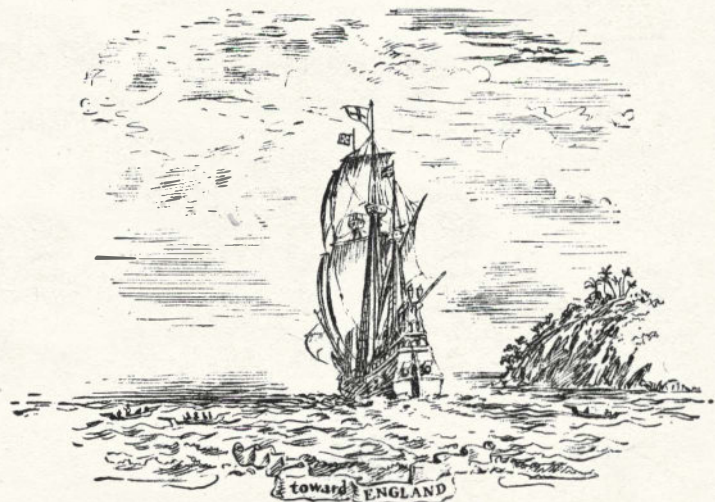
Few were the days that one or more of these kings did miss to visit us, inso-much that we grew acquainted with the names of many of them, as of Rajah Pataiára, Rajah Cabocapálla, Rajah Manghángo, Rajah Bocabarra, Rajah Timbánton: whom our General always entertained with the best cheer that we could make, and shewed them all the commodities of our ship, with our ordnance and other arms and weapons, and the several furnitures belonging to each, and the uses for which they served. His music also, and all things else whereby he might do them pleasure, wherein they took exceeding great delight with admiration. One day, amongst the rest, March 21st, Rajah Donan coming aboard us, in requital of our music which was made to him, presented our General with his country music, which though it were of a very strange kind, yet the sound was pleasant and delightful. The same day he caused an ox also to be brought to the water's side and delivered to us, for which he was to his content rewarded by our General with divers sorts of very costly silks, which he held in great esteem. Though our often giving entertainment in this manner did hinder us

much in the speedy despatching of our businesses, and made us spend the more days about them, yet there we found all such convenient helps, that to our contents we at last ended them. The matter of greatest importance which we did, besides victualing, was the new trimming and washing of our ship, which by reason of our long voyage was so overgrown with a kind of shellfish sticking fast unto her, that it hindered her exceedingly, and was a great trouble to her sailing. The people, as are their kings, are a loving, a very true, and a just-dealing people. We trafficked with them for hens, goats, cocoas, plantains, and other kinds of victuals, which they offered us in such plenty, that we might have laden our ship if we had needed.

We took our leaves and departed from them the 26th of March, and set our course WSW, directly towards the Cape of Good Hope, or Bon Esperance, and continued without touch of aught but air and water until the 21st of May, when we espied land—to wit, a part of the main of Africa—in some places very high, under the latitude of thirty-one and a half degrees. We coasted along till June 15th, on which day, having very fair weather, and the wind at South-east, we passed the Cape itself so near in sight, that we had been able with our pieces to have shot to land. July 15th we fell with the land again about Rio de Sesto, where we saw many Negroes in their boats a-fishing, whereof two came very near us, but we cared not to stay, nor had any talk or dealing with them. The 22d of the same month we came to Sierra Leone, and spent two days for watering in the mouth of Tagoine, and then put to sea again; here also we had oysters, and plenty of lemons, which gave us good refreshing. We found ourselves under the Tropic of Cancer, August 15th, having the wind at North-east, and we fifty leagues off from the nearest land. The 22d day we were in the height of the Canaries.

And the 26th of September (which was Monday in the just and ordinary reckoning of those that had stayed at home in one place or country, but in our computation was the Lord's Day or Sunday) we safely, with joyful minds and thankful hearts to God, arrived at Plymouth, the place of our first setting forth, after we had spent two years, ten months, and some few odd days besides, in seeing the wonders of the Lord in the deep, in discovering so many admirable things, in going through with so many strange adventures, in escaping out of so many dangers, and overcoming so many difficulties, in this our encompassing of this nether globe, and passing round about the world, which we have related.

Soli Deo sit semper Gloria.



Leprechaun Magic

NOW, there were those in Kearney who called Terry O'Shane for what he was. His laughter did not touch them, and when the sly humor came to his blue eyes, they saw only the mockery and none of the friendliness; and so they called him a ne'er-do-well.

He was a braggart—aye, that he was; and his brag was always bigger, always more honest-sounding than those of other men. He could lick any mau in the county, and sometimes did, when the anger ran true and deep in him, and he thought some man needed a mauling. But he carried no grudges, and first he always was to help a neighbor with the hoeing or the plowing or the tending of the stock.

And girls—losh, but he was the one, though! He kissed their red lips and

tickled their smooth chins, and his words were gay and sang of the devil. And then, when the moon was gone away, a new day come, he said his quick good-bys, a reckless, careless whistle on his lips.

That is, until he met Laureen Shaugnessy, and lost his heart to her Irish eyes and laughing ways.

She was no bigger than a minute, but her eyes could flash, and even Terry could not face her anger.

"I've heard of you, Terry O'Shane," she said the first time they met, "and I am not impressed. You are a great lout who has licked all the men and kissed all the girls, and so be away with you."

He laughed aloud, liking the words and her; and in a moment, she smiled despite herself.

"I can dance you down," he said impudently, and caught an arm about her slender waist and whirled her to the floor.

And while the fiddles squealed and the accordions cried out their tuneful notes, they danced to the wind, and none there was who could match the lightness of their steps nor the laughter in their eyes. But when at last the dance was over and he asked to take her home, she shook her head and would have none of him.

"I have promised Jimmy O'Brien," she said. "He is a gentleman, and will not stop for foolery in the moonlight."

He hung his head in mock shame, but his eyes twinkled and his mouth quirked with laughter.

"I am fair told," he said, "and so I must abide with your wishes. But mark you this, Laureen Shaugnessy, I have decided you are the one for me."

She blushed, delighted at the words and shocked at their impropriety. She tucked soft hair behind her ear and spun away, her voice floating back.

"Away with you!" she said. "Else I tell Jimmy, and he give you a knock for speaking to me in such a way."

It was then that Jimmy O'Brien came to her side and caught the last of her words, and he turned to face Terry. He was as big as the redhead, and his eyes were black and scowling, and their mutual dislike was a thing to tighten the throats of those who watched.

"What is this," he asked, "he has said to you that I should knock him?" Already was he stripping off his coat.

Terry O'Shane grinned, leaning against the barn door, catching a straw from a beam and twisting it in his fingers. Laughter still lay in his eyes, but it was different now, watchful and keen; and flat muscles began to swell in his back.

"Tell him, Laureen," he said, almost idly, and smiled at the girl.

But her gaze had gone about the barn, and she saw that people watched, and a flush came to her cheeks.

"It was nothing, Jimmy," she said, catching his arm. "Now take me home."

Jimmy O'Brien heeded the persuasion, but the blackness still lay in his eyes, and his fists held a promise for the future. Still, he took Laureen away; and a moment later Terry was laughing in another girl's ear and wheedling her into a moonlight ride.



He felt shock strike at him; for the dying flowers of the Elfin Ring told him that what an O'Shane planned was wrong.

THE VERSATILE AUTHOR OF THE SNAKE RIVER JIM AND FRANCOIS VILLON STORIES TURNS HIS HAND TO A TALE OF EIRE AND THE YOUNG FOLKS THAT TURNED TOWARD AMERICA

by WILBUR S. PEACOCK

Illustrated by John Fulton



That was the first meeting, and there were many others, for Terry was a man of his word, and he came calling on Laureen each time she said he might, blarney in his heart and on his tongue, doing now in earnest what he had always done in fun.

He did not change, you understand, for he had not the rascally capacity for that. No man, not even those who held him up to scorn, could say that he was a dishonest man. He stole a kiss whenever he could, and he made his brags, some even wilder than before; and when he saw the open doubt in her eyes, he proved his brags, which not many men could do.

He took her fishing, down through the fields and along the meadows and up into the brakes where trout swam as thick as minnows in a shadowed stream. They had a lovely time, for a lunch they brought, hot bread and spicy cake and chicken browned to a crust. And it was only when he made an incautious word that she realized he had neglected his haying so that they might have the outing.

Her brows drew together and storm winds lashed her eyes. She looked at him, and he met her gaze with a slight smile.

"How could you, Terry?" she asked impatiently. "There's rain in the air, and your crop not in. You'll lose it."

He finished the ringlet of peat roses and twirled it on one brown finger.

"There'll be no rain," he said confidently. "The Little People will not let that happen to us."

"The Little People!" Laureen said in astonishment. "Terry O'Shane, surely you are not so daft as to believe in such nonsense!"

"Of course I do," he said in lazy humor. "Always have the O'Shanes had a Fairy Ring upon their land, and always have the crops been good and the cows heavy with milk and the table groaning with rich food."

"Little People—Fairy Ring! Terry, you speak like a child." Laureen shook her head. "Those are midwife tales, only for children."

TERRY O'SHANE laughed. "Then a child I am, for I believe," he admitted. "And so it will not rain on my land until the hay is in." He came lithely to his feet, reaching out his strong hand. "Come, I will show you."

They left the brook and went across the meadows and came at last to

Terry's farm. Neat as a pin, it was, the pratie hills even-spaced and weeded like a garden patch, the hay-grass sweeping in rolling waves to the north, just waiting for a reaper's blade. There was a pride in Terry when he moved his hand in ownership, and she sensed it and was drawn to him.

"'Tis my land, Laureen," he said. "'Tis not much in number of acres, but the land is clean and sweet, and a man can work up an honest sweat and expect an honest reward."

"It is fine," she agreed at last, and followed him along the path.

He showed her the house, three rooms and clean, timbers true and roof thickly thatched. There was a cooling shed and a small barn, and in the barn a white-faced cow turned mild eyes, milk veins thick as thumbs along her belly.

Laureen said nothing, yet Terry O'Shane felt her astonishment. True, he was a ne'er-do-well, as many said, but the name had been given by some in envy, and others would have him work a greater place. It was a shame, so many said, that he should be content to waste God-given talents on such a tiny farm.

"It is enough," he said in answer to her unspoken question. "Why should I work more, when this gives me what I want and leaves a bit of time for living?"

"But Terry—" Laureen began, and he stopped her words with those of his own.

"The Fairy Ring," he said, "lies but a piece this way," and led her along a path toward the copse of green woods at the meadow's foot.

He stopped at last, and gentleness lay in his eyes. "This is the Little People's work," he said. "It augurs good for the O'Shanes."

They lay in a perfect circle, green stem close to green stem, blue petals turned bravely to the sun. Flowers, they were, not toadstools as some Elfin Rings were, and the circle was fully three strides across.

She looked and caught the fragrance of the flowers, and a hint of awe came to her eyes.

But still she doubted, and her doubt showed in her words. "It is a natural thing," she said scornfully.

Terry O'Shane shook his head. "No," he disagreed. "Whenever an O'Shane decides to do something new, to test himself, to make a change, he

comes to this corner of the land and tells the Little People of his intent. If such is the right thing to be done, then a Fairy Ring springs from the earth. If the thing is wrong, then the ring dies or does not appear, and the O'Shane must change his plans."

"You're daft, and I'll listen no more," Laureen said, half-angrily. "It is superstition, nothing more, and Father Matthew should hear you talk. Come, I'm going back to the village."

SHE went ahead of him, back through the meadow, and for a moment she thought there was the twittering of voices in the grass. But when she looked, it was only a field mouse, squeaking and wriggling his long shiny whiskers.

Terry caught up with her, saying nothing against what she had declared, and when they were back in the village, he standing with easy grace outside the door of her aunt's home, laughter was again in his eyes.

"You'll go with me to the harvest dance," he said as though the matter were settled.

Laureen shook her head. "Jimmy has asked me, and I have promised," she said. "But I'll dance with you."

For the first time then, she saw anger in his eyes. They went cold and angry, and it was as though he were another man.

"I thought it understood," he said at last, "that we should go together."

Pique touched her. "And why should anything be understood, Terry O'Shane?" she asked in sudden crossness. "At least, Jimmy O'Brien is a man who looks ahead; at least he is building himself a future. He knows a man's life and fortune lies in his hands and not in a silly belief in fairies and elves and fairy rings."

"Go with him, then," Terry thundered, and stalked away; and in him lay an urge to maul the other man with the might of his clenched fists.

And go she did, riding with Jimmy in the front seat of his new lorry, his dark face darker in the dashlight, his eyes smiling at her from time to time.

"This is the third, Laureen," he said, and patted the wheel. "Within a year I will have two more, and then shall I be one of the biggest carters in the land. He sighed in thought. "It is not an easy thing, this building of a business alone."

She looked straight ahead, not really listening, a turmoil in her mind.

She had not seen Terry since the day at the doorstep; she only knew that he had left the village for a time, going to Dublin, and returning only this very day. Her aunt had been very outspoken in her relief, and her words had withered some of the life from Laureen.

"Good riddance!" her aunt had said. "Oh, he's quite a man, but he has no ambition. To be content to work that small farm is a disgrace. He could not support a wife on it, and I doubt he would work harder, married or no."

AND NOW, riding in the shiny cab of Jimmy's lorry, Laureen wondered if her aunt were not right. Terry O'Shane was a fine man in many ways, but still he was a child, unable to face the reality of living. He must laze and fish and hunt and drink, when work must be done. He believed in fairies and midwives' tales, and no thinking man could do that, and be a real man or husband.

"I said it is a lonely life," Jimmy O'Brien said at her side, and she knew the thought in him, and was vaguely terrified for the moment.

"Later, Jimmy," she said. "For now, the dance."

"All right," he agreed, and swung the truck about and parked it at the side of the barn.

Children laughed and whooped and played their games about the barn; and farther back, men stole with obvious secrecy toward a jug hidden beside the well-housing, their voices lifting, their friendliness a thing to warm the heart.

"The dancing will not start for a time yet," Laureen said. "I'll be with the women until then." She smiled. "Watch out for the jug; it can tangle your feet."

"I'll dance all the better," Jimmy O'Brien said, laughing, and she felt a stab of pain in her heart, for the brag might have been Terry's.

Then she had slipped from the cab and was going into the barn, seeing the swept floor, already slick with meal, and along the side to where the women had laid the boards and the food and were chattering away their idle gossip.

"I see you're with Jimmy," Mrs. Cunningham said, a knowing look in her eyes; and Laureen blushed at the ripple of amusement that went about the women.

"He dances well," she said.

"Aye, that he does," Father Matthew said at her side.

"Good evening, Father," she said.

He turned about, surveying the preparations. "A good crop and a good dance," he observed. "We've much to be thankful for."

Laureen saw Terry then, standing indolently in the doorway, his hair



Terry was standing over him, throwing blows,

an unruly flame, his eyes searching her out. The fiddlers were tuning, and a cornet was being sounded, and the accordionists waited, wrists limp and relaxed.

And when Terry O'Shane saw her, he came across the floor, leaving a wake in the crowd which eddied in high whispers.

"Good evening, Laureen," he said. "Might I speak with you for the moment?"

"What is it?" she asked, and wondered at the beating of her heart.

"Outside!" His hand urged her, and she went along, blue eyes turned to study his face.

There was a difference here, something she could not define, and it frightened her as well as excited her.

He took her toward the hitched wagons, and at the wheel of the nearest, he stopped and turned.

"I've thought it over, Laureen, and but one answer comes to my mind. I have tried to frame my thought with

pretty words, but they do not come out. But what I have to say is this: I love you very much and would have you for my wife."

Now that the moment was here, she did not know what to say. For long had she waited, but now a doubt lay in her mind. And because he sensed the turmoil of her mind, Terry began to plead his case.

"I am not in debt; indeed, I have a bit of money left over. The farm is big enough for two, and we could be happy." He smiled, moonlight limning the planes of his face. "I've even stood in the Fairy Ring this night and told the Little People of my intent."

It was then that Jimmy O'Brien's laughter rang across the words. He came about the wagon, big and strong in the moonlight, and he faced them both, the odor of poteen on his breath.

"You've stood in a Fairy Ring!" he said mockingly. "And you've told the



until at last Jimmy braced himself on hands and knees and could rise no more.

Little People! You would do better to stand in the field with a hoe in your hand, before you talk marriage to Laureen."

"Jimmy!" Laureen said in alarm. But the man would not be stopped. "I love you too, Laureen," he said. "I meant to tell you this evening and to ask you for your hand. And I do not offer fairy tales, nor do I ask permission of anybody or anything. I can offer you a good life, a solid life. My business is growing every week, and I—"

"Enough!" Terry O'Shane said. "This is between Laureen and myself."

Jimmy O'Brien moved a step inward, hands now fists at his sides.

"I've taken all I will from you, O'Shane," he said, and threw his blow with deceptive speed.

Terry went back against the wagon, and now there was a dark smear on his mouth. He touched his lips, then straightened up and came driving in.

They met, and their fists were like bludgeons. They braced heavy legs and threw the power of their shoulders into their arms and fists, and the grunting of their breaths was savage.

Laureen said nothing, watching; sickened by the brutality.

Terry went down, thrown by a leglock, and Jimmy topped him, hitting true and fair, riding Terry. Blood marked his face, too, and his mouth was hard. Then Terry was coming about, twisting, bucking, throwing Jimmy far away.

He followed, catching Jimmy as he rose, then blasting him back again, standing over him, throwing blows, until at last Jimmy braced himself on hands and knees and could rise no more.

Terry licked his knuckles, satisfied, then he swung about and pushed through the crowd to Laureen's side.

"I gave a question," he said through rapid breathing. "Would you give me your answer now?"

She was crying, openly, freely, seeing the hurt in his face. But she shook her head, hearing the excited talk of the crowd about.

"I am no prize to be won through a fight," she said. "You've disgraced me and yourself. I'm ashamed of you, both of you."

"I am sorry," Terry O'Shane said slowly. "It was not my wish to fight. I wanted only to tell you of what lay in my mind, and that I had told the Little People—"

But he was talking to himself, for Laureen had turned and was running, crying as she went; and after a bit he too turned and went into the night.

He wandered down the road aimlessly, without purpose, and then cut across the fields to the brakes where he and Laureen had spent long hours beside the brook. He laved marks of the fight from his face, and then lay upon his back, watching the moon soar past its peak of flight and begin its lower trek. Peace came to him after a time, and when the first streamers of morning light touched the sleeping earth, he rose and made his way back to his farm.

He came in a roundabout way, passing close by the copse of trees, seeing the house and barns upon the rise ahead. A wry smile quirked his bruised mouth, as he remembered his speaking to the Little People early in the evening. His words had been a plea and a promise and he had known the wee folks would understand.

And then, seeing the Elfin Ring in the growing morning light, he felt shock strike at him, widening his eyes, catching his breath in his throat.

For dying, their blooms bending ever closer to the earth, the flowers of the Elfin Ring told him that what an O'Shane planned was wrong, that it could never be.

He shook his head in disbelief, and bending, touched the flowers. They were unresisting, limp; and after a moment, he rose and paced toward the house. There was no laughter in him then, no singing, only a bleakness like the aching chill of winter.

THE story went about, and people laughed, but some shook their heads, knowing the O'Shane luck was gone for a time. They spoke to Terry, and after he was gone, their tongues clacked in speculation, for Terry was a different man, a stranger, unlike himself. It was a shame, some said, for despite their words they had liked the red-haired young giant and his laughing ways.

Jimmy O'Brien, the marks of his fight gone now, became a steady visitor to Laureen's home. His laughter rang there of an evening, and Sunday brought his newest lorry about for a ride along shady country lanes. He told his plans, told them again and



"The Little People! Surely you are not so daft as to believe in such nonsense!"

again, and Laureen listened. And her aunt approved, for it was obvious to everybody that Jimmy O'Brien would be a great man in Eire some day.

If there was a void in Laureen's life, she masked it well, except when alone in her bedchamber. If tears stained her pillow, and if she sat long at the window, watching for Terry's tall figure to come striding along the street—well, that was her concern and no one else's.

Terry came by, but not as often as before. And the closeness, born of

rich laughter and secret thoughts and hopes, was gone. No more did Terry talk of marriage; it was as though he knew a curse was upon him and his dreams, and so he must accept it.

They went for walks, and once to the cinema, trying to recapture the feeling which had been theirs, but without success. Love they had for each other, and both knew it, but Terry had lost belief in many things, not the least of which was himself.

And so it was on a Friday night at Laureen's home, that he told her of his plans. Shock held her for the moment; for she too had a secret, and hers was such that even to know it was to experience happiness.

"I meant to leave without saying good-by," Terry O'Shane said unevenly, "but that I found I could not do. I take the train for Dublin tomorrow, and from there I leave for America."

Laureen caught her breath. "You go to the United States!" she cried. "But why?"

Terry shrugged. "Why not?" he asked. "I am no good here; I am happy here no longer. In America I can start fresh."

"But Terry, why so soon?"

He laughed, and for the moment he was the devil-eyed giant who had stolen her heart on their first meeting.

"Because I wish it," he said. "Oh, I know you think I'm daft, and maybe I am. But something tells me that I have been here long enough. The Little People no longer bless the O'Shanes, and so it is time I found somewhere else to live." His voice grew gentle. "I am no good, Laureen, but I cannot change. The Wee Ones did not like my plans, and so those plans must be changed."

She touched his arm, tears crowding her eyes. "It was not the Little People," she said. "I found that out only an hour ago when Jimmy let slip to me of what he had done. I could not find you to tell you then."

"O'Brien!" Terry said coldly.

"Aye! He, and not the fairies, decided how things should be. He salted the ground and killed the Fairy Ring."

"No!" Terry O'Shane said, but there was no doubt in his voice, only a growing exultation. "No!"

"Aye, that's what he did. Oh, Terry, I'm so sorry."

He came to his feet, breathing deep of the evening air. "I'll wish you a good night, Laureen," he said.

"But where are you going—to seek out Jimmy?"

He chuckled, and then he laughed, and the sparkle lay in his eyes again, unshadowed by broken beliefs.

"No," he said, "not there. Another place."

He went away, ignoring her cries, going tall and full-paced along the road. Excitement grew in him, grew and spread, until he was almost running. He raced along the road and over the stile and across an open field—until at last he was at the edge of his own farm.

He stopped beside the copse of trees, staring at the circle of brown bare earth where the Little People's ring had been. It was sere and dead now; and stooping, he scratched dirt free, tasting it and spitting it out. Salt lay in it, and now he understood the evil which had been done to him by a jealous man.

The moon was rising, limning the earth with silver light; and he stood in it, and his voice came loud and clear.

"Listen to me, Little People," he cried, "listen to Terry O'Shane whose blessing is given by you. I lost my belief in you, lost it, and I am truly sorry. But now I tell you what I should have said before. I leave Kearney tomorrow, and I shall start anew in America, and I would take Laureen Shaugnassy along for my wife. Give me that, for the wish is honest in my heart."

He would have staked his life he heard a whispering in the grass. He could have sworn he heard the patter of elfin feet in the leafy carpet of the copse. He turned slowly, staring, for to see a fairy is to have luck given a man beyond measure.

He saw nothing, and he heard no more, yet he was content. A song welled in his heart, and freedom was in his mind, and his soul was content. He went up the hill to the house, and later, brought down a bowl of fresh milk, setting it on the ground.

"Drink deep!" he cried, and went back up the slope of the ground.

That night he slept easily, untroubled, and at the first bright light of dawn, he hurried into his clothes, barely waiting to eat a bite of breakfast. He did not doubt, yet the eagerness ran full and strong in him; and so at last, when he did come down the slight hill, he was almost running.

"Glory be!" he whispered to the cool morning, and bent to touch the flowers which had come up overnight.

Peat roses they were, each as broad as the nail of his great thumb. They grew in a ring, an Elfin Ring, as he had expected them to; Terry watched for a silent moment, marveling. Then he bent, and fingered a soft blossom.

He saw at a little distance the bare earth where Jimmy O'Brien had scattered his salt. Even the magic of the Wee People could not heal that scar upon the land for a long time to come. It must remain a mark, a warning; and Terry O'Shane felt a great sense of pity for Jimmy O'Brien.

Then he broke the stem of a single peat rose; and he stood holding it before him in the growing sunlight.

"This you will not miss," he told the grassy hiding-places of the wee folk, "and it will keep my heart close to this land."

He went about, returning to the house and shouldering the chest which held his belongings. Long-strided, he began the walk to town, whistling now, cheerfully, hopefully.

And in Kearney, he stopped for a time at the home of Father Matthew; and the excitement in him drew a smile and a word of encouragement from the priest. And after a time he went from the house and along the road: until at last he dropped his chest beside the door of the house where Laureen lived, and his fist made great booming echoes on the door.

"Laureen!" he cried, unmindful of the waking neighbors. "Laureen, it is Terry, and I am on my way to America. Will you come with me?"

A window rattled open, and then shutters were flung back. Laureen's aunt thrust her head outside.

"You're drunk, Terry O'Shane!" she cried. "Away with you and let respectable people rest!"

He laughed aloud in the glory of his strength and blew her a kiss, and she stared in amazement, for this was the red-haired giant of old.

"Laureen," he bellowed, "are you coming?"

And then the door was opening and she was in his arms: and if she cried then, whose business was it but hers and Terry's? And he was saying sweet things and holding her close and explaining as best he could.

"I told them of my plans and wishes, Laureen, darling," he said, and his eyes were wide with pride and belief, "and when I awoke this morning, there was a Fairy Ring to bless what I had in mind." He laughed and swung her lightly up and kissed the softness of her throat. "Now, will you believe? Now will you be my wife and go across the sea?"



If she cried, whose business was it but hers and Terry's?

Her love for him then was a thing without dimensions, and yet a shadow was in her eyes; and some of his laughter drained away.

"You will not go?" he asked.

"The banns, Terry," she said, "and how can we leave together when we are not wed?"

His smile came back, and he winked. "I talked to Father Matthew," he said, "and the good Father tells me that banns may be declared in Dublin as well as here. And until the words are said and you are mine, then shall you stay with my father's sister." He caught her close. "Now what say you? Will you marry me?"

"Aye, Terry," Laureen answered, "that I will."

He put her down, still holding her hand, impatience tugging at his good sense.

"Then let's be off."

She shook her head. "I must pack," she said. "I cannot go without my clothes and belongings. Dublin is far, and America even farther. I cannot go like this. Even the Little People would not approve of that."

"Laureen, are you mad!" her aunt called from the window where she had listened to it all.

And Laureen Shaugnessy turned a laughing face upward, and her words were very clear.

"That I am," she admitted.

She went through the doorway, leaving Terry outside, and sat for a moment on the couch in the front room. Her heart beat heavily in her breast, and she could feel tears still unshed in her eyes. But now she waited, for she must not come out too soon.

Her aunt came down the stairs, wrapped in her night robe; and when she saw Laureen sitting on the couch, her gaze went about, and she nodded as though to herself.

"So!" she said, and yet really did not understand.

"So!" Laureen agreed.

For she did understand that men were but boys grown heavier, cherishing some illusions of their childhood. It did not make them lesser men; it made them greater in a way. And a woman was a fool if she shattered every illusion. Let men have their beliefs; let them be omnipotent in many things. But in the ways which mattered, let them be guided by the soft hands and heart of the woman they loved.

And because her hands were soft, she rubbed them absently, seeing the marks of the toil she had done the night before. When Terry had rushed away, she had followed, thinking he meant harm to Jimmy O'Brien. She had followed, and she had heard Terry speaking to the Little People, and it was then she had thought for a time her heart would break. For she knew the wee folk did not exist, and

that they would not give their approval to what Terry planned.

And so because it meant so very much to her, because it was her life, she had seen to it that an answer waited Terry O'Shane in the morning light. So carefully had she worked, so exacting her efforts had been, for to disturb the earth too much would have given her secret away. Three hours had she worked in the bright moonlight, transplanting peat roses from a near meadow and laying them in a Fairy Ring, circling them bravely as the Little People would have done.

And now her hands were tired and scuffed, but a smile was in her heart.

Then, thinking she had waited long enough that Terry would believe she had packed in these last few moments, instead of hours before, she lifted the two small bags and went toward the door.

"I love him so," she said to her aunt, and caught the fullness of understanding in the older woman's eyes.

"Bless you, my dear," her aunt replied. "Now write whenever you have the chance." She brushed a kiss on her niece's cheek. "Godspeed!"

And then Laureen was through the door, Terry waiting with the eagerness of a man very much in love. He caught her bags beneath one great arm and stole a kiss in passing.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Ready," she replied; and when he handed her the peat rose, she turned it in wondering fingers. "What is this?" she asked.

"A gift and a promise from the Little People; I took it from the Fairy Ring," he answered.

He caught up the chest, laughing aloud at the amazement in her eyes.

"A fairy flower," he said, "and it will bring us luck and happiness." He caught a deep breath. "Come," he finished, "we've a world to cross and a life to build."

And Laureen came after him, staring first at the flower and then at Terry O'Shane's broad back. And somehow, in a way she did not know, while looking at the delicate white petals of the peat rose, there came a peace to her such as she had never felt before.

For the flowers she had planted had been pink.



Picturesque

Count

The brilliant American Tory, and his astonishing career in England and Bavaria

FROM time to time the "Rumford medals," awarded for scientific achievement, have been mentioned in the news. And who was Rumford? Probably it is not an exaggeration to say that he was one of the most extraordinary men who ever lived, and his career even more unbelievable than the man himself, if that is possible.

A Massachusetts farm boy, self educated; sent to England as a messenger while still very young, and almost immediately appointed to a high office in the English Government; elected a Fellow of the Royal Society; made grand chamberlain, minister of police, minister of war by the man who became ruler of Bavaria, whom he had met casually on a holiday . . . These are just a few of the highlights in the career of a man who was also a great scientist, a great inventor, founder of the Royal Institution and writer of many books.

Still most of his countrymen today will hardly recognize his name, though he was, on the authority of the *New York Times*, "one of the historical characters most admired by President Roosevelt." Readers of Kenneth Roberts' "Oliver Wiswell" met him in that book as an historical personage.

Such was Benjamin Thompson, afterward Sir Benjamin Thompson, still later Count Rumford—the last name vaguely familiar today because it was used as the title of his product by the maker of a baking-powder invented by Thompson in a spare moment.

He was born in 1753 at Woburn, Massachusetts, the son of a farmer. Schools were not for him, but by the time he was fourteen years old he had taught himself enough algebra, geometry, astronomy and higher mathematics to calculate an eclipse of the sun with an error of only four seconds. In addition to brains, from boyhood he possessed to a superlative degree that quality to which the late President Roosevelt largely owed his suc-

Rumford

by MORRISON
COLLADAY

cess. We call it charm for want of a better word. All who came in contact with young Thompson, from royal governors down, immediately became his friends. For example, when Wentworth, the royal governor of New Hampshire, met him for the first time, he was "so struck by his appearance and bearing that he conferred on him the majority of a local regiment of militia."

This turned out not to be much of a favor to Thompson. The American Revolution had begun. The other officers of the regiment, all Englishmen, made life unpleasant for the American who did not try to conceal the fact that his sympathies at that critical time were divided between the mother country and the fast-spreading revolt. On the other hand, most of his friends and neighbors, uncompromising Massachusetts patriots, naturally distrusted him because of his relations with the English authorities. He had a narrow escape when a mob of them tried to hang him.

Most of us today fail to realize what a difficult choice a conscientious man had to make at the time of the American Revolution. He must either remain loyal to the king and mother country or become a rebel with those of his fellows who were fighting to establish a new nation. There was no middle course possible.

In spite of his experience with the mob, Thompson shortly afterward resigned from his regiment and joined the American Army in Cambridge. But he was no happier on the Revolutionary side of the fence. The patriots committed excesses which antagonized many. Besides, there is no question that Thompson's sympathies always inclined toward the mother country. His struggle to decide the right thing to do is interesting because it was an experience shared by thousands of men of whose lives we have no record.

In his case the conflict between loyalties had a happy enough ending.



His friend Governor Wentworth, like many Englishmen of the ruling class at the time of the Revolution, regarded the American patriots as temporarily misguided Englishmen rather than as traitors. When Boston was evacuated by the royal troops he suggested that Thompson carry certain dispatches to England for him.

What happened to the young American on his arrival in London would be unbelievable if it were not unquestionably true.

LORD GEORGE GERMAINE was at that time Secretary of State. When Thompson delivered his dispatches, Germaine immediately became so much interested in the messenger that he appointed him to a position in the State Department. In a few months Thompson was promoted to the office of Secretary of the Province of Georgia. Not long afterward he was made

Under-Secretary of State, one of the highest positions in the English government outside the cabinet. He was still not much more than a boy.

During this time, in addition to his political duties, Thompson kept up his scientific studies. In 1779 at the age of twenty-six he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, which was as remarkable in its way as anything that had happened to him.

Eventually Lord North's administration—in which Lord George Germaine was Secretary of State—fell, and Under-Secretary Thompson was out of a job. He thereupon entered the army again and saw active service in America. In 1783, the war being practically over, he retired at the advanced age of thirty with the rank and half pay of a lieutenant-colonel.

With the world before him and nothing special to do, he set out to seek adventure. He crossed the Chan-

nel from Dover to Calais with Gibbon, historian of the Roman Empire, who in a letter to Lord Sheffield described his famous fellow passenger, calling him "Mr. Secretary-Colonel-Admiral-Philosopher Thompson."

At Strasbourg the young secretary-colonel-admiral-philosopher met casually Prince Maximilian, afterward Elector of Bavaria. Maximilian, an immediate victim of the Thompson charm, entreated the American to enter the service of Bavaria as a kind of deputy ruler. Thompson was a British subject, so he asked permission from King George Third to take the job. The king consented and at the same time conferred on him the honor of knighthood.

THE Massachusetts farmer's son now Sir Benjamin Thompson, became Minister of War, Minister of Police and Grand Chamberlain of Bavaria. He remained in Bavaria eleven years, kept busy by his various jobs. He reorganized the army, reduced unemployment, vastly improved the condition of the working classes and abolished beggary.

The story of this last achievement is worth telling. Poverty was so great and widespread in Bavaria that beggary had become a dangerous and pressing problem. In one of his various official capacities Thompson solved it. One day he sent out military patrols to arrest all the beggars they could find in Munich and its suburbs. By nightfall they had 2600 in custody. Thompson had made preparations for them. He had established an industrial colony where they were to be sheltered, fed and persuaded to work. Most of them found themselves so much better off than they had ever been before that the colony not only paid its way but produced a profit for the state.

Thompson explained to skeptical penologists and sociologists of the time the principle on which he set out to rehabilitate his charges. "To make vicious and abandoned people happy it has generally been supposed necessary first to make them virtuous. But why not reverse this order? Why not make them first happy and then virtuous?"

In gratitude for his services to Bavaria, Thompson was created a count of the Holy Roman Empire. He took his title, Rumford, from the name of the New Hampshire town in which he had lived, the present Concord.

In 1795 during a visit to England he invented the revolutionary methods of building fireplaces and curing smoky chimneys which have been used ever since.

This vacation from his official duties did not last long. Bavaria was invaded by the French and Austrian armies simultaneously. The Elector

fled after making a wild appeal to his chamberlain—working over the problem of smoky chimneys in London—to rush back and save the city of Munich.

It is a question whether what followed was not the most remarkable achievement in a remarkable life. The Massachusetts farmer's son hurried to beleaguered Munich and persuaded the two armies to return home without entering the city. The nearest thing to an explanation of what actually happened is the statement of a contemporary writer: "It was entirely owing to Rumford's energy and tact that a hostile occupation of the city was prevented." This would seem to have been the supreme test of the famous charm.

This crisis settled, Rumford wanted to retire to London to pursue his scientific studies. The Bavarians attempted to show their gratitude by making him the country's ambassador to England, it having been forgotten that during all the years in Munich he was still a British subject. As a substitute honor, Munich built the monument to him which still stands in the park he established for the city's poor.

HE lived in London for several years, refusing an invitation to make his home in America. Public life was profitable in those days and he had become a very rich man, though he had never been interested in accumulating money. He refused to patent his many practical inventions and even went so far as to exhibit drawings and models of them to workers in Europe and America "so they could be easily and freely manufactured." That these various inventions made other men rich was a matter of indifference to him. He happened to be one of fortune's favorites to whom most good things in life came without effort.

Except in domestic affairs. In them he was not so happy.

When he was eighteen a wealthy widow fourteen years his senior married him. She remained in America when he went to London as Governor Wentworth's messenger and he never saw her again. In Paris many years after her death he married another wealthy widow, Madame Lavoisier, whose first husband was the famous chemist. According to an early biographer, "With this lady he led an extremely uncomfortable life till at last they agreed to separate."

Rumford was a pioneer in the study of foods but his scientific fame rests on his studies of light and heat. In 1796 he gave to the London Royal Society and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences a thousand pounds each as endowment funds to provide the medals which bear his name and are still periodically awarded.

He was the founder of the Royal Institution which received its charter from George Third in 1800, and personally selected Sir Humphrey Davy as its first lecturer. He was elected as one of the few foreign members of the Institute of France.

He died in 1814, leaving among numerous public bequests one of a thousand pounds to Harvard College for a professorship to teach "the utility of the physical and mathematical sciences."

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences published Rumford's complete works in 1872 and included a voluminous biography. This was republished by Macmillan in London a few years later. A number of books and articles have been written about him since, one fairly ambitious biography only a few years ago. But none of them succeeds in portraying the man with sufficient vividness to make his astounding achievements really credible.

The accounts of his scientific work naturally ignore the spectacular events in his life. For example, they relate in detail his investigations into the explosive force of gunpowder, the construction of firearms and the system of signaling at sea. They do not tell the story of his cruise as a volunteer with the Channel Fleet on board the *Victory* under command of Admiral Sir Charles Hardy, when he made those investigations.

Most of the Americans who have written about Rumford have not been able to forget that he was on the losing side in the Revolution. To call a man a Tory in this country during the past century has been to condemn him utterly no matter what his achievements. An example of this attitude is afforded by Rumford's most recent biographer. He sums up his subject: "A brilliant mathematician, painstaking investigator, pioneer in the field of light and heat, excellent organizer and a scientist of the first rank. He served the men he worked for faithfully and efficiently."

However, the biographer cannot let stand this favorable picture of an American who disagreed with his country's popular heroes. He thus qualifies his estimate: "He was utterly devoid of humor and humanism, hard, brittle, self-centered from first to last, aloof and patronizing in his philanthropic work."

All contemporary evidence indicates that even these not very serious charges are unjustified. Nevertheless they reflect the attitude of the average American toward the members of losing political minorities. In spite of President Roosevelt's expressed admiration for Rumford, it is probable many years will elapse before his real stature is generally recognized.

Illustrated by John McDermott



Report on Wake Island

The tragic story of the Japanese occupation as brought out by the war criminals trials.

by CHARLES BARNARD

MANY centuries ago, at a point over twenty-one hundred miles from what is now the city of Honolulu, the floor of the Pacific heaved with a volcanic convulsion and threw up into the sunlight an island.

No one can now say when this happened or for how many countless tides the ocean rolled and broke its thunderous surf on the sandy beaches of this island. None but the migrant flocks of booby birds that fly the vast Pacific knew of its existence. It was a place of silence and peace, without a name, without a history, without significance. It lived in its lonely, watery world for hundreds—perhaps thousands—of years before man ventured onto the sea to stumble upon it.

To this island, man brought war and murder. On its beaches he buried his treasure, and in its coral he buried his dead.

This is Wake Island: an American legend.

Best known chapter in the history of Wake is the heroic defense of its shores by U. S. Marines under Major James Devereaux in December, 1941. No one has better chronicled this story of bravery and heroism against overwhelming forces than Major Devereaux himself. At the time of this defense of Wake, the American press

recorded each bloody day with banner heads. The name "Wake Island" became a trumpet call and stirred men the world around to stiffen their fight against the tide of Axis victory. Wake became a catalyst of courage—an Alamo of World War II.

But it was nevertheless an American defeat. The Japanese captured the island, for all their staggering losses, and occupied it for four years. The story of their existence on Wake during these four years is the story of an empty victory, a story of death and starvation. It is, in many respects, as much of a legend as the American struggle to hold the island.

What happened during those four years?

The story is probably best told by a Japanese who was there—one who splashed up Wake's shell-torn beach in the gray dawn of December 23rd, 1941, and who remained on his island prison until November 1st, 1945. This was Takao Endo, a "Supreme Seaman" in the Imperial Japanese Navy, and one of the few Japs to survive the forty-six terrible months.

Here, then, is a recreation of Endo's stark narrative as told to me at Wake Island in October, 1945. In some instances, it contains minor inaccuracies; in others, lies. Whenever it has appeared necessary to clarify a mean-

ing or to correct a falsehood, this has been done in the body of his story. In all other respects, his words have been faithfully preserved:

"I was in charge of the dead. (After the fall of Wake to the Japs.) I have no idea of how many there were, but for many days we found them. All of our people (Endo later said that there were only 115 Japanese dead) were cremated, but there were many who were not found in the water. The Americans were buried in large trenches. We did not count them, but conducted religious services at their graves. (These were the last rites of the Shinto faith.) In a few days the American officers (Major Devereaux and his party) were put aboard a ship to leave for Japan. During their captivity they sulked and would not eat the food that was given them.

"Work on the construction of defenses was begun almost at once. Especially, the facilities of the flying-field were enlarged and made better. We heard that we would soon be sent large bombing planes to attack Hawaii. Of course, these never came to Wake Island.

"Still on the Wake Island were about twelve hundred Americans. These were, I believe, workers of Pan American Airways. (Some were; most

were U. S. Government workers.) Many were skilled in the operation of heavy construction machinery, and although prisoners of war, we gave them liberty to work. Some Americans were wounded and sick and did not work. They all lived together in their own barracks. American food supplies which were captured with the island were turned over to the Americans, because they did not like Japanese food.

"After a few months the Americans did not appear unhappy any more. They worked every day, but rested much in the shade of their machines. Some of our people (Japanese) became friendly with some of your people and learned to speak American words. I do not know whether any of your people learned Japanese.

"It was after several months (actually in March, 1942) that the first of the twelve hundred Americans began to be sent to Japan on ships. The sick and wounded were sent first, and later those who were lazy. Every time a supply ship returned to Japan from the island, a few of the Americans were sent—sometimes a few, sometimes as many as one hundred and twenty-two, I remember.

"But soon it became more difficult for Japanese ships to reach the Wake Island because of your Navy blockade. Therefore it was not possible to entirely evacuate all the twelve hundred. By December (1943) the last surface ship had reached Wake.

"This was the *Suwa Maru* that is now on the Wake reef. This ship (a 10,000-ton, former N.Y.K. liner) was torpedoed, and her master beached her to preserve her cargo. However, American aircraft attacks at that time prevented us from unloading the cargo until much of the food was spoiled. Some mail was saved, and several million yen, I believe. (The hulk of the *Suwa Maru* is still at Wake today; it will soon be blown up.)

"Later (in January, 1944) we received some supplies by submarine. The last of these vessels to reach us (on June 21, 1945) was so heavily laden that it carried a deck cargo of rice in sealed rubber bags. There was no room on this vessel for letters from our loved ones.

"FROM 1943, our existence on the Wake Island became more difficult. With us were still ninety-eight Americans. Some work on defenses continued, particularly on a submarine slip cut into Wilkes Island (a part of Wake). Without enough food, no one could work hard.

"American attacks on the island became more frequent and caused much damage to our defenses, and many lives. These had begun after about two months. (Actually, the first U. S. air strike on Wake after its



"On October 7, 1943, I gave the following order: 'Using the men of the

fall to the Japs was on February 24, 1942.) We worked always to repair the damages. The Americans also worked, although many were sick and had become very light (had lost weight).

"For eating materials, we did many things. First, we planted gardens of food (fertilized with human excrement) but these were not as successful as we hoped, because of the climate of Wake Island. The salt air perished most plants even though we tried to shelter them with pieces of (corrugated) metal. It became that the ripening of a squash was an event to be celebrated. A single *shogoin* turnip and the water it was cooked in was food for five.

"Birds (mostly terns) were snared, and many rats were trapped. (Endo was noted among the Japanese garrison as Wake's most accomplished rat catcher.) The meat of these animals was fresh and good.

"Because of the great effort it was to sit in the sun to fish, some of our people used grenades in the water for this purpose. (Until island commander Sakaibara forbade the practice because of the number of accidental deaths.)

"In the month of, I believe, May or June (1944) an American Consolidated plane was blown up by anti-aircraft fire over Wake Island and crashed. I observed this with my own eyes. Sometime later a (Japanese) civilian laborer came to our position

and said: 'Over at Navy headquarters they are eating the flesh of the American flyers. They are keeping what is left for the use of the sick.'

"At that time, the civilian laborer said he heard this from Petty Officer First Class Kunitomo, who was head of the cooking squad of the air group. Kunitomo said he had tasted it and found it was very delicious. (It must be noted that Endo himself was accused of both cannibalism and the theft of food by his superiors.)

"Our expectancy of an American invasion of Wake Island mounted with (the frequency of) the attacks.

"For many months the remaining ninety-eight Americans caused us worry because of signals we detected between them and American aircraft. These signals were made by waving with cloths (handkerchiefs) and by signs on the ground. Objects were often seen to drop near the Americans' barracks from the planes. These things gave us fear. (The "objects" were later thought by U. S. authorities to be Red Cross food packages.)

"ONE night in, I believe, July (1943) one of the Americans was detected in stealing from our supplies. He had secreted from a stockhouse (warehouse) some quantity of whisky used by our people's officers. To preserve absolute discipline and respect for authority, it was necessary for him to be killed by *kendo* (be-



headquarters company, execute the prisoners of war by firing squad."

heading). He was treated very kindly, and the *kendo* was swift and well done.

"Acts of unfriendliness by the Americans continued and were worse because of our hunger condition.

"On the 5th of October (1943) in the night, a great American naval force was in the process of attacking Wake Island and all were expecting to die soon in defeating an American landing force. During this raid, the (remaining) ninety-seven Americans were put in two very deep concrete shelters for protection from the bombs.

"American submarines had been sighted near the island for several days, and this increased our knowledge of the attack."

(At this point in Endo's narrative begins the great lie as to the fate of the ninety-seven Americans. It was not until two months later that American war crimes investigators discovered that all had been executed. However, to preserve the continuity of Endo's story for the moment, the lie is here recorded.)

"It was regrettable that during the ferocious (American) attack two happenings caused the deaths of all the Americans. It is not sure which happening was first. About fifty of your people who were under guard in a shelter were dead because of your bombs. The guards were also dead.

"The others of your people wished escape and killed their guards and

ran onto the island. With them they took grenades and an automatic weapon for fighting. Warrant Officer Nakamura of the command (headquarters) platoon was ordered by Captain (later Admiral) Sakaibara to recapture the escaped prisoners.

"The platoon of, I believe, twenty-seven men, armed with automatic weapons and some with grenades, then went in an easterly direction from the Naval headquarters in searching. At a point six hundred yards from their shelter, the Americans were found. Then fighting began and all people fired their weapons. The fight moved toward the northeast beach of Wake and some of your people swam out into the water, in which they drowned or were shot. All your people met death in this way, and one man (Japanese) was killed and seven wounded in the fighting.

"THE next morning (October 8, 1943) some of the American bodies were found—thirty-five, I believe, and were buried in an anti-tank ditch on the beach. The bodies were treated with religion.

"After this, not so much work was able to be done because of the lack of the Americans. Hunger was on the island, and life and living were difficult.

"Our people saw moving pictures (Pan American Airways had maintained an outdoor theater on Wake) but the same stories (films) did not

change, and soon all had seen them many times.

"Some tobacco was grown, but not well because of the same reasons as the vegetables.

"All our people received their pay regularly. (From the million yen salvaged from the *Suwa Maru*.)

"Soon, Captain Sakaibara did not demand work because all of our people became so light. Our aircraft were all destroyed over a year ago (1944). I believe only a few hundred of your people could have taken back the Wake Island any time since one year. We are 1250 here (Japanese) and with eighteen tanks and many large guns, but our hunger is so much that we could not carry even ammunition.

"Not many days ago, before your people came here (to accept the surrender of Wake on September 5, 1945) the hospital ship *Takasago Maru* took many (actually 974) of our sick to Japan. All of these people were to be carried to the ship on (stretchers) and many were expecting to die.

"The Wake Island is not a good island for men unless there is food."

THUS Takao Endo summed up the four years of his life spent as one of the original "conquerors" of Wake. There is no better testimony to the effectiveness of the Navy's "bomb-by-pass-and-starve" tactic than his story.

But although Endo spoke the truth about living conditions on Wake, his story about the "accidental" death of ninety-seven Americans was—as we have noted—a lie and one which at first baffled U. S. investigators.

Following the American reoccupation of the island, one of the first mysteries to be probed by Navy authorities was the fate of the Americans known to have been on Wake during the Jap occupation. That some of the twelve hundred civilians captured by the Japanese on December 23rd, 1941, had been returned safely to Japan was known. However, all efforts of the U. S. Department of State to learn the whereabouts of approximately one hundred others had failed.

Then came the Japanese explanation: the pat story told in exact detail by every Jap from Admiral Sakaibara down to Supreme Seaman Endo: fifty had been killed by an American bomb, the remainder in an escape attempt. Inasmuch as the Japanese said this had occurred in 1943—fully two years before the surrender of the island—the U. S. was faced with a who-done-it of major and baffling proportions. And the trail appeared to be very cold indeed.

But the search for facts was diligent and thorough. On November 1st, 1945, as the last remnants of the Japanese garrison were taken aboard the *Hikawa Maru* for transportation to

Japan, each Jap soldier and sailor was carefully searched for hidden diaries or other records of events on the island which he might have kept. Each was also required to sign a statement which said: "I certify that I have no records pertaining to the execution of Americans on Wake Island." None of the more than five hundred evacuees indicated any such knowledge. Naturally. So sorry!

However, twelve were held in custody for further questioning. Among these was Admiral Sakaibara, the island commander, later to be termed by the press the Butcher of Wake.

The scene shifted then to Kwajalein Island in the Marshalls, where war crimes proceedings were already under way against Japanese on other islands. It was, in fact, on Kwajalein—once a powerful Japanese fortress island—that the first Axis war criminals of World War II were sentenced for their crimes. On Kwajalein, Sakaibara and his eleven companions were imprisoned in a crude stockade where they could be seen every day, walking slowly up and down behind the barbed wire and stoutly reaffirming their story that the Americans had met accidental death.

U. S. authorities still had little more than a suspicion on which to work, but it was a suspicion based on Japanese conduct on other occupied islands. At Mille, at Jaluit, and at Kwajalein itself, Americans had been beheaded. On almost every island occupied by the Japanese, the native populations had been slaughtered. But had this happened at Wake?

Sakaibara, bland and urbane, was always polite and always firm. It was an accident. So sorry.

"I don't believe it," said Lt. William P. Mahoney Jr. of Phoenix, Arizona. This young attorney had been in the thick of the investigation. "He says that about fifty Americans tried to escape with one gun and a few grenades for weapons. Against a garrison of nearly five thousand armed Japs, that doesn't make sense—even for desperate men."

So the investigation was pressed on. Wake was combed from beach to beach for evidence. Every hut in which the Japanese had lived was searched. The effects of the Japanese dead were opened and studied. Letters and records were translated and pieced together.

Traces of the lost Americans were found everywhere, but not a clue as to their fate. In what had once been their living-quarters, names and dates were found written on the walls. "Bill Ryan, Portland, Oregon. Jap war prisoner 1941-1942. How long?" Another had written "April 29th, the Emperor's birthday—God damn him." From one inscription it was clear that



Takao Endo—one of the few Japs to survive the months on Wake.

the hapless Americans had survived at least three hundred days of captivity. It said: "C. A. Riebel, 300th day as prisoner."

The investigation was beginning to look fruitless, when, early in December at Kwajalein came a big break. A Japanese stool pigeon was ready to talk!

His name was Momma, and he was a typical Hollywood-style Jap. What had loosened his tongue was not at once clear until he explained that while a corporal he had been reduced in grade to the rank of "civilian" for insubordination. He was out for revenge on his officers, and he couldn't have picked a better time to talk. When Lt. Mahoney heard his story, he knew he had a case to handle that would be a honey.

"The Americans were all executed," said Momma.

"How do you know?"

"Miyaki and Banguichi told me."

These were junior officers of the Wake garrison. Confronted with the truth, they told all they knew. The case had broken, and on December 17th, 1945, Sakaibara, his executive officer, Lt. Comdr. Soichi Tachibana, and Lt. Toraji Ito were charged with murder.

The next day Ito committed suicide by hanging himself in the prisoners' mess hall, leaving Sakaibara and Tachibana to face the trial commission alone on December 22nd. But in the possession of American authorities before the trial began was a statement by the Japanese admiral.

"On October 7, 1943, I gave the following order to Tachibana: 'Using the men of the headquarters company appropriately, and at a place which

will not interfere with our positions, execute the prisoners of war by firing squad.' I remember that it was about one hour after sunset. Although my recollection of the hour of execution is not definite, I remember that there was a report made by Ensign Nakamura, a command platoon leader, more than an hour and a half after my issuance of the order. Ninety-six prisoners were executed, and one escaped."

But with this confession and denial of his previous lies, Sakaibara did not intend to plead guilty to the charge of murder. It was now his plan to show that the Americans had constituted a threat to the safety of the Wake garrison at a time of peril; that they were, in fact, spies. Lt. Mahoney had his man, but he still had to prove him a murderer.

FURTHER explaining the death of the American who escaped the first slaughter, Sakaibara said: "I believe it was about October 15th, 1943, that the prisoner who had escaped on October 7th was discovered and captured near the vicinity of the food stores located near the shrine, where he obtained food. At that time we frequently received situation reports and orders from the fleet. One of them being that 'a new and powerful task force was organized and has departed from Hawaii. Therefore the Marshalls Area will go into their first defensive positions. Wake Island will prepare for an attack force.' Thus, we were in the midst of an alerted condition. In order to suppress any danger arising from him, I was forced to execute (the American) on Hajima (Peale Island) about thirty minutes after sunset on the same day. Execution was by decapitation. The officer in charge of the prisoners, Ensign Nakamura, and several other Japanese enlisted men were also present at the scene."

Sakaibara, although now fighting for his own life, next made an attempt to whitewash his subordinates of guilt. He said: "According to the news broadcasts from San Francisco which I have heard regarding the war criminal trials of Germans by the Allied nations, it is said that the issuer of the orders as well as the executors of the orders will be prosecuted. In case the various actions which were carried out to my orders become the source of any trouble, it will mean that my subordinates too will be involved. There is no greater grief for the commanding officer whose subordinates had to suffer because they had to carry out his absolute orders. Therefore, in all cases, I would like to shoulder the responsibility for my subordinates."

With regard to the lies which he had previously told American authori-

ties, Sakaibara said: "I voluntarily and without consulting any other officer called all company commanders involved and department heads to a meeting in the conference room of my house on Wake, and ordered that the false story be made.

"After the end of the war, it was impossible for me to obtain the contents of the Potsdam Declaration, and thereafter I began to realize that Japan was about to surrender unconditionally. I then realized that we had to obey United States orders. And in considering that in the Imperial Rescript it said not to lose faith in the Allied nations, I reconsidered and decided to confess the truth without hesitation."

THE pre-trial statement of Tachibana, co-defendant with Sakaibara, threw more light on the incidents leading up to the execution of the Americans. He said: "I was assigned as headquarters company leader and head of communications in the latter part of September, 1943. During that time there wasn't an executive officer, so I was assigned as acting executive officer. On October 6th and 7th continuously we were bombed by gunfire and dive bombers from a task force. There were a great many casualties. On the 7th, at about noon, a dispatch came from the air corps saying that a great fleet was discovered one hundred miles from Wake Island to the northwest. A message was received from the commander of the Fourth Fleet (then at Kwajalein) saying to keep a sharp lookout for a landing invasion. That night a landing invasion was imminent, so everyone resolved to fight to the last man. Immediately there were orders to prepare for the counter-offensive. Every unit was busy preparing for the invasion.

"On the 7th, just after sundown, the commanding officer and I were at the command post. Then, all of a sudden, he ordered: 'The headquarters company leader is to use his men and shoot to death the prisoners of war on the northern shore.' It was so sudden that I was startled, but I knew that the commanding officer was a careful man, and I knew he wouldn't have come to a conclusion unless he gave it plenty of consideration.

"Later, a report came from the commander of the headquarters company saying that the execution had been carried out. Then Admiral Sakaibara sent for paymaster Lt. Kawaguchi and ordered him to use his men in the quartermaster corps to bury the corpses.

"When I was a cadet at the naval academy, Admiral Sakaibara was my instructor. Therefore, I didn't have a bit of doubt and thought that it was

justifiable to execute the prisoners of war according to the situation that night."

Justifiable! There was the defense! Counsel for Sakaibara and Tachibana was youthful Japanese Lt. Comdr. Kozo Hirata. In near-perfect English he told the court: "If you please, it was one of those tragedies which happen necessarily with the ruthless actions of war, such as the unintentional massacre of citizens, that about a hundred prisoners of war on Wake Island whom the Japanese on that island had made very good friends with, came to be suspected and testified by certain evidences of deeds of spying on their parts, and on the night of October 7, 1943, met with their execution under the emergent circumstances of expected landing operations by U. S. forces. Although it was a serious tragedy, it may before the law be justified."

Justified? Lt. William Mahoney didn't think so.

When Sakaibara took the stand in his own defense in Kwajalein's crowded Quonset courtroom, Mahoney subjected him to nearly two hours of grueling cross-examination. Firmly, Sakaibara stuck to his story: the Americans were a threat; they had signaled to attacking U.S. planes; they received messages from these planes; they were thought to have a hidden short-wave radio. Their execution was not, however, to punish them, but to protect the Wake Island garrison. It was therefore a military necessity.

LT. MAHONEY carefully baited his trap. "You say these Americans were dangerous?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Sakaibara.

"You say you feared them?"

"Yes."

"You therefore kept them confined?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In a deep concrete shelter."

"They were guarded?"

"Yes."

"How many guards?"

"One."

At last the wily Jap admiral had been tripped! One man to guard all of the ninety-eight "dangerous" Americans!

Lt. Mahoney summed up quickly. "On the night of October 7th, just after sunset, and in the light of a young moon, the helpless Americans were led from their barracks solely on the order of one man: Sakaibara! Then they began a march north and east toward the edge of Wake Island, a beach they were never to leave alive. It was a Death March every bit as loathsome as that which took place on Bataan. There you have the killings and the killer!"

On the 24th of December, 1945—four years and one day after the Japanese invasion of Wake—Sakaibara and Tachibana were sentenced to death. But the Jap admiral was to make one more dramatic gesture. Asked if he had anything to say in his own behalf before sentence was pronounced, Sakaibara faced the court and with deliberate calm read in Japanese a prepared statement: "Now, as we are about to receive the decision of an American court, I would like to make a request that the people who planned and carried out the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan should be regarded in the same light as we!"

Defiance flashed from his eyes as he concluded and awaited the sentence of death which he considered inevitable.

Navy Commodore Ben H. Wyatt, president of the trial commission, stood, adjusted his horn-rimmed glasses and solemnly read ". . . you shall be hanged by the neck until dead."

Tachibana's death sentence was subsequently commuted to life imprisonment; but on June 19, 1947—eighteen months after sentence had been pronounced—Sakaibara dropped to his death through a gallows trap on Guam. He received the last rites of the Nishi faith from a Buddhist priest.

But this does not end the saga of Wake Island. The history of this four-square-mile "spit kit" of sand, surrounded by the vast Pacific, goes on today as American commercial aviation struggles to rebuild it into a vital link in world communications.

The scars of war are fast being overgrown with vines and underbrush; the Japanese defenses, built at such great cost, are crumbling and rusting away. The concrete revetments, the dugouts, the ammo dumps—all have succumbed to the bulldozer. On Wake's reef, the giant *Suwa Maru* rests at a crazy angle, surrendering to the fury of the surf, mute evidence of the days of violence and war.

WAKE'S ghosts will live on: the ghosts of the Americans who fought and died there in defense of the island; the ghosts of the twelve hundred who stayed behind and worked for the Japanese; the ghosts of four thousand Japs who died of starvation and shellfire; the ghosts of those ninety-six who were executed on a lonely moonlit beach. The ghost of Sakaibara is there now too; and the ghost of Ito, who committed suicide rather than tell his story of what happened on Wake Island.

And somewhere in Wake's coral sand today are the bodies of Americans and Japanese alike. Men caught up by war. Men who will never leave Wake.

Professional



Paul Brown

THE big horse reared and Smith Carson turned his crop around and banged him between the ears with the handle to straighten out their relationship right away.

He heard Mr. Blake take in his breath and he turned and looked down at him but Mr. Blake didn't say anything, just frowned and looked away.

His daughter Judith said: "Mr. Carson!"

He grinned at her and then picked up the horse and took him away from there. The horse was a big bony long-headed Irish hunter, nine years old and black of heart and he ran with a plunging awkwardness; but he could run all day and he took the fences like a hawk.

Later, when they were having a drink on the porch, Mr. Blake said to Carson:

"It was mighty nice of you to come—What do they call you by, son?"

Smith Carson said, "Kit, of course." He smiled at the girl.

"I bought that horse sight unseen—a friend did in Ireland, rather," Mr. Blake said. "Kit, it's kind of awkward but, well, I'd like to pay you somehow for your trouble. You came down from Long Island."

Kit looked out over the rolling Maryland hills, at the white fences, at the sweep of the white-pillared veranda where they sat. He started to answer but the girl said, "Why did you hit Hot Pursuit?"

"Who's Hot Pursuit?"

"The horse."

"Oh? Well, Miss Blake, I like to ride horses but I don't like to have horses take me for a ride." He turned to the girl's father. "How did you happen to pick on me? How did you happen to write me that letter?"

Judith Blake said, "But you *hurt* him."

"I hope so," Kit said. "Why me, Mr. Blake?"

"Judy—"

"We thought you knew a great deal about hunters, Mr. Carson. You ride a great deal," Judith Blake said quickly.

"Judy wanted you to come," Mr. Blake said.

KIT CARSON, smiling faintly, looked up at Judith Blake; then he looked down at his feet, stretched his legs out and put the toes of his boots together like a man making a pyramid with his fingers.

Judith Blake had gone all pink.

She'd still be beautiful, Kit thought, if her daddy only had two instead of twenty millions.

"I concern myself with horses quite a lot," Kit said. He paused. "You have acquired yourself much horse."

"Could you get him so Judy could hunt with him?" Mr. Blake asked.

Kit looked at his boots and shook his head. "No," he said. "That is a horse set in his ways—all bad. You will never get much use out of that one for taking the children to Sunday school."

"What could you do with him?" Mr. Blake asked. Then he quoted the old rodeo saying: "'There ain't no horse that can't be rode.'"

Kit smiled. The skin on his face was tight and dark and his teeth were white when he smiled.

"The rest of it," he said, "is 'and there ain't no man that can't be thrown.'"

Mr. Blake grinned. "What could you do with that horse, son?" he asked again.

"Oh," Kit said. "Maybe win the Midwick Cup." Win the girl, too, maybe, Kit thought. More likely than the Cup. The Midwick Cup—four miles over ditch and water and hedge and fences built like barricades. But the girl—

"The Midwick Cup?" Judith Blake repeated. "Oh, Mr. Carson!"

Kit Carson could observe his own brain and emotions working, and it occurred to him for a fraction of an instant that he viewed himself thus with some slight distaste. But it was time: Time to get off the wearing

Gentleman

A bad horse, a hard point-to-point race, and
a girl with a will of her own.

by EUSTACE COCKRELL

Illustrated by PAUL BROWN

circuit one rode as a professional amateur horseman. Playing polo with the rich—on their ponies—even with an eight-goal rating. Riding steeplechases as a “gentleman rider,” which meant having “Mr.” in front of your name on the program but having to keep your weight down to do it just like any pro.

Yes, it was time to get off the merry-go-round, even though the horses are real. Time to marry some money and—well, and here it is. Mr. Roy Blake is new-rich from oil and he has an only daughter and the only daughter has egged Papa into asking me down to look at the new horse. She has probably read about me, or seen my picture or maybe seen me play polo, or ride some jumpers—and I am lean and dark and thus romantic. . . .

“Could you stay down and get the horse ready?” Mr. Blake was saying. “It’d be a feather in the cap of an old tool-dresser like me to win the Midwick Cup.”

“Yes,” Kit said. “Yes, I could do that, Mr. Blake.” He looked at Judy and she looked up at him through her eyelashes and then let her eyes drop again. “And I couldn’t take anything—any money. I’m an amateur, Mr. Blake.”

So Kit stayed on to work the big horse—winding him up fine, but not too fine. A horse must have some bottom left for four miles of the kind of jumps they have on the Midwick courses. It’s no six-furlong scamper on the flat but a long tough grueling test—four miles of water, hedge, ditch, and fence. And the fences are solid. If a horse kicks the top rail, the rail stays there and the horse goes down.

And the girl every night—but not too fast. In solidly, slowly. She was twenty-three and lonely, and curious about a lean man with no past and no future who had parlayed a gift for horsemanship into an uneasy association with the rich. But she wasn’t subject to hypnotism clear up to the altar.

They were sitting on the veranda again in the twilight. Tired from working with the horse, Kit was watching her. “What are you thinking about?” Judy asked.

“The big horse,” Kit said. “He’s full of heart, you know—all black.”

“That isn’t what you were thinking about.”

He said wryly, “You can lead a girl to the altar but you can’t let her think.”

“What do you mean, Kit?”

“I don’t know. Maybe I’m thinking of that morning I’m going to wake up middle-aged.” He paused and lit a cigarette. “Maybe that morning has already come and I didn’t recognize it.”

“Go on.”

“Go on where? That’s the question, Judy.”

“Have you ever been in love, Kit?” the girl asked him.

“Two polo ponies, and a little bit with this beast of yours I’m riding in the Midwick next week,” Kit said. He paused. “They were honest, the ponies. And this one too, in his own way.”

“It’s an endearing trait,” Judy said. “Honesty.”

“Why did you ask me,” Kit said, “about love?”

The girl shrugged.

“I’ve been down here quite awhile,” Kit said.

“Yes,” the girl said, “quite awhile.”

“I wonder if you care about me, Judy—well, say, well, care about me *some*?” he said, something telling him to say it now.

The girl didn’t say anything but looked at him, and then as if with reluctance she nodded an affirmative.

He got up and walked over and sat down beside her and took her in his arms and kissed her. “Would you marry me?”

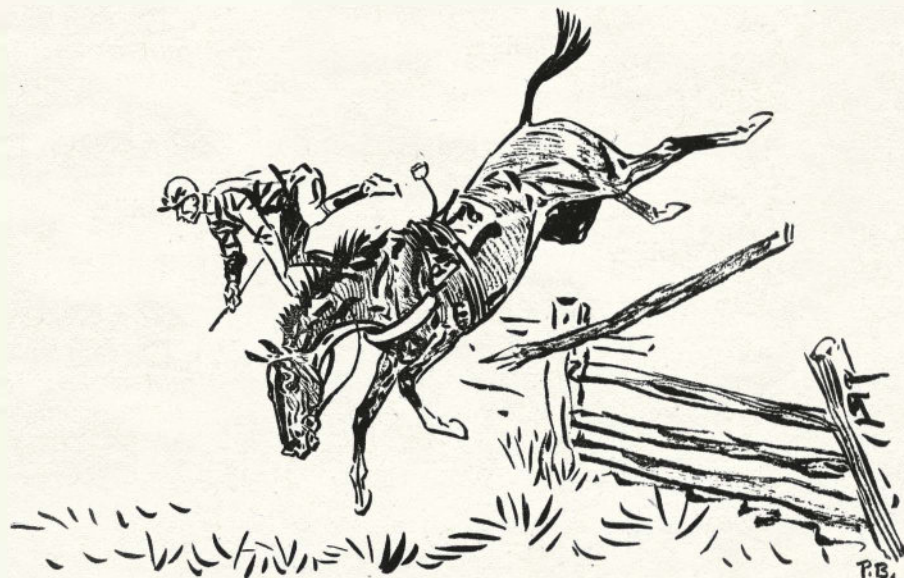
“Yes,” she said. “That’s the way it would have to be with me—the only way it could be with me.”

THE Midwick is over a partly natural course and the people watch from a gentle hill that lies against the stretch, the stretch that’s strewn with rail and solid fence; the long run for home.

Kit tried to shut his mind to everything, everything but the horse and the race, checking the others only automatically, feeling his own horse under him, part of him, now, after the weeks of work. An uneasy melting together of human and equine personalities.

The crowd was out there, felt rather than seen; and the noise and excitement tightened Kit Carson’s lean stomach with a peculiar and lovely tension akin to no other.

It was something that went way back. A horse-race—yes, and a race among men, too. Errantly he thought: I’d like a brick cottage in the country and a cellar full of hams and apples and flour and all kinds of provender and the stock up tight in a warm barn with plenty of feed in the loft and a hell of a blizzard blowing and Judy fixing supper. He could see the kitchen, and the big stove and the copper





kettles and the light in her hair. Warm in there and the sleet and snow blowing outside so you could hear it against the windows.

He didn't look up to see her, up on the hill sitting with her father on the top of a six-thousand-dollar convertible in something original from Fifty-seventh Street.

And the way he was thinking disturbed him because it was taking his mind away from the race, flawing his concentration, and he came to himself with a mental jerk as the flag fell.

THESE were eighteen in the field and they took the first jump, a cresting wave of multicolored lavender, and Kit rated the big horse under him into the ruck trying to think of the thousand things he had to think about.

He wanted to lay back and save ground on the inside and he wanted to be behind horses that wouldn't fall and he— He was trying to think about all those things and he knew he shouldn't have to be thinking of those things—they should have been automatic reactions.

He was riding badly. Nothing you could see, anybody could see, nothing anybody could know but Kit, himself, and the horse. But it was there, a secretly felt thing, a slackening of rapport.

But the big horse went on, head down too far, plunging at the obstacles but taking them clean—the hard way. He was falling back but he was running all the race he could without help and it was quite a lot.

Three horses went down on the water-jump where the course turned obliquely to the left and luck was with them, being so far back, for Hot Pursuit went outside and dragging his feet in the hedge cleared the water that was beyond and was still in the race.

Kit got with the horse, then, and they chewed up space that lay between them and the leaders. Kit Carson, the man with the great pair of hands, he started riding, snapped out of his wandering thoughts.

They went left, again, and hit the long stretch down the back and the people on the hill stood up in their cars and their glasses showed Hot Pursuit, Carson up, lying fifth.

And then it happened. The leader went down on a high fence, pinwheeling, and another horse refused the jump, encumbered as it was by flying hoofs, and turned sharply out.

Hot Pursuit, running him down, went out, too, there being no place else to go. There might have been room and Kit hit the big horse sharply with his bat and they drove for the closing aperture that lay between the refusing horse and the end of the wing.

He made it.

His right foot caught in the wing's upright, and they heard it yards away and Hot Pursuit fought through and over and battled against falling and won.

He plunged for the turn for home and now he had a rider who sat him like a sack of meal.

Kit felt the pain come up his leg and glanced down and his foot was still in the stirrup but turned at a grisly angle. He tried to close down with thigh and knee and take the pressure off and he felt the pain come up his body in waves and across his eyes: a pink haze that came up in jagged lines and walked across his vision with every beat of his heart.

The big horse was outside now, hunting looting, and he took the jump a breath behind the leader and Kit pitched forward, and then back, but the horse rocked on and the smell of him came up, acrid with foamy sweat.

PAIN is a thing your nerves tell your brain. So tell your brain another thing. Tell your brain that this is a canter up the lane to a girl in a shabby kitchen with lights in her hair that match the copper kettles. . . . But tell the horse you want to help him, tell him you're still there.

He took up a little, and tightened down for the jump that was coming, two more and home, and he hit the big horse with the crop and yelled at

him, something he had never done before.

He came, they came, up the stretch and he was a head off the pace the leader set and as he passed the people on the hill they went quiet with collective indrawn breath.

Silence swept along with Kit Carson like the shadow of doom, for the foot the crowd could see still sat at its macabre angle but now blood bubbled from the boot that housed it and dribbled down its side.

He yelled again at the horse, a tremendous prayerful curse and hit him once more as they looked the leader in the eye and came up to the last hurdle.

Kit Carson, the man with the great seat and the great pair of hands; the equestrian bum, never took one better. They passed the flags and the big horse swung out and to the right, slowing, knowing the race was over better than Kit Carson, who, fainting, slid gently to the ground.

JUNY came to see him first of all when they had finished with the leg and standing at the foot of the bed she looked down at him, her love in her wet eyes two nails in his heart.

She came around and put her arms around him but he turned his face away.

"Darling, Kit," the girl said. "What is it?"

"It's no good, baby. Did you talk to the doctors?"

"No."

He said as lightly as he could. "They rather think I'll ride no more."

"How wonderful—you can put on a little weight and—"

"Wonderful? No, honey, not wonderful." He stopped, then tried to get it into words, clear and precise and exact. But they weren't there and he had to hurry. He went on: "It's all I can do. And now that I can't do anything, I'll not marry you."

"Oh, Kit—I'm not in love with a rider . . ."

"Oh, yes, you are," Kit Carson said, "if you think you are in love with me. . . ." What a time to fall in love, he thought bitterly. If I weren't in love with her then I could marry her and coast out my life. Why now a twinge of honor? But you mustn't think. You must not support the scene until it can no longer be supported. "You are confusing love and pity, my dear," he said. "Please go away."

"You don't love me?"

"No," he said between his teeth. "I don't love you. Now go away!"

The girl went away and Kit Carson lay there. He lay there for a day, glad of the pain that wracked his leg, glad he was safe from everything there in his hospital bed.

Mr. Blake appeared next day and he was casual, politely concerned. He

took a flask from his pocket and poured a drink and handed it to Kit and admired the complications of the ropes and pulleys that held Kit Carson's leg. "Have a jolt, kid," he said. "That was quite a do, that race you rode."

Kit drank the drink. "Thank you," he said flatly.

Mr. Blake looked at the ceiling. "I been reading, lately," he said, "the racing publications. They sure are blunt, the fellows that write the comment under the chart."

Kit didn't answer for a moment and then he said, "Yes?"

"Like when they say 'When the real racing began, Carson quit.' That's assuming a horse is named Carson, of course."

Kit looked at Mr. Blake. "Look, Mr. Blake, they've said for years: 'Carson's got a great pair of hands. Carson's got great seat.' But never have they said 'Carson's got a great heart!'"

"No?"

"You don't want your daughter married to, to—well, to me."

"Don't I?"

"Hell, Mr. Blake, they destroy horses with broken legs. . . ."

"Well, do what you want to do. Judy would." He added somberly, "She is."

"What?"

"She took Hot Pursuit out this morning. . . ."

"You let her?"

"Let? Hell, Kit, she can't come in here with a preacher and make you marry her and I can't tie her up and tell her she can't do this or that."

"Where is she?"

"Right now she's downstairs in the car. She fell easy this morning."

"Tell her to come up here."

MR. BLAKE shrugged and moved away.

And then the girl stood at the foot of the bed once more and looked down at Kit guardedly.

"What do you mean going out on that big brute?" Kit asked.

"Well, I must say. . . . He's *my* horse, you know."

"He's liable to kill you, you little fool."

"He killed you, didn't he?" Judith Blake said.

"Skip that," Kit said. "*Stay off that horse.*"

The girl laughed.

"Mr. Blake," Kit said finally, evenly. "If you will go out and get a preacher and make the arrangements about the license—" He reached up suddenly and took Judith by the arm. "I'll tie her up and tell her what she can do."

Judith Blake said weakly, happiness in her voice and her eyes bright with tears: "You don't have to twist my arm."

Arms and the Woman

Kady Brownell

—Color Sergeant

THE FIRST OF A DEEPLY INTERESTING SERIES ABOUT THE
WOMEN WHO HAVE FOUGHT IN OUR VARIOUS WARS.

by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

SHE carried the flag in the last big war when colors marched unfurled up into the firing-line, when they swept forward, streaming, in a charge, or served as a rallying-point. Enemy musketry and artillery concentrated on that ideal target. If the bright-hued emblem crashed down, often an attack was broken or a retreat was turned into a rout.

Color-bearer was a brave man's detail in the Civil War; but nineteen-year-old Kady Brownell handled it as gallantly as any man. While she grasped the staff, the Stars and Stripes never faltered in the face of the foe.

Woman's place was in the home, sewing on a flag—as had Betsy Ross; or on the parade ground, prettily presenting colors to a regiment about to entrain for the front. Kady disregarded such weaker sex traditions. To her, a woman's place was with her man; and if he happened to be in the Army, what possible difference could that make?

She came by the idea naturally. Her mother had accompanied her soldier father, a Scot in the British service, to his station on the African coast, and there Kady was born in 1842. Emigrating to the United States, she married a Providence, Rhode Island, mechanic—Robert S. Brownell. When Abe Lincoln called for volunteers, Brownell enlisted in the First Rhode Island Infantry and was made sergeant. Just as promptly his young wife came forward to join up. Not only was she accepted, but she was appointed color-bearer.

Certainly that was unprecedented. But Kady had been bred an Army girl and knew far more about military service than the bulk of the raw recruits in the regiment. Furthermore,

she was definitely going along with her husband. Probably the commanding officer of the First never had encountered a more determined female. Although Kady's name does not appear on the roster, she was present and accounted for when the outfit, shifted southward, pitched camp in Maryland.

From the first she was resolved not to be a mere water-carrier or camp-follower, nor yet an angel of mercy as Clara Barton was about to become. Kady Brownell was of more martial stuff. She took part in target practice. Though the customary ammunition shortage limited each man to three rounds, Kady's eye proved so keen that she was allowed more, developed into one of the best shots in the regiment and was rated sharpshooter. Formidable also with the sergeant's short sword that swung at her side, she engaged in frequent fencing bouts with her husband and his friends. In all hikes she marched along carrying the colors at the side of Sergeant Brownell, while the rest of the column reflected wistfully on the girls they left behind them.

PASSING troops gasped and goggled, as would the enemy shortly. They had seen everything now. That was a woman there, carrying the flag. Kady's long hair, parted in the middle, fluttered in the breeze like the banner she bore. At the throat of her loose blouse with a white collar she wore a cameo brooch, and a tasseled sash bound her waist. Her short skirt extended to her knees, and beneath it appeared trousers in the manner of the French Army *vandières* who had made the same concession to field service. Bobby Burns never would have written a poem to her

beauty; but her pleasant open Scottish lassie's face was far from dour or unfeminine.

Across the Potomac the regiment received its baptism of fire. A skirmish in a pine woods separated Kady from her husband. Union lines bent and broke under a wild assault by Gray legions, yipping the shrill Rebel yell. The color-bearer stayed at her post, flaunting the flag for a rally that was never made. Almost alone, she stood fast, with Confederate batteries blazing away at her from a range of a few hundred yards.

A Pennsylvania trooper, running past Kady, seized her by the hand and shouted, "Come on, sis. There's no use to stay here just to be killed. Let's get into the woods." Still holding the flag high, Kady retreated; but before

they reached cover, a cannonball shattered the head of the soldier at her side.

Word came that her husband lay dead on the battlefield. Kady turned over the colors to another bearer, caught a stray horse and was riding straight toward the enemy lines to find her sergeant when the Colonel called that Brownell was safe and unhurt.

The First, a three-months regiment, was sent back to Providence and mustered out. At once the Brownells re-upped in the 5th Rhode Island Heavy Artillery and marched back to war. They saw action again in Burnside's command during the advance on Richmond from the south in the autumn of '61. Kady, now the adored daughter of the regiment, had added nurse duty to that of color-bearer.

Drawn by
FREDERICK
CHAPMAN



Passing troops gasped and goggled; as would the enemy shortly. They had seen everything now. That was a woman there, carrying the flag.

In March, 1862, the Fifth, acting as infantry, debarked from a river transport and hiked fourteen miles to join the attack on the Confederate field works at New Berne. As it prepared to launch a charge from a woods, the color-bearer took post in the front rank as a matter of course. Officers sternly ordered her back. Kady stubbornly stayed right where she was, and she was still there when the column advanced into the open.

As the Fifth appeared, Union troops on its flanks failed to recognize it. Blue infantry and artillery were within an ace of pouring murderous volleys into it as a surprise Rebel attacking force, when Kady saved her regiment by rushing out in front, waving the Stars and Stripes.

THAT was enough in line of duty for Mrs. Brownell, officers decided. They insisted on turning over the colors to another bearer and ordering Kady to the rear. They might have known that was the last place she would go while she had a husband to look after. She followed the charge and found her Robert lying in a brickyard, which had been part of the enemy defenses, his thigh shattered by a Minié ball. No artery was severed, and she bandaged him, going on to attend other wounded; nor did she neglect the men in gray. She had dragged one bloody Confederate engineer from the muddy pool half submerging him and was ministering to him when the man stared up at this disheveled girl, who was certainly no picture of charming Southern womanhood. In pain and fury he cursed her, declares a chronicler, using the discreet dashes of the day:

"Ah, you d--- Yankee-----, if ever I get on my feet again, if I don't blow the head off your shoulders, then God d--- me!"

Fallen foe or not, it was too much for Kady. Outraged beyond control, she snatched up a bayoneted musket. "In a moment more his profane and indecent tongue would have been hushed forever." But a Union soldier lying near at hand shoved the bayonet aside and stayed Kady's hand.

Her devoted nursing helped save her husband's leg, and despite her bitter experience she cared for Confederate wounded in the same hospital. First Sergeant Brownell, Company A, 5th R. I. Heavy Artillery, was invalided home and discharged as unfit for further active service. His wife, accompanying him as always, also returned to civilian life and hung up her short sword on the wall of their home.

For the rest of her life that sword guarded a gift from the regiment, a stand of colors—the star-spangled banner Kady Brownell had borne so valiantly in action.



"Think I'd go out for business with a lady's gun?"

The Low-Down

A DRAMATIC SCENE ON THAT ROAD TO HELL THAT IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS.

by EDWARD L. McKENNA

NOW listen, Dave: This is strictly a wrong; a wrong. It's a bum rap, see? You think I'd go out for business with a pearl-handled thirty-two, a lady's gun? It don't stand to reason. You go see Whitey, ask him to spring me. Tell him—you tell him how it is. Go easy on the Daisy business, on account of him and her were like that once, and then they split. But nobody could stay mad at Daisy, particularly now she's gone. If Whitey goes to the front for me, then maybe I could cop a plea or maybe I could just blow. It's just that bad, see.

I give you the low-down:

I knew Daisy Varden since Prohibition. She's just a punk kid, fourth from the end of the front line. I'm—well, I'm helping around in this drum, the Club Brantome, the name of it is. You remember the Club Brantome; you knew what it was like. I'm wearing a tux and making myself handy with the noisy drunks and the squawkers. It's better than taking it on the chin at the St. Nick or the Broadway, anyhow.

Somebody, maybe it was Whitey, gets the idea that Daisy is entitled to a break. They let her do a number at the supper show. The kid is scared to death. She goes by me, and I haul off and give her a smack for good luck. "Get in there, knock them into Row Twelve," I says. "Who are they? They ain't nobody." Daisy was a good kid. She always was a good kid.

She goes out and lays them in the aisles. "Sweet Annabelle Lee," the number is. It wows them. She comes running off, and when she gets up to me, she gives me a sock in the ribs. "Howja like that? Howja like that?" she says. She is half bawling. "Go on. Get yourself organized," I says. "Catch another bow. You ain't stealing it," I says. Neither was she. . . .

No, absolutely not. I ain't throwing anything as good as her over my shoulder. I was always working with Whitey, for one thing. Whether she ever was Whitey's babe, I don't know for sure. I know she wasn't for long. She always had somebody, and generally he was a rat, too. She was always looking for somebody to take

care of, somebody to look out for. The kind of a deal she got from them is just about what you'd expect.

By the time the Club Brantome folds, Daisy's out of the line and doing a single. I was doing a little different, myself. I go for a few ocean voyages, out to the Bahamas and Cape Breton Island, all like that. I'm doing all right, till they jack-roll me. I get back to the Big Apple without a dime. So, I heist a few trucks out off Long Beach and Bay Shore, all like that, only they are the wrong trucks. Every hick cop in Nassau County rumbles me, and one night I get a slug in my leg, and bimeby I am saying: "Good morning, Judge." And I get two to five up in the country, and I'd have got more only for you, Dave, you and Whitey. Well, I done a few little things for him, too.

AND who sends me up cigarettes, and fruit, and stuff? Well, two or three of them do when they think of it, but Daisy sends something all the time, and she writes me a letter once in a while, and the babe is just like

me—if she ever gets through the eighth grade, it's a miracle.

I do my two and a bit, and when they let me out, I get smart. I tie up with Whitey for keeps, and he sends me out to Indianapolis to do a little something for him. Probably you knew about that, who it was. Yeah, there were two guys with me and the driver. One of them is out in Joliet. Another is Butch; he helped me out on this Varden touch. The driver's dead.

Whitey never forgets it. He never forgets anything. He got me fixed up nice. He makes me manager of this joint up on 51st Street. I still get it, as you know. I'm doing good, no rough-house, anyhow, not much. I try to run it O.K. Now, look, Dave, I got a gat stashed away, like everybody else, but it's been there for five years. I don't pack no rod. I don't have to.

As soon as I get going, I look around for talent, and I think of Daisy. She's coming along all right, working in clubs in Chi and Miami, and around. I speak about her to Whitey, and he don't say nothing for a minute and then he says: "Sure, O.K."

Boy, I get her, and she sings in my place all that winter. She's good; she brings them in. It's O.K., it's fine for business, but still and all, I don't know.

You see, she got ideas by this time. She's tops for night-clubs, and she's sort of temperamental. I don't mean she won't go out and give an audience all she got. She's a swell trouper all the time, so far as that goes. But she got ideas, see? She's always trying to build up the show, spend more jack on costumes, and get more pieces in the orchestra. Noise! How that dame likes noise! Just because she can holler down the Philharmonic herself, she thinks everybody wants to go deed. She'da had steam whistles in that band, if she could. Everything's got to be full of zing. The show's got to go off like the Kentucky Derby. It's O.K., but I guess I get used to quiet up in the Big House, and I kind of like it quiet.

The battles I have with that dame! Listen, I get a couple of Spaniards from Eighth Avenue, a dance team. They are good, all right; but the guy, he likes his sauce. The third time he shows up lit, I tie the can to them. You think I can make it stick? Daisy, she knows them from way back; they played on some bill together; they are swell kids, she says. She could talk you out of your eyeteeth. Many's the time I say to her: "Who's running this drum, you or me?" She'd drive you nuts.

The customers thought she was a jolly, good-natured kid. So she was, but she really only liked her own kind

—entertainers, show people, boxers, jockeys, ball-players. She didn't like her audiences. People tell you she liked a good spender. It's a lie. She'd rather talk to a animal-trainer or an iron-jaw act than any of that Park Avenue bunch she used to kid along. She was from Hammond, Indiana, but she'd make a snoot if she saw a hat with a Peoria or a Jefferson City label. "Hicks," she would say. Ooh, how she did not go for hicks!

And it was hicks that was in our place, and in her own place afterward.



Daisy could talk you out of your eyeteeth. Many's the

Hicks, big business men with briefcases full of stuff they got to read on Pullmans. Phonies in tuxedos from Larchmont or Mamaroneck, having their big every other Thursday night out. Yaagh!

HER OWN place—that was what she had in her mind, all the time. She wanted to be the boss. She wanted to run things. Wanted to pick out her own unit, line girls, dance teams, hostesses, an orchestra with two sets of traps and maybe four bass drums.



time I say to her: "Who's running this drum, you or me?"

Now, if she had gone to Whitey and told him, maybe he would have said O.K. But you know Whitey. He don't think anybody can run even a lawnmower in Central Park without he gets some advice from Whitey and gives him a cut. Whitey's the real big shot in this town, all right, and he done plenty for me. All the same—

Remember, when she did open her café, how much trouble she had? That was long past repeal, but she had trouble with her liquor shipments, and her waiters struck, and they had her in

court for serving drunks and keeping open after hours. She paid plenty for protection, and she was always in a jam. Some people say Whitey, he done it. I wouldn't want to know.

I was sort of nice in my place after Daisy left. Myself, I like a place where there is maybe a little music, but the real works is the feed and the liquor. I must say I don't like no dance-floor, either. These guys who can do a hot rhumba may be O.K. but give me the serious guys who are willing to sit

across a table and buy a babe a few drinks and see how they make out.

On account of Whitey, I didn't see Daisy so much. Whatever they were before, they weren't that way after she got her own club. I hear about her, and I see her name up in lights, which she always wanted. She's getting plenty of publicity, and plenty of summonses, which might be all right, both times. Then I hear she ain't doing so well as it looks. She is getting a good gross, but she is being gypped for plenty. They say her feed is terrible, but where is it good? Some of her girls are all right, but then on the other hand she got ponies who are twenty-eight years old and show girls who weigh a hundred and forty. She won't fire anybody who knew her when. She ain't got the heart to fire anybody, anyhow, unless she gets good and mad. And she always wants to give a young kid a chance. So what happens? So the ones who got stuff leave her flat when it suits them, and all the has-beens and never-wases keep right on dancing and showing their gold teeth.

Still, and all, she's always Daisy Varden, and Daisy Varden was tops in the night-club business for my money. Tell you how I rate singles: Sophie Tucker, singing "Some of These Days;" Fay Templeton, singing "Rosie, You Are My Posie;" Nora Bayes, singing anything but "Shine on Harvest Moon," because I am kinda tired of it; Marie Lloyd singing "If You Were the Only Boy in the World;" and Daisy Varden, coming out like the Tenth Cavalry, and saying "Come on, boys, hit it," and shouting the orchestra down. That dame could have sailed a catboat on a calm day with her voice. "Sundown" was the one I liked best. Poor Walter Donaldson's number, "I'll Tell the World I'm in Heaven When Night is Falling and Love is Calling Me Home,"—boy, could she hit that one!

You know what happened to her. This club and that club, all kinds of griel, all kinds of jams. She files her petition, and the auctioneer comes, and she gets next to nothing for her stuff—which, of course, is the regular thing. Starts all over again in this town, the town that Whitey runs. Well, you can't beat her. She gets a crack at one of the big picture-houses, and she plays six weeks. Maybe she saves her jack; maybe she gets a backer. She opens up again. This time she is really making it go. She is turning them away when everybody else is starving to death. And most of her old friends are pulling for her.

Then, what happens? You know what happens. One night Daisy has a cold. She sings, anyhow. She gets into a costume that is breast-plates and trunks, and she tries to sing, and she



There is only one thing to do. It gets done.

breaks down; her voice cracks in the middle. She looks at them and grins, and puts out her hand. "O.K., boys," she says, "give the old lady a chance. Come on, you. Hit it." This time she finishes, and they give her a great hand. Know what it is she sings? "You're Gonna Lose Your Gal," an old number.

Next morning she is in St. James Hospital with the pneumonia.

Tommy Mullaney calls me up the third day. He's her band-leader. He says the kid is not so good, and that she wants to see me.

I go up there. I send her up stuff from my florist, all like that. They don't want to let me in. I say I am her brother. She ain't got any brothers, but they let me in.

I take one look, and I know it's get-away-day for her. She makes me, all right. "Hello, Spike," she says.

"They told me you were sick," I said.

"I'm a flop, Spike," she said. "I flopped in my own old club."

"Nuts," I said. "You never flopped in your whole life."

Then she says: "My kids, my kids! What's gonna become of my kids?"

"Shut up. I'll crown you," I said. "We'll look out for your kids until you're on your feet."

"Who's we?" she says.

"Me and Whi—" I said, and then stopped. I could bite my tongue out. "I don't think Whitey," she said.

"Oh, yes. Yes, he's a good fellow," I said. "I wish you'd fix it up with him, Daisy."

"Maybe," she said, "maybe."

SHE don't say nothing. Then she says: "Spike, you and me was always shipmates. You, you look after my kids, will you, till I'm out of here? Some of them are awful dopes."

"I'll take care of them," I say, "and you take care of yourself, you."

"God bless you, Spike," she says. "See you in the lunny papers."

I wave my hand to her from the doorway. But she has already closed her eyes.

I talk to the Doc. She ain't got a chance, he says. She's got nothing left but a prayer.

So I get a hold of Tommy Mullaney—he ain't in this. He strictly ain't in it. He tells me what I want to know. I don't say he couldn't give a guess what happens.

I know where that babe got her stuff. Not in no bank. I know Daisy for ten years, better than ten years. I get a couple of guys—lean close—yeah, yeah, I guess you defended both of them. They're yeggs, and you get all of the yeggs. You're a funny guy, Dave. They say you'll never take a booster or a dip or a pineapple. I don't like thieves, myself, but I get along all right with yeggs.

I hire a couple of rooms over at the Savoy, right near Daisy's apartment. I make arrangements to have the St. James Hospital called every fifteen minutes—not down at the Savoy switchboard—from outside. We sit there and play rummy, these two I was telling you about and me. I win five dollars off of them, and Joe, he wins eight cents. The telephone call comes through at eight o'clock that night. Daisy's dead.

I had made up my mind what to do, see, Dave. She lived alone—that is, well, she didn't have no maid or nothing. I knew that whatever jack or jewelry or coats or stuff she had would be at her place. I got the low-down on a lot of this from Tommy, earlier that afternoon.

THERE is an elevator man and a guy at the door over at Daisy's. There is no trouble with them. Joe and Butch and I ride up to the tenth. She lived on the eighth. We walk down. It doesn't take two minutes until we are inside. These guys know their stuff. It is a new grift for me.

I know where everything is, from Tommy. It don't take so long to get it. Everything goes fine. There is only one thing. While we are working, we hear a key, very quietlike, in the door. We keep quiet. There is only one thing to do. It gets done. Don't ask me who done it. We are all in it. It's first degree for everybody.

I guess you know who he was. He was a rat, like the others, him and his passkey. He was there to make that touch. He wasn't sitting in that hospital with his dead girl, no. So he got it, anyhow. I took the key off him, by the way, and dropped it on the Boston Post Road.

I had said I would give Butch and Joe two yards and a half apiece. On account of what happened, I give them each a extra yard. Three hundred and fifty dollars, yeah. It was no three-way split. That dough was out of my own kick. Joe didn't like it so good, but Butch will always back me up. He'd better!

After this thing happens, we wait a few minutes, but everything is nice and quiet. So we finish up, and go back to the tenth, and push the buzzer. That's the longest part of the job, waiting for the elevator.

It was very bad, very bad, Dave, see, on account of what happened in there. We had to take that elevator down, see? I don't think either the elevator man or the starter could identify any of us—but still, but still—

The stuff is mostly jewelry, but there is a good deal of cash, and a few bonds. I get rid of the ice, here and there, for maybe a quarter, a third of what it's worth. It come to about three thousand dollars.

Daisy was paying for a dame at White Sulphur Springs, and one at Saranac. Well, I inquire around and I hear that Equity will take care of the Saranac outfit. So I sent them a little piece of change, enough for a front, or a couple of parties. The dame at White Sulphur I am still paying for. Same way with a dame doing ten years at Auburn. Daisy used to send her candy, cigarettes, underwear, all like that. It's still being done. It's not a big item.

About the kids in her show, seven of them has got jobs, or else they are married, or somebody's keeping them. I checked up on all of them, the best I could.

There was a few more I can't locate. Maybe they blew the town: maybe they're out on the street; maybe they're in some jam; maybe they're O.K. I got all their names. I might run across them.

The ones that ain't got jobs are all fixed up for the time being. My idea is, I'll stake them to a few bucks, as long as the jack holds out. One of Whitey's boys married one of them last week. I asked him to look her up, and he marries her. Another was hustling over in Newark, down and out, looking terrible. Give her a little jack, she buys a flock of new clothes. She can work the Bermuda boats, the way she looks. Another one is helping my hat-check girl. She is a pip; her name is Edna. I wouldn't have run into her if it hadn't been for all this.

I'll show you the list sometime, Dave, and I'll show you where every dime of Daisy's money goes. "Take care of my kids," she says. I am doing it. That's why I am in this jam.

Look—yesterday I get word that this Clara Purcell is living in a furnished room out around Long Island City. O.K.—you remember Clara Purcell? She is older than Daisy, older and heftier. She is one of these show girls I told you about that stuck with Daisy, and Daisy wouldn't fire them. She had some looks once, not lately. Daisy let her work just the same. She wasn't the only one either, like I told you before.

WELL, like a dope, I go out there myself. I get in the heap and drive over. Clara is living in an awful fleabag. She looks terrible.

There is some of a bottle of gin left. She has had plenty.

I sit down and have a shot. Then I make the mistake of breaking out my own bottle. Naturally, Clara would rather have the rye, and it does not do her any good.

All I am trying to do is slip this twist a little of Daisy's jack, and do it nice, see? I'm just sitting down, saying hello, how are you, and gonna get around to it in a minute or two.

This dizzy tramp gets an awful crying jag. She gets tighter and tighter and sadder and sadder. Nobody wants her—she can't get no job—she is too old—all like that.

All of a sudden she gets up, says "excuse me," makes a quick pass for a bureau drawer. I grab her just in time.

I get the gat away from her. "What's the big idea?" I said. "You sit down. You have a drink. Why, we went to different schools together, and all. Here. That's a good girl." Finally I give her fifty bucks and I tell her: "You get yourself organized a little, you lie down, catch some sleep. Let the liquor alone tomorrow, come to see me Thursday over at my club. I'll buy you a new dress. Job? Don't make me laugh. You'll get a job."

But she won't get no job, Dave. The dame is all done for show business.

She throws her arms around me and gives me a great big kiss and cries some more. Well, I can hardly get away from there, Dave. I don't want no new dame, Dave. I got too many dames now. It will be nice if she comes around to the club, and Edna sees her. Or maybe Josephine would hear about it.

I GET to thinking about it, driving home. First thing you know—bam, I hit a Yellow cab, and the lights are against me, at that. One of those wise Brooklyn bulls comes up. He smells my breath. I had two drinks: that's as good as a thousand. And he frisks me—and there in my coat pocket is this lousy pearl-handled lady's revolver I took off of Clara, and forgot all about.

Gees, look! A Sullivan Act violation! Driving when drunk—I wasn't. Going through a light. And me, I done two and a bit in the Big House. I been running a dive, they say. Well, it ain't a dive, but that's what they'll say. And I don't want my picture in the paper, Dave, on account maybe that doorman or that elevator boy will say:

"Why, that's one of three guys I took up to floor ten one night when something happened in Daisy Varden's apartment."

That couldn't happen. It couldn't happen, could it, Dave?

You go to Whitey, Dave. But look, he wasn't such good friends with Daisy. Maybe he thinks I moved in on him or something, huh? I never did. I tried to do my best for Daisy because I—well, just because I always liked her.

Look—go to Whitey. Ask him if for a pearl-handled pop-gun they will make me a two-time loser.

Or—or maybe I better cop a plea. Huh?

Listen, Dave—



Red Fingers

THE SCENE IS POST-WAR PAPUA; THE STORY A POIGNANT DRAMA OF LOVE AND DEATH
AMONG THE FEW RETURNING WHITE PEOPLE.

As told to BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

AFTER the War, it seemed to me that there was little change in Papua, in that part of it, at least, that I had chosen to call mine. I had gone away and come back, and there was the mangrove wall, a hundred feet high, severing land from sea, and west from east, where the big troubles had been. And the endless windbeaten black-sand beaches. And my store, empty of goods, but with its iron roof and

sago walls unbroken. Have little, and you can face a world war calmly.

I was stacking on the shelves the goods that I had brought up from Cairns—native trade goods, tins and calicoes and tobacco and hurricane lamps—and whistling to myself as I savored the quiet, the peace of this outback spot; hearing the slap of little waves on the black-sand shore, and the thrash of palmleaves on the roof above me, and nothing else at all.

Thirty years, I thought, and I saw them running past me like telegraph poles past a train, since I was a lad of eighteen; and the end of it was this long dusky shed with a door at each end, and a bunk beneath the counter; naked barefoot buyers of my goods, and peace, peace.

Forthwith the door was darkened, the seaward door with the Gulf of Papua behind it, and a white man came in.

Without greeting or preliminary he said: "There's a grapevine rumor come down the coast from Mararu Station. A white woman's gone bush."

I got to my feet. "The hell she has!" I said. This man was a newcomer; I understood better than he what such a disaster might mean. Death, in a dozen ways, or happenings worse than death. The best one could hope for, silence.

It had been late when I finished my unpacking; into the wide Gulf waters stained by the gloomy Fly, the sun was quickly sinking. The day was almost done, and with it, hour by hour, died one more chance, one slender hope for a woman's life.

I WASTED no time. Throwing food and biscuits, quinine and a rolled-up mosquito net, into a bag, I called to my boys to help along with the whaleboat. We got it afloat in a matter of minutes, and out into the tossing unsheltered waters of the Gulf. Not till we had the sail up, and were leaning hard away from the wild nor'west wind, did I take time to speak to my fellow-traveler. "You're Keenan, aren't you?" I said, shouting against the ugly shriek of the wind. "One of the forestry blokes that's come down from Port Moresby."

He nodded; it was difficult to speak with that hag of a nor'wester tattering at the sail and clawing your face. "You're Bonnington," he shouted. "I've heard of you: everyone knows you. That's why—" The wind caught him in the jaws.

Ahead of us, in the growing dusk, rose a cape that offered temporary shelter. Jerry Keenan was eager to speak. "They say you know more about the jungle than—*whff!*" He wiped the splash of spray from his face.

"I've had thirty years of New Guinea, more or less, to learn it," I said. "Who's the woman, and how did she get lost?"

"She didn't get lost," he shouted. "She ran away."

"Into the jungle?"

"Yes."

"What the devil for? Mad?"

"I—I don't think so. She—"

"Who was she?" Unconsciously, I had used the past tense; I saw him wince as if he had been struck.

"Ruth Cullen."

"Miss Cullen—why, she was to have married Bob Leighton day after tomorrow; Bob has gone to Daru to fetch the parson—she wasn't due at the station for another two days."

"The natives seem to know all about it. The boat she was to have come by broke down, and she had the chance of a trading ketch calling in. And something went wrong—no, I don't know what—"

"I reckon I do," was my comment. Dark had come down on the unquiet

Gulf; a changed course had given us a favorable slant, nearer to the invisible shores where the Bamu and the Aird poured forth their unclean floods. Nobody there, nobody behind us; before us another fifty miles of desolate sandbank, reef and river bar, to Mararu Station, alone in its tiny clearing, sole oasis in an uninhabited hundred miles of mangrove and black beach.

"You know? What was it?" Keenan eagerly cried. I did not choose to answer. I remembered now that this young fellow not long resident in the country, was said to be a lover, an unsuccessful one, of the girl whose fate we were discussing. He was good-looking, kindly and popular; but against him was Bob Leighton's position as Resident Magistrate, Leighton's personal charm, of which he made unscrupulous capital, and Ruth Cullen's almost crazy passion for her bridegroom-to-be. . . . Little, fair creature that she was, she had laid her heart at Leighton's feet—and her money with it, though that was not generally discussed.

THE wind was with us; dawn had hardly broken, yellow and threatening, before I steered the whaleboat into the little bay that sheltered the Government station. Behind the Magistrate's bungalow, with its scarlet croton hedges, its avenue of scented

frangipanni, rose, at the back of a narrow clearing, the blue-black jungle wall, tall mangroves set with their feet in the gloomy marsh water, leading by who-knew-what dark ways to end in who-knows-where. They do not want us, those unchanging ramparts of the unknown; sinister they are, and evil; yet I have lived within call of them for thirty years; and my grave, I think, will one day be dug in the black-sand beaches beside them.

Sail down, we ran in with the crew hard at the oars; the sun was up now, and showed, at the end of the little jetty, waiting, a figure dressed in white.

"Thank God!" burst from Keenan's lips. "She's safe."

"Way 'nuff!" I ordered, and steered to the tidewashed steps. My sight is keen; I knew that figure; I had not been altogether surprised to find it—and it was not Ruth's.

Keenan, hurrying along the jetty with myself close behind, saw his mistake. "Who is it?" he demanded, not without hope. This girl might know—

I said: "It's the prettiest girl in Papua—Alexa Massey." Now, I thought, the fat's in the fire. The natives know everything. Down the coast had come to my humble shack, not long before, tales about Leighton and this beautiful girl, tales that might, as people say, have set the place on fire. Certainly Alexa could set on fire whom



Alexa laughed. "I'd see her in a crocodile's jaws, and not stir a foot. She stole Bob from me."

she liked, and when. Slim, high-breasted as a very Juno, eyes passionate, dark; hair red-gold as sunset, arched small feet in silver sandals, legs slender, rising to white knees curved like shells—Alexa caught and held the eye, so that you could not, for a moment, hold judgment on her for any or all of her defects. (Did I know her well? Well enough, and that's that.)

Keenan, for one, was not impressed by her. The image in his mind must have been different: a little fair gentle creature, with pale angelic curls, and eyes as blue as mint flowers of Port Moresby. To Alexa he threw an eager question or two: "Where is Ruth? What's happened? Is she safe? Are the police out looking?" Even as he spoke, he pushed her aside, and ran for the Residency steps. Alexa lit a cigarette and followed him. She drew a puff or two before she answered, addressing herself to me: "The little fool," she said, "ran away into the jungle day before yesterday."

"Why?"

"Do I know? She hadn't been here half an hour—the ketch was hardly out of sight. Bob would have turned up in a day or two. He took his police; there was some trouble down the coast. . . . The cooky and his wife were here. Maybe Ruth took offense at something."

"And showed it," I said, "by choosing snakes and crocodiles rather than the company she found."

ALEXA laughed shortly. "You're nearer than you think. I'd see her in a crocodile's jaws, and not stir a foot. She took Bob from me."

"You overstayed your visit here, so that she found you in possession. And you let her go to her death—probably."

"I didn't know she was going to fly off her nut," the girl said, puffing at her cigarette. "I let the houseboys go looking for her. They haven't come back. I don't care if they never do—or her."

"What you are," I told her, "is a murderess—or next to it."

The strange thing was that she resented that. "I might—do a good deal," she said. "But I've never had anyone's death on my conscience."

"On your what?" I asked, and without waiting for reply, ran up the veranda steps. I met Keenan coming out.

"Not a sign of Ruth," he said despairingly. "Look here. I want to show you something."

It was the double bedroom—the only bedroom furnished in the house. Alexa's goods were all over it.

I said, not quite believing myself: "She may have been using it when he was away."

"Yes, and when he wasn't," came Alexa's voice behind us.

"She's let Ruth know everything, and driven her insane," Keenan cried. "That ketch should have taken Alexa away before ever Ruth came along. Bob may be a villain, but he's not quite a cad."

His face was yellow with the weariness and strain of the long night; there was dangerous fire in his eyes. I got between him and Alexa; I didn't want to see those cringing fingers of his meet round her neck. "We're wasting time," I warned. "Let's get some food and go." There were some remains of breakfast in the living-room, but he would not touch it.

"How do you know she hasn't poisoned it?" he asked.

Again Alexa showed resentment. "I'd let anything happen to anyone who stood in my way," she declared. "But kill I never would."

It seemed to me that she was clinging in a manner almost pathetic to the one rag of conscience she possessed. It didn't surprise me; after thirty years of the jungle, nothing could. But Keenan looked at her as if her soul, to his mind, were as black as her face was fair. "Come on," was all he said.

I filled my pockets with what food I could find, and accompanied by the whaleboat crew, started off.

Middle-aged though I am, I beat Keenan in the first hurry through the half-cleared swamp behind the station. The mangrove forest came next; and there we went slowly, helped by the long clearing-knives of the crew. The high bronzed trunks, knitted together by tangles of black basketry, rose toward the invisible sky as closely set as a bed of rushes; dark water and dark mud were underfoot; the shining back of a snake showed up against a fallen log. "There's no crocodiles," Jerry said, in a low voice, as if he judged loud speaking to be dangerous. "There's plenty, but you don't see them," I told him. Even as I spoke, a prostrate log quietly changed itself into a dripping head with green eyes and long sneering jaw, close upon us. I fired my Navy .45 into the wicked eyes, and the head and the half body that had followed it slid under the mud again.

"The crocodiles aren't the only risk," I told Jerry.

"Natives?" he asked breathlessly. The pace that I was keeping, spurred on by what I knew, had winded him.

The boat-boys cracked ahead of us with their clearing-knives; we splashed knee-deep through the inky, ill-smelling mud. I did not answer at once. Jungle-wise, I had by now good hopes that none of the few inhabitants of the mangrove forest had met with the half-crazed girl. But there were other risks. "No," I said briefly. We halted for a minute's rest. Not very far away, a groaning bellow rose, and

filled the air, and sank again. "That what you mean?" Jerry asked, and again I said: "No." . . .

All day we had looked for signs of Ruth, and found none. Now we were coming out where the mangroves grew thinner; here and there an oasis of sago palms appeared—their huge, snakeskin-patterned columns rising far into the green-shaded sky. Now at last there was to be a little hope—a scrap of blue ribbon showed, lying in the mud. Jerry seized upon it, with a cry of relief. "She's been here—she's alive!" he panted.

"Maybe," I said. There were worse things than death in the jungle. And now we were to meet with one.

Dry patches of soil showed up where the sun broke through into a clearing made by a fallen tree. Flowers grew in the light; spider lilies, begonias, frost-white orchids. And bushes—there were a few small bushes, with dark green shining leaves, and bunches of red fruit curiously shaped, like children's fingers dipped in thickened blood.

I am something of a black tracker; I went on my knees, and examined the ground, the fallen tree, the bushes and the fruit. Jerry, a figure almost comic in his mud-soaked, thorn-ripped clothing, watched me eagerly.

"Found anything?" he asked.

My answer, as I rose to my feet, was: "No, thank God!" He looked at me as if he did not understand.

"Back," I said. "Back to where we found the ribbon. We may be in time."

At that point I had blazed the trees; we found it easily. I led the boat-boys and Jerry, as quickly as the ground allowed, in a new direction. It was darker here; there were no more flowers, no bushes. There was at last, thank heaven, the print of a woman's foot—another—

I SAW it first, but Jerry cried out quicker. We had found the girl, Ruth Cullen, lying on the ground as one dead.

She was not dead, however. She opened her eyes and feebly tried to speak. I got out my whisky flask, put a spoonful between her lips, and waited till it took effect before allowing Jerry to raise her from the ground. "Are you all right? What happened?" he eagerly asked her.

"Bob," she said feebly. "Where's Bob?"

"Back at the station by now, I reckon," I told her. "He'd have been there at the right time, but your boat was early."

She was weakly crying. "That—that woman," she sobbed. "She told me he belonged to her. She said he'd sent her away, but she came back. I couldn't bear it; I think I was mad. I've nearly died—I wish I had!"



Through a small clearing a strange figure was advancing—a woman who seemed to be either sleepwalking or crazed.

"You're starving," Jerry said, groping in my bag for food.

"I've had nothing to eat," she told him. "There was water—but nothing else all the time."

"Nothing at all?" I asked.

"Why, no," she said, with her teeth in a biscuit. "If there was, I was too frightened. The crocodiles and the snakes—" She broke off, shivering.

WE made a stretcher, and carried her, with the help of the boat's crew. We camped that night, and walked, carrying Ruth, nearly all the next day. Once or twice, only in breaks among the trees, I saw the flash of the red finger-shaped fruit. I do not think anyone else noticed it. The backward journey was easier than the first, by the route that the boys had cleared with their knives. We were nearing the station, in late afternoon, when Ruth, who had almost recovered, suddenly sat up on the stretcher, and cried: "Look, look! It's a ghost!"

Jerry shouted, I stared, the boat-boys all but dropped their burden. There was, just there, a small clearing in the jungle, and through it a strange figure was slowly advancing, a figure in white, with arms outstretched and head uplifted. No spirit—a woman, but one who seemed to be either sleepwalking or crazed.

Jerry seized Ruth in his arms as if to protect her. I walked up to the hesitating, stumbling figure of the woman and cried: "Alexa!"

"Who is it?" she asked, stretching out her hands to me.

"Joe Bonnington—don't you know me?" I asked her.

The blood was running cold in my veins, as I realized what had happened.

"Is anyone else there?" she asked, turning her head about. "Isn't it sunup yet?"

I put an arm about her. "Ruth Cullen and Jerry are here," I said. I could not answer the rest of her question, since I knew that sunup, for Alexa, would never dawn again. . . .

We reached the station late that afternoon, after a nightmare journey. Ruth, I thought, was making the most of her troubles; after all, she had not met with the grave harm that had struck Alexa. I lied to Alexa, assuring her that she would be all right in a day or two; but I drew Jerry aside, and told him the truth. Holding her hand, I guided her through the rest of the terrible journey. I thought the border of the swampland never would be reached; but it came at last, and with it Bob Leighton, back again, with his police, starting off to comb the jungle in search of his bride.

There were greetings, exclamations; we hastened to the house. As soon as I could, I spoke to Leighton. "If you don't set your men, and my men, and any others you can get, clearing out that devilish stuff from the jungle hereabouts, you ought to lose your job," I flatly told him. "Didn't know? It was your business to know that the Queensland finger cherry had got in! It's the devil to spread—they've had it listed as a noxious weed in Queensland. How did it get here? If it wasn't here already—which I doubt—birds could easily carry it by Torres Straits. You look to it."

Leighton was hardly listening. He stood there in the sinking sunlight, shadowed by the Government bungalow, his eyes on Alexa. "What's the matter?" he demanded, rather than asked. Alexa answered, slowly moving toward him. I had never seen her more beautiful, with her dark eyes wide and strangely bright, her Juno shape scarce hidden by the torn white silks she wore. "I'm blind," she said. "I ate finger cherries."

Leighton stood staring at her. He did not take the hands that she held out. "The finger cherry?" he said. "But that's incurable!"

Ruth, slipping off the stretcher to her feet, confronted him now. "You beast!" she said, and turned to blind

Alexa, putting an arm about her. Alexa had turned whiter than even the day in the jungle had made her, but she did not speak.

"What took you off into the jungle? Wasn't one fool enough?" the magistrate asked Alexa. I could see that he was boiling with rage against both of them.

"They didn't come back," she said tonelessly, "and I went to see—" On that word she broke off.

"And you," he said to Ruth, "you must have been insane; I think everyone's insane—"

Jerry moved over to Ruth. "I'm taking her out of this," he stated crisply. "To Daru; there's a missionary there. You and your"—he just suppressed an ugly word—"can work things out for yourselves."

"You're all coming in to be washed and fed," I declared. "I'm sure Mr. Leighton just forgot to ask you."

He grunted assent, and strode away. "Nasty temper," Jerry commented. "You're well rid of him, Ruthiel!"

ALEXA, standing alone in the fading sunlight, seemed to have been forgotten by everybody.

I went up to her, and took her hand. "You were sorry and came after to give help," I said. "You had no food, and ate the cherries. You never sent Ruth into the jungle to blind her. That's proved."

"No," she said, "I didn't know. I wouldn't have—"

"I understand," I told her. There was a minute's silence: the others had gone into the house. It was growing darker there on the edge of the jungle; the swift and sinister afterglow of the New Guinea sunset was wrapping us round—me, who knew well that cruel "twilight of the gods;" Alexa, to whom it was already, and always would be, night.

"Alexa," I said, "will you marry me?"

She did not answer directly. "Leave me a little," she said.

I left her, standing motionless in the dusk; it was kindness, I thought, to give her a chance to recover herself, to re-orient her life, or what must be her life from now. I did not go far away, but the voice of Jerry called me, for a minute, to the house. "We want your boat at once," he said. "Ruth won't stay the night. She's promised me," he added joyfully.

I gave the order and went back. Does no one think of Alexa? I asked myself; and went to find her.

She was not where I had left her. She was not at the house. Now it was almost night on the black-sand beach. I sprang my torch, and looked—and looked—and found. Straight into the dark water that faintly rippled below, went those small footsteps—went, and did not come back.

Songs That Have Made History

MALBROUGH S'EN VA-T-EN GUERRE

YOU know the song, though perhaps not by its French title. For centuries it has been a favorite, and a dozen nationalities have claimed it as their own. It has been termed "the most famous song in the world, judged by its being known in the most lands and by the most varied nations, and by its being one of the oldest and most widely sung ditties."

Crusaders brought it back from Palestine, liking the gay tune they heard the Saracens chanting about a certain "Mabrook"—a tune so popular it is still sung in Arab lands today. The air spread through Europe, but it was not until six centuries later that a man and an event inspired words for it that would make it famous.

In the War of the Spanish Succession, the French Army under Marshal Villars suffered a defeat at the bloody Battle of Malplaquet in 1709. It was the brilliant general of the English and Dutch forces who had beaten them: the Duke of Marlborough, eldest son of Sir Winston Churchill, one of whose later descendants was a not-unnoted namesake.

Marlborough—the name came hard to French tongues. They pronounced it "Malbrough" or "Malbrouk." A resemblance to the Arab name "Mabrook," may have struck some unknown songsmith in the French ranks. At any rate, he began jotting down verses.

*Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre.
Miron-ton, miron-ton, miron-taine.
Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre;
Ne sait quand reviendra.*

"Marlborough's off to war, and nobody knows when he'll be back." So sang the French troops, as the song caught on, and they put particular fervor into that last line, for rumor was rife that the victorious British general would never return to plague France—that he was dead.

Although the report proved false, it had had considerable foundation. After the conflict the Duke had fallen gravely ill from exhaustion and grief over heavy losses. Before he collapsed he had personally directed the succor of at least three thousand of the wounded strewn on the battlefield. It was no wonder that the French songsters promptly and wishfully listed the Duke of Marlborough himself among the casualties.

Verses of the song relate that a page brought the news of the Duke's demise to his lady, watching from a tower. Four captains followed, bearing the leader's body, and buried him in a marble tomb whence his soul ascended through laurel wreaths. After the ceremony, prostrate French spectators rose, and some retired with their wives. But others out of decorum spent the evening in solitude in spite of the fact there was no lack of brunettes, blondes, and red-headed girls around—a truly Gallic tribute to a fallen foe.

The song, its life renewed, skipped the Channel to England—where historians writing Marlborough's life were driven to distraction by nurses and children constantly caroling the tune. A non-English-speaking Frenchman in London obtained directions to Marlborough Street by humming it. The German poet Goethe grew so wearied of hearing it that he came to hate the memory of its hero. It found a new vogue in Paris when a peasant nurse sang it as a lullaby to the Dauphin, born to Marie Antoinette. Dishes and modes were named after it. Beaumarchais used it in his comedy, "The Marriage of Figaro," and Beethoven in his "Battle Symphony." It was a favorite of Charlotte Corday's; perhaps if Marat had been singing it in his tub that day, she never would have made her murderous entry into his bathroom. Napoleon, an admirer of Marlborough's military genius, is said to have sung the air whenever he mounted to ride forth on a campaign and to have chanted it sadly on St. Helena during his last exile.

The tune is familiar in Finland. Turks sing it. Britons and Americans have roared it on festive occasions ever since this English version was made:

*Marlborough, prince of commanders,
Has gone to war in Flanders,
His fame is like Alexander's;
But when will he come home?
He won't come home until morn-
ing. . . .*

Of Marlborough, the British added another chorus:

For he's a jolly good fellow. . . .

And so is anybody else we sing it to—"as nobody can deny."

—By Fairfax Downey



The Mule Mail

HE CARRIED FREIGHT AND MAIL—AND WHEN THE INDIANS ATTACKED, A FAR MORE PRECIOUS CARGO.

by STEWART TOLAND

THE wagon came up the rise slowly, as though it were afraid to reach the crest, to know what was on the other side. It was an old mountain mud-wagon with a patchy top—white canvas it once had been, but now it was grayed and thinned, and wherever the holes had come there were piecings of blue woolsey and red flannel, an Indian blanket of brown and green and yellow checks, deerhide and a smear of matted buffalo; all of it stitched with sinew and rounding over the wagon ribs like a monstrous patch-work quilt.

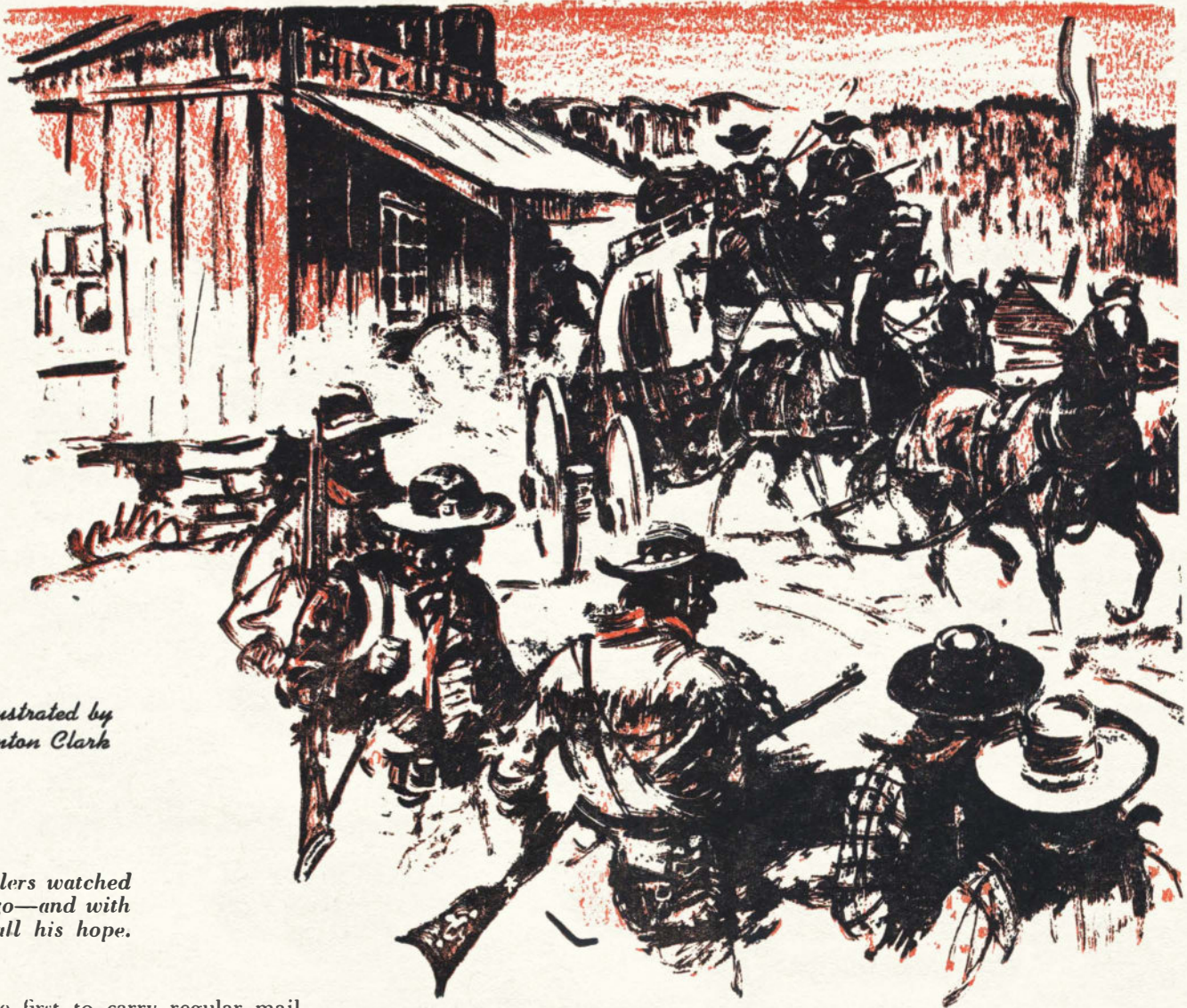
The wood of the wagon spoke of time and patience, too. It was tied and braced with rawhide, axles and spokes and rims bandaged until the wheels limped, one leaning this way

while another leaned that, as though they were straining to be free of carrying their load. They were made of Osage orange, so they weren't sun-cracked, just plumb worn thin with the length of the years. And above them on the wood planking was a red sign faded almost white: ZELLERS' FAST EXPRESS.

Zellers' Fast Express! That had been a name to conjure with going to Santa Fe in 1828. It had been on everybody's lips in Texas in '38. It had carried the first mail out of Independence in '49. Wherever adventure had been, Zellers' Fast Express had got there first. *First—Fast—Sure.* That was what was printed on his stamps, those three words and the picture of his four mules, long-muzzled, low-bellied, keen-eared mules.

And Zellers himself had been pictured in hearts all over the West—a tall man with a weather-wrinkled face, and eyes like a searching eagle: a proud man. Even his name spoke of glories: "Three Scalp Zellers," that was what he had been called for sixty of his eighty-two years, and there were a dozen different stories going round the campfires as to how he came by that name—*Three Scalp*. Though a body didn't need to ask whose they were or why or how. Each man could see it for himself—three scalps.

HE'D been proud of that name and had worn it like a badge of honor. He'd been somebody in these parts since the very beginning for he had brought the mail when every step was danger, and he was the only mail ex-



*Illustrated by
Benton Clark*

*Zellers watched
it go—and with
it all his hope.*

press, the first to carry regular mail west of the Missouri. First, fast and sure. Yes, he was a proud man.

The mud-wagon evened off on the hill rise: Three Scalp Zellers looked down upon a cluster of houses nestled at his feet like sleeping sheep. He lifted the silver horn hanging under his arm and blew a signal; low, lovely music it made. But no one paid it any mind. He peered through the early morning haze over the greening meadows and the brown fields where men worked, and down among the houses. Summer was just a breath over the land—this good, rich land where he and adventure had walked hand in hand. And now no one was paying him any mind. Maybe they hadn't heard. Maybe a trick of the wind had carried away the sound of his horn. But he knew it hadn't.

This wasn't Santa Fe in '25 or San Antone in '38 or the Gold Trail; this was Cottersville, Nevada, in 1860 and the thin brown path before him wasn't Zellers' road any more. It hadn't been his for a long time, not since the Overland came and took it away—took it away with shiny paint and high-riding Concord coaches with windows, and leather thoroughbraces a good three

inches thick. And a conductor to hold a gun in his hand night and day if need be, or one in each hand, or just to sit there and look fashionable and important. Yes, it wasn't Zellers' road. Yet now it wasn't the Overland's either, not in 1860, it was the Pony Trail. That was where the glories had gone, and Three Scalp Zellers was just about sixty pounds too heavy and sixty years too old.

He curled his whip over the mules and sent them racketing into the village. As he came to the outermost house he blew his horn once more. He rode slowly, looking sharply from side to side to see if anyone came with a letter in his hand. Or if there might be a traveler with a bag. There wasn't. Children played and women washed and men picked their teeth outside saloons, and no one paid him any mind.

The mule mail waited. Perhaps someone hadn't quite finished writing a letter. Perhaps—so many times he had said this. And the only answer came from far away like high, trium-

phant laughter: Horn notes on the breeze, shrill—young—impatient.

Cottersville just about jumped out of its boots. Children lined the trail, men raced to cluster near the swing station, women came from their back yards so fast the suds still foamed on their elbows, but the Pony got there almost before they did. It galloped into town, horsehair and boy-hair flying, thudding hoofs and boy's feet jumping to the ground by the swing station. Mail to put in the way-pocket, two letters safely wrapped in oiled silk and the way-bill signed and the *mochila* switched from horse to horse, and in half a minute he was off and away, the new horse mail clattering down the street past the old mule mail and hitting a mud slough and sending a black spray over Zellers' knees and hands and marking up his pretty silver horn. He rubbed it clean gently and folk who hadn't paid its lovely music any attention saw the mud right enough and laughed.

One cursed. "Why don't Crazy Zellers give up? You'd think he'd know when to quit, when he was through!"



Crazy Zellers—it was like an ache in him, hurting deeper and deeper as the days went by. For this wasn't the first time he'd heard the name folks were calling him now. Crazy Zellers—not Three Scalp Zellers, but Crazy. And they thought he was through.

But he wasn't. He couldn't be. He still had one stamp to sell. This last one of all he had printed with the four mules on it and the three words: *First—Fast—Sure*.

Crazy Zellers. . . . He had pretended not to know about that name, he'd thought maybe somehow there'd be business for both him and the Overland but with the coming of the Pony, the world was going too fast. Yet he hadn't quit, he'd wandered from town to town—but everywhere, even the tiniest of them had their bunting and flags up for the Pony. He heard of the parades they'd held and the women waving and throwing flowers from balconies at the Pony boys, the bands that came to meet them and the speeches. Zellers wanted to shout at them: "The horse mail has only been going a month; I've carried the mail for almost fifty years! I carried it when every step was danger, and I was the only one. Can't you remember?"

But they didn't. It was on everyone's lips, "I heard by Pony—The Pony says that—The Pony! The Pony!"

And the mule mail rode on empty. It hadn't helped for Zellers to

tell himself the Pony was just an advertising stunt dreamed up to take the mail route away from the south and the Butterfield route, and to prove the Pacific Railroad could go through on the Central Route, winter as well as summer, Indians or no. No matter who dreamed it up or what it was for, the Pony had the glamour; the hearts of all the world were traveling with it, ears tuned to its horn. It was the first now, and the Overland was the second, and who wanted third best?

But he couldn't quit. The loneliness couldn't make him, nor the years, nor his empty wagon. He still had one stamp, and there must be use for it. Somewhere there must be a letter that needed his stamp. God had let him live this long—for eighty-two years—through hunger and danger and death. God had let him print three thousand stamps and sell two thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine. There must be use for this last one.

So he had kept on riding from farm to farm and town to town and he heard that name, Crazy Zellers. Over and over. Because he wouldn't quit, because he'd tried to pretend he was busy; but folks had found out what he carried in those full mailbags he toted: Pine straw! Because it was so light and his mules were so old and near dead they couldn't haul anything else, that's what folks said. Because no one would trust him in the wilderness with anything, not their lives surely nor their mail, not with stamps costing twenty-five cents apiece.

BUT it was hard pretending sometimes, like this morning, to come to the top of the hill, knowing there was nothing waiting on the other side. It was hard to lift that silver horn, knowing he had nothing to blow about. He hadn't brought any mail through. But the mules were used to harness and so was he. Place after place he'd wandered and hoped, and the loneliness had grown like a long night sneaking up on him, and the doubt was beginning to gnaw. Maybe he was no use to anyone any more. Yet he had one more stamp; a man couldn't quit before his business was done.

He'd always been a somebody in these parts; he couldn't quit with folks laughing at him. He had to get his pride back.

He waited. Surely someone had a letter to mail, not by expensive horse mail but mule mail. In a town as big as Cöttersville there must be a letter. As he cleaned the pony-mud off his horn, he listened to the Overland blow the town. Not low, lovely music, not young and impatient, but a booming like a paunchy, well-fed man. It came thudding in from the

East with bursting bags of mail and six passengers craning at the windows. Stuck deep in the door were two Indian arrows, and the driver was strutting.

He curled his whip and spat in the dust, aiming at the Pony Station next door; the Overland drivers had had their noses turned a bit by the Pony, too.

"Well," drawled the driver, "it may be all right for boys to carry a piece or two of mail if anyone's a mind to pay five dollars half an ounce for it, but it takes a man to bring ten sacks of letters and eight lives through an Indian skirmish!"

"Indians!" Cöttersvillians flocked around the coach and gaped at the arrows. "Are the redskins on the war-path?"

The driver shrugged carelessly.

"This party was. We killed six."

JUST like that. As though it were of no importance. "We killed six." And folks who hadn't had any letters to mail when Zellers blew the town brought them out now, and five men came forward with bags and tried squeezing in where there was room for only two.

Zellers sounded his horn again, and then he called out plain and loud: "Step this way, gents. Zellers' Express is going west. Zellers' Express will set you where you want to go. For almost fifty years this Express has been first and fast and sure."

"But now it's last and slow and sure to fall apart!"

Someone yelled that, and everyone laughed and nine men crawled inside the Overland, sitting on the mailbags—and some under them—and two men were strapped tight and safe on top, and with a whoop and a holler the Overland dusted westward.

Zellers watched it go—and with it all his hope. For the first time he admitted it to himself, maybe he was crazy wanting to be of use to somebody, not wanting to be forgotten. Maybe he had been hoping for too much.

He got out the last stamp. It was pretty, all red-and-blue. He'd been a proud man when that was printed. He'd like to be a proud man again. But there was that sneering laughter in his ears, it was so loud the little girl had to speak twice before he heard her—a very little girl dressed in pink, and in her hand there was a headless doll.

"Please, Mister, I'd like to mail something." He didn't answer. He didn't see her. She climbed up the spokes of the wheel and stood on the axle where it was lumped out with rawhide, and very gently she reached up and touched him on the knee. "Please, Mister, I have something I'd like to mail."

Zellers jumped and peered over his horn into eyes that were blue as a summer sky, eyes that seemed to be looking at worlds and worlds away.

"All my life I have wanted a doll with a real head, not just a stocking pretend, but a real one of china with eyes and nose and a mouth you can feel. Did you know that, Mister?"

"No." Zellers thought that over. "No, I didn't likely know that."

"And Mamma heard there is a doll man traveling. He didn't come this way. He's at Twin Forks, which is a big town far off. Do you go to Twin Forks?"

"I reckon I do."

She held out the doll without any head. "Then will you please carry this in your mail for the doll man? I have twenty-five cents for the stamp and fifty cents to pay for the doll head. It is all the money I have. Do you think it will be enough?"

Zellers looked at the doll. It was tight-packed with sawdust; it had two arms and two legs and no head; it had a blue chintz dress and three petticoats, two plain and one flounced.

"You want to send mail by my express? Do you know who I am?"

"Oh, yes! You're the mule mail. You've been traveling this road since before I was born, so I know you know it well, and you're fast—that's why you have four mules, isn't it, so they can go so much faster than one? And I

Crazy Zellers. . . He had pretended not to know about that name.



have to send my doll fast because the doll man might never pass this way again. And you're sure; Mamma says that's what's on all your stamps, and I have to be sure because it's the only fifty cents I'll ever have to spend."

"The Overland's bigger and the Pony's faster." He had to say it because it was true, because this was so important to her. And to him.

"But you carry pine straw in your sacks—I have heard people say you did. Your wagon is full of sacks and sacks of pine straw—that's to keep your mail safe, isn't it? So that nothing might hurt it ever. Oh, please, Mister, do you have room in all your nice soft straw for my doll?"

HANDS that were brown and hard as old beeswax took the doll and cradled it as though it were something precious. They hooked one of the mailsacks through the peephole and laid the doll in the center and just before Zellers shut it tight he lifted the blue chintz dress and on the top white petticoat with a stub of pencil, he blocked out the name she gave him, writing *Return to Miss Mindlie Able of Cottersville with one doll head to fit.*

She listened to the whispering of the pencil. "That makes it like a letter, doesn't it?"

He smiled. "Yes, it makes it like a letter." Very carefully he pasted the last stamp on the white petticoat. "Hop down, Miss Mindlie; Zellers' Express has mail to carry through."

He blew his horn and curled his whip so close and so hard over the drowsing ears that all four mules hit the air at once. And that was the way he wanted it to be, to surprise them into a run so it would look as if he was going fast, as it said on the stamp. Crazy Zellers, going eighty miles with a doll—with the Overland carrying men and news, and the Pony all the glory!

He had meant this stamp to buy glory and adventure, too, but instead he'd sold it to the dreams in a little girl's eyes. It seemed for a time as though his heart might break. He had lived so long on the hope of what this last stamp would buy, and now even that was gone. Because what could be the glory in carrying a doll? Even one so very much loved.

All day he rode, meeting no one on the trail, neither man nor beast, wild nor tame. He passed a Pony station sleeping in the sun, its horses eating all that fine expensive hay of Mr. Majors', its keeper whittling by the door. But the tender of the next Pony station was swearing by his door. It was off its hinges, all the good food was gone, and the stock run off.

"Some damn' drunk Injuns did it!" he screamed at Zellers.

"You're lucky to be alive." Zellers rode on west, his eyes searching the hills, settling on a cloud of black smoke, thick, boiling smoke, house-smoke. From the quick way it puffed up and died it must have been tinder dry. He came upon the ashes of it just as the sun was thinking of setting. House and barn both had burned—it could have been a badly set lamp, or soured hay. He got down off the wagon seat and walked over to where the chimney stood alone. In the ground all about were the prints of moccasins and barefooted horses.

Zellers stood in the evening hush and listened. There was no sound. He looked all about, and saw only hills. The sun fell and brought night, a moon-bright night with dark shadows in it like creeping men. And new sounds—woman-sounds of crying, man-sounds of cursing, the thunder of hoofs and the creak of a prairie schooner. It came down the trail as if lightning were chasing it and at the first sight of Zellers, the immigrant raised a gun; at second sight he lowered it and screamed out of a bushy beard:

"Go back! Hell's busted loose! The Piutes are burning and killing—there ain't goin' to be a white man left alive!"

ZELLERS watched them go; then he got on his mud-wagon and rode on west. The night was quiet; even the wind seemed to be hiding out. Another ten miles churned beneath his wheels; he was thirty miles from Cottersville with fifty miles to go when he became conscious of smoke in his nose—hay-smoke and hide-and-blankets. He'd smelled it all before: this smoke was the ruin of the third Pony station. It had burned, all the part that could, the roof and the floor and the horse barn and corral, the hay and the men who kept it. They had been tortured first.

Zellers knelt by them. He straightened their legs and laid their arms easy. He couldn't close their eyes, for the lids were gone. The tender was a middle-aged man; he'd got to know something of life. But his helper was a beardless boy.

Zellers took out his pocket Bible. He couldn't read the words, but he held it by them and whispered, "*Thy will be done.*" And with those words on his lips and the Book in his hand he knew he couldn't go back, no matter what was ahead. It was ironic, bitter, to remember all the important things he'd done, guarding gold and guns and lives, and then this last stamp he'd dreamed over and counted on was for a rag doll of no importance to anyone but one small girl-child.

He measured them, the Book in one hand, and the doll in the other. He walked to the nearest hill and



Death was waiting; lining the trail, like a tunnel of hate, were over two hundred braves.

listened to the music, devils singing on the wind. . . . War dances. In the valley beyond there were half-a-dozen fires watching him like angry eyes. There was the sound of gourd and tambourine and men boasting. There was no stealth for miles around.

That must mean that already there were no white men left alive. No one but Crazy Zellers staring at the Indian fires and listening to the drums. Each one beat the same message—throbbing hearts, whispering, "Go back. There's only death ahead."

He listened to them, and he figured how he could be safe. He could hide behind the 'dobe walls of the swing station; it had shed its blood, the Indians mightn't come again. Or he could hide out in the hills—they were friendly to him, he knew many of their secrets. He could save his life, perhaps, but he would be breaking this last promise. The doll man would be gone and might never pass this way again, leastways not soon enough for Miss Mindlie, for little girls grew up so fast. The doll man would be gone and Zellers' last stamp would be gone, and his pride. Only his life would be left, and that wouldn't be enough. A man needed so much more than mere life.

Crazy Zellers walked back and climbed into his mud-wagon and rode west, through the almost dawn. It was a winding, hiding, darting way that he went, and time and time again he crouched in thickets holding his hands over the muzzles of his most

nervous mules, whispering to them soothingly, as war parties passed by: Five braves, ten braves. The last party had been thirty strong, and at the head of it, carried high and proud, were willow hoops with new scalps set to dry. He counted them. Thirteen hoops, twelve man-size and one boy-size.

AN hour passed before he left the thicket. He threaded deeper and deeper into the forest until once more he smelled the tart sharp smell of burned wood. It was the Overland. Twelve men lay dead around it, and one boy.

Zellers rode on until he came to the sound of digging. It was at a Pony station which oddly had not been touched. The "keeper's eyes seemed popping from his head; his hands were blistered from the shovel.

"I'm digging me a hole, and I'm not comin' out till I hear the Army blowing over me."

"You can ride with me, if you've a mind. I'm being right careful. I might get through."

The tender looked at the patchy top. "I'll take 'dobe walls and an earth hole instead of that, partner."

"Hiding in the hills would be better. The station back of this has been burned, and the tender and his boy killed."

"His boy—" The shovel stopped. "Leastways *my* boy is safe! I sent him on the last Overland east; there were five guards on it, each holding

a long revolver and a small revolver, and one of Colt's revolving rifles. They could shoot eighty-five times without reloading." He licked his lips. "My boy is safe."

Zellers stared down on the ground as though he were looking again at that little boy. So they'd had eighty-five shots. He swallowed and fingered his one gun; he peered at the white mare eating hay in the barn. "I'll trade you, Mister—this gun for your mare. I don't reckon the Pony will be coming through."

"Won't matter if he does; the mare ain't no good—she's sprained a knee. I'd like your gun, and to have you stay; two men can fight better than one."

"No. I've got mail to get through." "You're crazy, crazier even than they say you are. You never know when to quit, do you?"

Zellers passed over his gun. "When my work's doné, I reckon that'll be time enough."

He tied the white mare in front of his mules which had grown harder and harder to handle with all this Indian smell in their noses. They gentled down right off, and Zellers rode west out of the sound of that busy shovel. And that night there were Indian fires behind him as well as in front, and dusk was laid down with smoke signals. Some of them were probably about him. He was undoubtedly watched; the Indians just hadn't got round to him yet. There was no particular glory to kill-

ing a man as old and well past fighting as he. They liked to kill brave men, men with fight and fury and hurry in their blood.

He came to another house that had burned, and another and another—four little houses that had set close to the road like gossipers: Four blackened chimneys and part of a cradle. While his mules drank in the creek nearby, Zellers went through the charred-wood piles. There was a dead man in each ruin. And the smell of powder was on their hands and bits of it in the shreds of their clothes where the fire and the Indian knives hadn't touched them. Each one had been by the front facing the road. He shuffled in the dirt. Bare-foot-pony tracks lay one upon the other: they had been held at bay there a good while, from the depth of the churning. He looked at the cradle; it had been new—green wood had kept it from burning well. He looked at the woods, the way they reached out and fingered the houses in the rear— Four men had stayed to fight, for what?

CRAZY ZELLERS walked into the wood. Moonlight touched the new leaves and wove a carpet of silver over the earth, this silent, blood-drenched earth. There was crushed grass, and broken moss and here and there a boot-heel mark. He had to walk low to the ground to see them at all. And once he stopped to listen to the faintest of sounds, coming from far away. . . . That was the moment when he knew what his last stamp had bought.

Somewhere a baby was crying—a white baby, because Indian children never cried. He ran till the sound filled the night. Huddled in a briar thicket were four young women and five young children. This was what those four men had been fighting for. This was why God had let Crazy Zellers live for eighty-two years. -

He knelt and looked at them. "Shh!" He touched the crying infant. "Shh! There are other ears in the woods, besides mine."

The mother was very young. "I can't stop him; he has the colic. We thought we could hide out; that was why we ran into the wood, and with the dark coming so soon we were safe, at least for the night when no Indian hunts, but with the baby crying—" She shrugged. "It's only a matter of time—till dawn, perhaps—when the Indians come away from their fires. You'd best leave us; you'll be safer alone."

"Why don't you leave the baby—lose one, save the others?"

"Save them for what? The Indian fires are burning for miles around."

Crazy Zellers looked at the baby, sleeping now. How like a china doll

it was, only this doll had its head on; but when the Indians came— He looked through the wood, and down into the valley, at the far Indian fires like stars bleeding in the night.

"Maybe I could get you through."

They stared at him, all those tear-washed, unbelieving eyes. "Our husbands made us run and hide in the woods, while they stayed to fight and keep the Indians from seeing us escape. We heard them shooting for a long time, and then we smelled the smoke. Yesterday a runner passed. He told us of the Overland and the Pony stations that were burned. All these were brave men. How could you do so much more than all the rest?"

It was simply asked; there was no bitterness, no mockery, just *why*.

He waited a moment as though he were wondering too. "Have you heard of me, ma'am—do you know my name?" She didn't answer, just bit her lip and looked away. "Yes, ma'am, you know it. Crazy Zellers. That's just why I might get you through where all the guns and all the strength and barred doors have failed."

They sat numb and not believing, and yet they let him try. What had they to lose? The baby was crying again.

Crazy Zellers brought his mountain mud-wagon up from the creek. But first he washed the white mare till she shone. Then he asked the ladies for their petticoats. They had thirteen white petticoats between them. He split a number and tied them around the bellies of the mules; he tore the rest into bandages and wound them about the mules' necks, and some around their legs till they were as white and bold in the night as the white mare.

He poured all the pine straw out of the sacks and stuffed a little, round-eyed child in each. Small as they were, they knew the fear of Indians, they knew they mustn't make a sound no matter what came. They were children of the wilderness. He leaned them against the four mothers and the infant lying low on the wagon-bed with its planked sides and its patchy top and the straw sprinkled deep above them. There wasn't much to the women by the time they'd shucked their petticoats; there was room enough for all, though the wagon groaned and the wheels leaned even more than before. Zellers climbed on the wagon-seat and rode back to the trail.

He didn't try to hide out. He knew the smokes had talked of him the night before, so he rode down the trail plain and easy as though all the world were right. And he sang. Dear God, how loud he sang!

Every time the sick baby shrieked in the wagon-bed back of him, he matched it with a louder shriek—till they all seemed to come just from him. Sometimes he had to catch his breath, so he worked his lips for the watching woods to see, and pretended he was crying, and then he'd bark like a dog and mew like a cat, while the moving wagon soothed the baby to sleep. Then he sang soft and mournful as the wind whistling through the eye of a buffalo skull. He sang "Jolly Ho and Jolly Haw," and "Open the Gates to the Kingdom." He had twenty miles to travel before he reached Twin Forks and the Fort.

And with the dawn the redskins gathered. He heard them in the hills long before he saw them: The cry of an owl—the call of a dove. Whispers and signals, and death waiting for him.

Death, as he came to the top of a hill rise. Below him, lining both sides of the trail, like a tunnel of hate, were over two hundred braves. They were mounted and carried lances decked with red flannel and old scalps. They carried guns and bows and arrows, half-a-hundred arrows pointing death at him, each one perhaps three feet long with yellow-feather tufts at one end and knife-sharp heads, and all the power of vengeance behind them. Half-a-hundred stone hatchets and half-a-hundred spears, and two hundred faces painted in yellow ochre and red, and lips just opening in a death cry when Crazy Zellers rounded the hilltop and saw them. . . .

It was eternity—one moment longer than all those eighty-two years. He had no gun. The mules were too old to run. There was nothing left but death—or laughter.

He chose laughter.

He gave a holler and greeted those redskins as though they were long-lost brothers. He rode right down among them in the center of that close double file. They were like a guard of honor come to see him safely into hell—and he laughed.

AND the Indians watched silently. They waited until he was in their midst; then they let their arrows fly. The patchy top was quilled as thick as any porcupine, and Crazy Zellers kept on laughing and kept on driving slow and easy—the white mare limping on a line out front and the four mules following—docile as kittens all dressed up in linen and lace.

The Indians made a surround and rode screaming round and round the wagon in a diminishing circle, while Crazy Zellers laughed and sang and waved at them as though this were a game they were playing. And still no arrow touched him, nor even tried to.



Zellers didn't pull away. He watched solemnly as the warrior drew the axe over his flesh, blade down.

Then suddenly they were quiet—watching, waiting, as a brave rode close, a brave of many winters and many wars. He had five eagle feathers in his braids, his lip had been torn in two at some ancient time, his body was striped in red and yellow and in his right hand he carried a sharpened axe.

He leaned over so close his breath was hot, and the smell of him was like a rotting cloud about Zellers' head, but the white man didn't seem to notice. He moved the lines lazily and sang softly to himself as the Indian reached out and touched his wrist.

ZELLERS didn't pull away. He watched solemnly as the warrior drew the axe over his flesh, blade down, cutting easily, gently, his eyes on Zellers' eyes, his nose quivering to smell the fright. Blood spurted and gushed. Zellers studied it, puzzled. Two hundred pairs of eyes watched his every move as he reached slowly out and took the axe carefully, so very carefully, as though he didn't want to hurt it, as though he didn't see the tensing of the Indian's muscles readying to spring as he touched the axe and lifted it. He ran the blade across his other wrist, then gravely returned the weapon to the Indian, butt for-

ward. He held his wrists up and watched them bleed onto his knees, and he laughed—a terrible sort of gasping laugh, but still it was laughter. The sweat of fright wasn't on him, nor hate, nor revenge, nor any sensible thing.

That was when the Indians broke and vanished. And no more came to the trail that day, to the Pony trail that used to be the Overland and before that was Zellers' road—as it now was once again. He had carried mail where every step was danger, and his the only one.

He came to Twin Forks, the houses huddling at his feet like frightened sheep. And once more he blew his silver horn—low, lovely music it made, and the town came swarming to him, men, women and children, and the doll man, all to stand gaping as the four young women and the five young children crawled out of the mountain mud-wagon with its patchy top and the arrows in it and the mules in petticoats.

Zellers sat hunched over his bloodied knees, and he tried to smile.

"It was really simple. Mules will go anywhere or do anything, if they only have a white mare to follow. And the redskins think the man who rides a white horse in wartime must be crazy, because a white horse or

mule makes such a wonderful target. You folks have called me crazy—Crazy Zellers, you named me; all I had to do was convince the redskins of it, too.

"I drove a white team. I laughed when there was nothing to laugh at. I thought it was fun when they laid an axe on my wrist. That was what did it, why they ran. The Indians are afraid of the insane; they will do them no harm. They think crazy people belong to the gods."

And Crazy Zellers did. He looked at all those admiring, awe-struck faces. He looked at the four young women and the five young children. He looked at the doll in the doll man's hands.

HE had sold his last stamp, and kept his promise to a doll, and he had found glory and adventure. The Pony hadn't gone through, nor the Overland, but Zellers' Fast Express had been first and fast and sure. It had carried mail again, and people. It had taken the hurt out of a name, and made it a legacy. Crazy Zellers, the only white man left alive, carrying nine to safety! It was a name he could wear like a badge of honor. He smiled as he toppled out of the wagon.

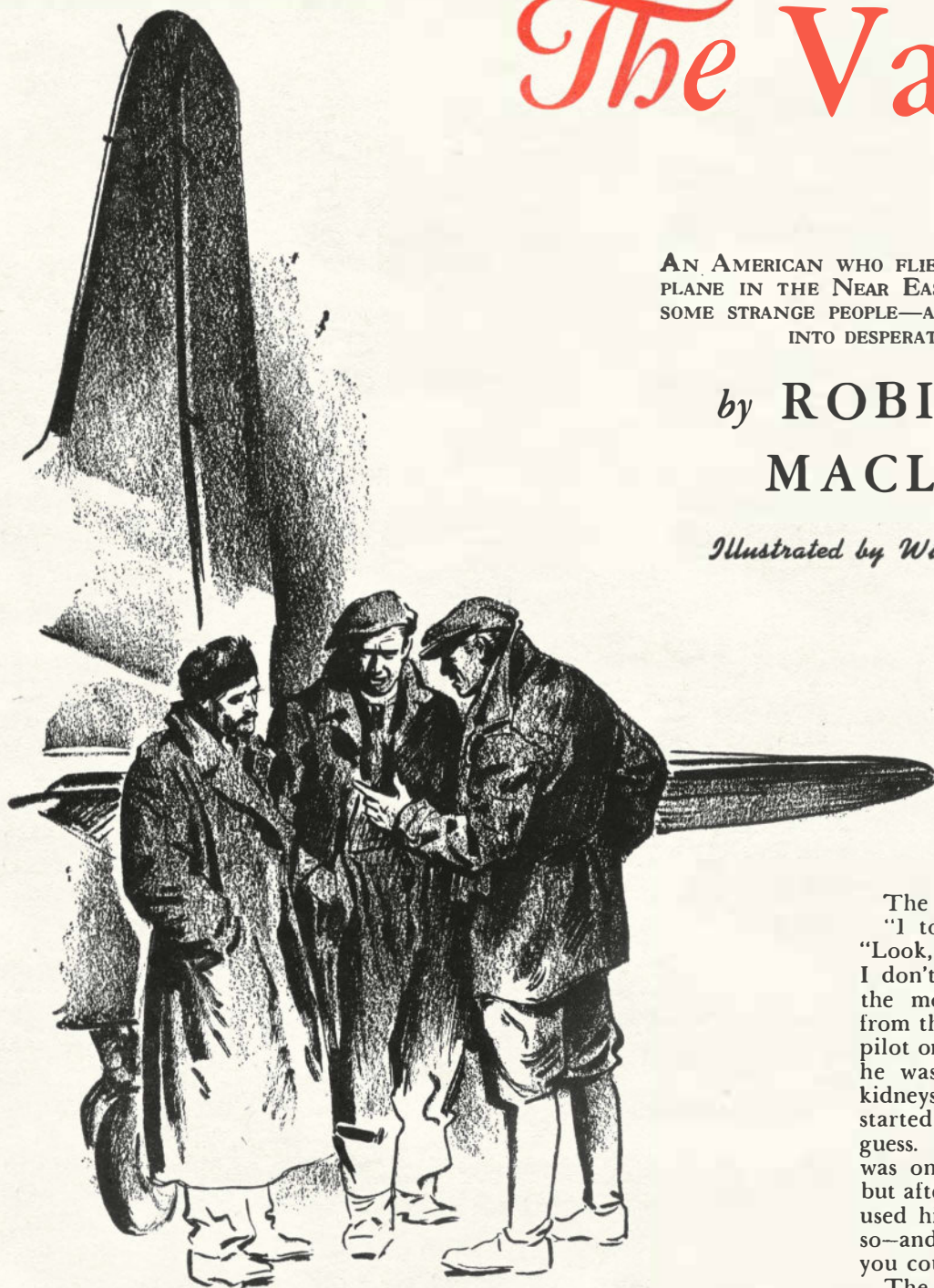
His work was done.

The Valley

AN AMERICAN WHO FLIES HIS OWN PASSENGER PLANE IN THE NEAR EAST HAS TO DEAL WITH SOME STRANGE PEOPLE—AND CAN GET HIMSELF INTO DESPERATE DANGER.

by ROBINSON
MACLEAN

Illustrated by William Heaslip



I REACHED over and cut the switches. The ship was still shaking from the hammering the port engine gave it, misfiring. We wouldn't be able to take off. I went back to the cabin.

"All out, kids," I told them. "Flight Seven isn't going any place until we get two engines hooked onto the same plane at the same time."

Red was nudging me, from behind. "Make it an hour, Eddie," he said. "We'll work on it. I'll get it smoothed out."

The passengers sat there quietly. Greeks, all of them: The girl up front, small, dark and scared like the

kitten people forget when they move to another duplex. The three men at the back—the kind you see hanging around the edges of amusement parks on a hot night. The kind that had postcards, in Nagoya—or sisters, in Padua.

"Let's stop dreaming," I told Red. "An hour isn't going to make any difference. This ship died in North Africa. She's just been too long getting buried."

Red said something to the passengers—in Greek, I guess. The men locked three greasy black heads together in a huddle, and the girl got up and went out.

The men followed her. "I told them an hour," Red said. "Look, Eddie, we can iron this out. I don't know about you, but I need the money." His breath was sour from that Turk *raki*. He was a good pilot once, until the medicos told him he was due to run himself out of kidneys in ten-twelve months, and he started helping the odds on their guess. He had no ticket now, and he was on the books as flight steward, but after you'd cleared the tower, you used him for co-pilot. Fat Boy said so—and Fat Boy owned the line—if you could call Air Macedonia a line.

The steps creaked, and Fat Boy pulled himself aboard. "*Demetrios Mavromatis*" he signs it, on the paychecks, in a cramped little hand. But Fat Boy fits him better:

"Trouble, gentlemen?" he asked us. He was watching me.

"Port engine," Red said. "I told Captain Payne I'd work on—"

"Shut up," Fat Boy said, flat.

"Trouble, Captain Payne?" You couldn't tell what color the eyes were, deep in the folds of cheek-muscle.

"Too much trouble," I said. "Look, Mavromatis, I rent my neck out cheap. I don't give it away. This plane's too old, too tired, for passenger work. She needs complete overhaul and one new engine. Maybe two. You can't fly an aircraft,

of Blinded Men

every other day, and hire any monkey that owns a pair of pliers for a ground crew. I'll take my pay. I wouldn't lift this ship off the ground, with passengers, to get to my mother-in-law's funeral."

"Joke?" Fat Boy asked hopefully.

"No joke." I left it there. Fat Boy was watching Red Kelly now.

"You can make her to fly?" Fat Boy asked.

"Sure, Mr. Mavromatis," Red told him. "An hour. Maybe an hour and a half. I can borrow that fellow Mikoyan off the Greek line for a couple of hours, for a couple of pounds. We can make the flight. I told you that. Eddie, here, is open to reason."

THEY both watched me then. I watched back. Outside there was a low ground-fog threading streamers of mist across the runways. You read about Turkey, and it's all the happy little rug-weavers, sweating beside their camels in the sunshine. You get hung up in Ankara, and you find it's the same latitude as Philadelphia, and colder than the Main Line.

"Pay me off," I said. "I'd take a chance with Red, here, with myself, with you; but I wouldn't lift a passenger off the field with this cripple for everything Aly Khan's got, including Rita."

"No?" Fat Boy was asking Red.

"No." That was Red, telling Fat Boy.

"You talked to the girl, maybe?" Fat Boy asked me. "You know why she's important for getting to Athens?"

Anybody that was important for getting anywhere, I told them, was important for keeping alive.

"I call the girl," Fat Boy said. "You listen maybe what she thinks?"

"I'm reasonable," I told Red. "I'll listen to anything. But you couldn't sell me on this operation, with passengers, unless all of them had their graves dug and were itching to turn in before the cemetery raised the rates."

"Talk to the girl," Mavromatis said. "Perhaps she could be like you say. Meester Kelly will busy on the engines."

"It won't hurt anybody to busy on the engines. I'll talk to the girl. I won't promise anything."

Fat Boy smiled at Red, and Red smiled back. I followed Fat Boy out

of the ship to where the girl was standing, back by the tail assembly. Twenty feet off, deep in another huddle, were the men, the Greeks. I heard Red sprint across the apron toward the next hangar where Air-Greek kept its spares.

"Mikoyan!" he was yelling. Then something in Greek.

"Mees Stannos?" Fat Boy was speaking to the girl. "Katerini Stannos, this is Captain Eddie Payne, my pilot. My chief pilot."

Behind me I heard Red, arguing with the Greek mechanic, loud. Fat Boy faded, over to the three Greeks hung back in the shadows. They were talking. The combings of mist slithered along the runway. It was cold. The girl was shivering.

She wasn't my type, anyway. I go for the happy ones, the big ones, the blondes, with nothing on their minds, and no place to put it if they had anything.

"Tonight I must be in Athens," the girl said. She had her eyes hung on me, as if they had hooks.

There were other flights, I told her. American lines. Greek lines. Even the British. There was nothing wrong with the weather. All that was wrong was our plane, Air Macedonia Number Twenty-nine. There weren't any other twenty-eight.

"There is no passage," she said. "The seats are filled, all. They have arranged that, the others. Whether I die is not an importance. Whether I reach Athens, tonight, is a most importance."

SHE wasn't kidding; she had something, something she had to do. It had to be done tonight. The voice said that. The voice and the way she stood, the arms, hung limp from the shoulders. She was no-color, dark against the night, a bruise against the drifting fog, a whisper out of the times when you knew better but you did worse.

"It's an even chance," I told her. "I can lift it off. I can fly it awhile. The other engine sounds better, but it won't last much longer. You mean what you say? You mean you got to get there? You ever see what happens when one of these planes loses both engines and crowds a hump of mountain?"

I expected any kind of answer—except the one she dug up.

"You have children, American Captain?" she asked me. "You are married?"

You can find a lot of answers to that, but when you're standing beside a sick duck, on the runway of Etimesut Field, Ankara, talking to a Greek girl with eyes that are twice as wide as her shoulders, they don't answer anything.

There was no reason for going into the business with Lola—the paper she hung on me three days after I got back from the Aleutians—the paper that cost me Eddie, Junior, and the dreams I'd whittled for myself while I was sweating it out where we flew them when the oil-lines leaked like a rented rowboat, and the Japs had Zeros slicing in out of the clouds we stuffed with crippled Catalinas.

"No children," I told her. "Not married."

"There were three of us," she said. "Three of us knew the faces of the men, the men selling my country to the enemy. One after one, the two men have gone. There is only me, now. I know the face of him that killed Angelopoulos. I know the man that murdered Corcoris. They are afraid for me to come to Athens, afraid for me to point a finger, for the police, and say: 'This man I know for murder.'"

I told her—told her to turn her ticket in for refund, and fly some line where they had two engines on every plane, and two pilots in the cabin you wouldn't have to hide from the Aeronautics Board.

"They flew so, the two men," she said. "By the big companies. One is force' down in Bulgaria, with a pistol at the pilot's head. The other is never found."

Bits of it came back to me, out of the papers:

The Greek Communists had the government in Athens stuffed like a larded lamb. Twice, the normal airlines—the ones with flightworthy aircraft—reported planes dropping out of sight. One of the ships limped into Ellinikos Field, Athens, eight hours late, short four passengers and a co-pilot. The other one never showed. It isn't very hard to plant four-five people among the passengers, have somebody wade forward to the office and cock a gun behind the pilot's ear. . . .

In front of her, between us, the limp fog trailed. She was maybe five feet high, this Katerini Stannos, and she was tense, like a child hung bug-eyed beside the chimney, Christmas Eve. There wasn't anything to her, except courage, but it kept her filled up, life-size.

"I'll take you to Athens," I said. "We can get this ship off the ground. I can fly it until it runs out of machinery. Then we can hire a horse and ride the last lap."

"Fast?" she asked me.

I told her I didn't know. All I knew was that Eddie Payne could stretch a bum engine as far as the next man, and he wouldn't give any change to passengers who wanted to play their own games with the flight plan.

"How much must I pay?" she asked.

"You got a ticket?"

"Yes. But the other—the other to fly safe, to fly quick?"

A kiss, I told her. What the hell. In the Near East you got to charge something on the side. The union expects it. She was small and shivering, but her lips were firm, friendly. Paid in full, I told her. I looked around.

Red had this Mikoyan, from the Greek Lines, and a couple of Mikoyan's monkeys, working back over the ignition harness on the bum engine. The three passengers, the ones listed on the manifest as "N. Athanasiou and Party," were still in a huddle. Fat Boy was standing by himself, watching all of us through slitted eyes. He had his hands behind him, leaning a little forward, with one of these long silk-tip Bulgarian cigarettes sagging from a lip-corner.

Red started the engine again, and it balked a little picking up to speed, but then it flattened out, and there was only the occasional blue stutter of exhaust to show some of the plugs were missing, here and there, now and then. The starboard engine turned over pretty. It slung a little oil, but it sounded confident. Fat Boy watched me. The sounds of the motors didn't mean anything to him, you could tell. He was reading what the sounds meant out of my face. I must have nodded, smiled or something. He came over.

"Excellent, now?" he said. "We are ready for flying?"

THE three thugs had stopped their chatter. They were watching me too.

I looked over where the girl stood.

"I'll take a chance with the woman," I told him. "Stannos. She's got to get to Athens, she says. Leave the other monkeys behind. If we have to hit the silk, I don't want to stand around arguing with a lot of people about who goes first."

"You are not content with Meester Athanasiou and his friends?" Fat

Boy puffed a trickle of the thin smoke from his nostrils. "You have some reason for objecting at them?"

"I don't need a reason. We ride it my way, or you buy yourself another jockey."

"You insist, Captain Payne?" His lips barely moved on the pink silk tip of his smoke.

"I insist, Mr. Mavromatis. One passenger, one flight. That—or nothing."

Red joined us, and he broke in with some Greek. Fat Boy slid a banknote out of a thick wallet and passed it to him. Red went back to where Mikoyan was waiting.

"A bonus, perhaps?" Fat Boy asked me. "A little extra something? Four pounds? Five?"

I wasn't Red Kelly, I reminded him. I still had the envelope, marked "Passage home," unopened in my wallet. He could take it or he— Then I got a notion.

I WASN'T worried about dropping the three Levantine thugs anywhere, any time, with or without chutes. All that worried me was the idea of a pistol-muzzle in my short-ribs, some place past Istanbul, and three Greeks that wanted me and the girl to land on some strip above the Greek-Bulgarian line, where you could tally our future with a stop-watch.

Still, we had a landing coming up before we got that far, a landing to clear the Greek Immigration at Istanbul. I could take Fat Boy along to make sure things ran smooth that far, and leave the ship sit there if that looked healthier.

"How do I know who this Athanasiou is?" I asked Fat Boy. "How do I know he doesn't want to play peek-a-boo through the Iron Curtain?"

"You have my word." Fat Boy was unctuous. "I guarantee him, in person."

"Then we have no worries. I'll take the whole party as far as Istanbul."

"Yes?" He was waiting for the bite.

"The whole party. The girl, Athanasiou, and Demetrios Mavromatis." He shook his head, slow.

"I never fly," he said.

"Then nobody flies."

He watched me. His head turned a little, where he could see the other passengers. He turned back.

"And how much money?"

For free, I told him. On the house. Courtesy of Air Macedonia.

He made a sound in that washtub chest, that could have been a laugh. His lips didn't move.

"I accept, Captain Payne. I have no fright of my airplane, no fright of our passengers."

"Hey, Red," I called. "Get my bag out of the tower. We'll make a stab at it."

Red moved into the sifting mist and disappeared.

"Get 'em aboard," I told Fat Boy. "Climb in yourself." While they took seats, I made my way up to cockpit. I had an idea, cooking—an idea that had been simmering in the back of my mind since I read the first reports on flights that crossed into Bulgaria and came back short of personnel.

Both flights, by the papers, had followed the same pattern. Passengers with side-arms turned up in the cabin and ordered the pilots to swing north, a few degrees off the Istanbul-Saloniki track. That brought them over a long razor-back ridge of mountains that marks the corner where Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia meet. Some place in those hills the Communists had a portable radio beacon. When the ship crossed above it, the gunner ordered the pilot onto a new course, due north, that brought them over a landing-strip in Bulgaria. There they landed, unloaded what they wanted, and let the pilot loose if he was still alive enough to sit up and navigate.

Keying their turn by the beacon, they didn't have to be pilots to hit their objective. They only had to listen for the beacon, watch the compass, time the flight and let the pistol take care of the rest. But you've got two compasses on a plane, magnetic and radio. The magnetic compass is temperamental, but it never gets itself turned end-for-end while it's in action. The radio compass does. You fly over a radio beacon, and the needle spins a full half-turn around the dial. You come in to the beacon, flying north, and when you come out, the needle says south.

You could play games with the passengers, on that kind of a deal—on a night when there was enough ground-mist to hide the geography, and if your passengers didn't have the magnetic compass to check any whimsy you might develop.

It looked like the kind of night, ahead, when you'd be better off without a magnetic compass. I reached up and unscrewed the drain-plug from the compass casing, to let the kerosene that floats the dial drain away—but nothing came out. The dial was flat on its bottom in the bowl, already, stuck tighter than aces over kings. I screwed the plug back.

That was Air Macedonia. The only thing that worked was the cash-box at the ticket-desk.

WHEN Red came forward and settled down beside me, I had the plug back. He looked me over, trying to read something out of the back of my mind. Then he checked the panel and grinned.

"Good boy, Eddie," he told me. "I can sure use the buck I get for this trip. Start 'em up?"



"Whether I die is not an importance. Whether I reach Athens, tonight, is a most importance."

I told him to hold it. I went back, made sure the passengers were settled and that Fat Boy hadn't ducked out. I secured the door and came forward again and told Red to wind them up.

The engines checked out pretty well, considering, and I took over. I called the tower and got my clearance, then took off. I climbed to six thousand, and pulled to the N side of the beam, headed for Europe. Red didn't seem to notice the magnetic compass was crippled in its bowl. Strictly a gyro boy, I figured. I gave him the pedals and went back to see how the cargo was making out.

Everything was under control—but it was the three Greeks that had the control. Air Macedonia didn't have any seats, just the benches along the sidewalls you fold up when you handle freight. Fat Boy was back by the door, looking nervous, and on each side of him was one of Athanasiou's thugs. Across, facing them, was the girl, and close beside the girl was Athanasiou.

They had their hands in their pockets, the three Greeks.

"Take it easy," I told them. "Both engines working dandy."

The girl turned her head up to me, and her eyes were pulling at me, trying to tell me she was in trouble and needed help. She was a cocker pup in a store window, with wide eyes and a narrow future, and you turn your head away and walk past because there isn't anything you can do.

Sure, I could wrestle the Greeks for the first fall, but Red wasn't in any shape to navigate if I lost the bout, and there was still a chance I could pretend not to notice anything, get down onto the runway at Istanbul, and change my program.

"Fasten your seat-belts," I told them. "We're running into a little storm." Fat Boy translated. The Greeks hooked up, each of them using one hand.

"An hour, yet, to Yesilkoy Field," I said. "Make yourselves comfortable." I went forward again, locked the door to the cockpit, and reinforced the lock with my belt, looped through the handle and around the stanchion inside.

Red was letting the ship fly herself. I watched him for a little; then I broke out the charts and worked over them a few minutes.

The map of Turkey is plastered with big purple patches marked "Restricted" where visiting aircraft get themselves shot down.

Three of these patches surround Istanbul, leaving narrow flight-channels between their edges. The flight-plan I'd filed showed I was swinging north, clear of the restricted area covering the Izmit Gulf, and cutting back to Yesilkoy field ten degrees south of a due-west heading. From Yesilkoy to Saloniki I had to dodge south again, skipping the restricted area between Istanbul and the Bulgar border, and take a course due west along the north edge of the Aegean Sea.

The way things were shaping, I had more trouble in my cabin than I was likely to meet from the Turk air patrols. I decided to slice across the first restricted patch, and hope the Turks would have time, during my

fifty miles of forbidden flight, to spot me by radar and intercept me.

The course we were flying, 291, handled that nicely. I folded the charts over to the Ankara-Istanbul lap, slid them into the case behind my seat, and took the controls over from Red. Behind me, softly, somebody tried the door. There was no pushing. Just a gentle pressure, then silence.

Red had a pint out, and he winked at me, swallowed, and poked it back into the pocket on his seat.

I beckoned him over, where I could talk under the hammer of the engines.

"Ever been in Bulgaria?" I asked him.

"Once," he told me. "I got five hundred pounds, British, for dropping a customer north of the border. Here—I'll show you."

He pulled his own chart out, and laid a finger on the same long ridge of mountains I'd checked myself, earlier. He ran his finger across the ridge to a valley along its north slope.

"There," he said. "Strumitsa valley. You know it's got another name—a funny one: Valley of the Blinded Men. Some Turk Sultan caught fifteen thousand Bulgars there, years back. He put out both eyes of ninety-nine out of every hundred of 'em. The others—the fifteen—he left with one eye apiece."

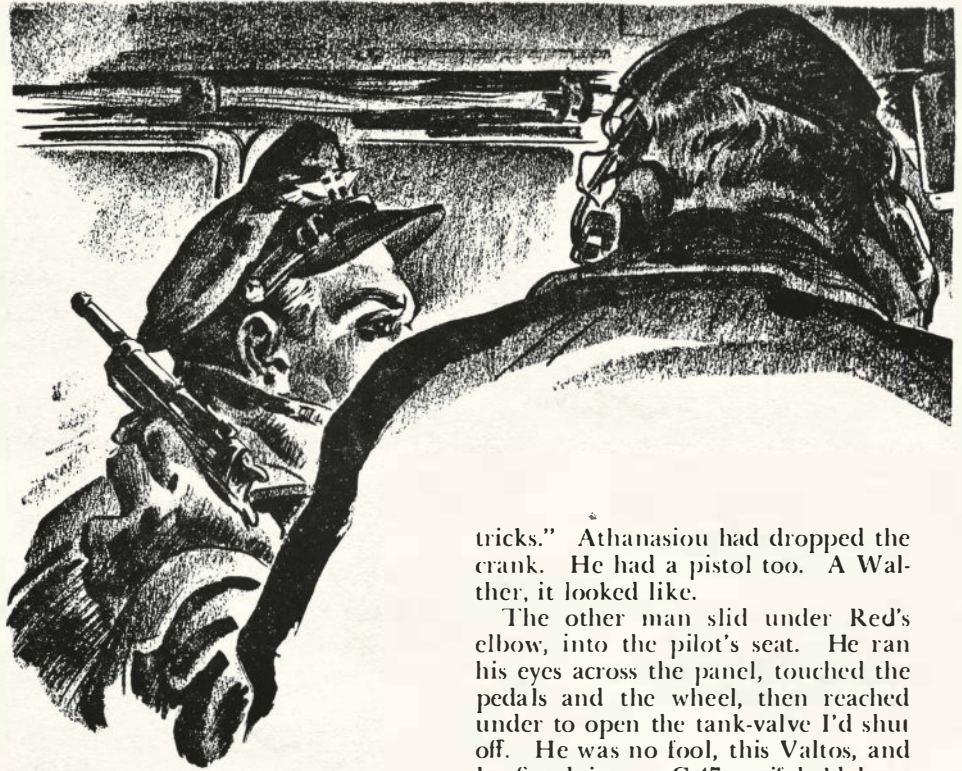
I didn't say anything.

"He told the fifteen, with one eye each, to lead the others back home. Told them to tell the Czar they'd been licked. Wasn't that a hell of a thing? Want a nip?"

I shook my head. I wondered what Red had bought with the two-thousand-odd dollars he got for dropping his Bulgarian back behind the Iron Curtain. I wondered what they were going to pay him, now. . . . We ran into a little weather and I was busy for a time.

SIGNALS from the Ankara range faded, and Red tuned to Cape Rumili marine beacon. There was nothing but the crawl of the radio compass needle to say where we were heading. Red had another drink. His head nodded, and he went to sleep with his jaw hung open a little, snoring in gulps. They tried the door behind again, harder this time. I made sure Red was asleep; then I opened up on the transmitter, trying to reach the Turk Army tower at Izmit. It was a waste of time. The big set was deader than a Chinese egg, and the VHF had no more range than a cracked niblick. I was a sharp citizen.

Sure, take Fat Boy along as a hostage, and forget anybody who could buy Fat Boy's airplane wouldn't have much trouble buying Fat Boy with it. You wouldn't have to buy Red.



Just rent him, on a mileage basis. He'd fixed the transmitter, I was pretty sure—fixed me, and the girl, Katerini Stannos.

The clouds rifted a little below, and I saw the lights on Arifiye Field. We were into the restricted area now, but there wasn't anything moving, no radio challenge, no sign of the Turk patrols that should have been climbing up to cut us down. I was reaching under for the tank valves, to cut one tank and let an engine starve out for a forced landing, when the door came open, behind, sharp.

There were two of them—Athanasίου and the older of his hoods. Athanasίου had the starter-handle he'd used to force the door. His chum wore a Czech 9-millimeter pistol, pointed.

"Stand up, Captain Payne," Athanasίου said. "Major Valtos will relieve you." I managed to cut the valve, quick, while I turned to get up out of the seat. There'd be a few minutes, maybe ten, and there was a chance this Major Valtos wouldn't find it. I had my hands up, stiff up from the elbows, waiting.

Athanasίου leaned past me to cuff Red across the side of the face with his forearm. "Drunken fool!" he spat at him. "Wake up. Pay attention."

Red woke slowly. On the second slap he sat up. He looked toward me; then he turned his eyes away, quick. "Take it easy," he said. "I was pretending. Everything's fine, Athanasίου. I told you the Turks'd be napping, we could cut right across this zone."

"Fly the plane, Kelly, until Major Valtos is prepared to take over. No

tricks." Athanasίου had dropped the crank. He had a pistol too. A Walther, it looked like.

The other man slid under Red's elbow, into the pilot's seat. He ran his eyes across the panel, touched the pedals and the wheel, then reached under to open the tank-valve I'd shut off. He was no fool, this Valtos, and he fitted into a C-47 as if he'd been set there on the assembly line.

"All correct," he said to Athanasίου, over his shoulder. He added something I couldn't catch—maybe Russian, maybe Bulgar.

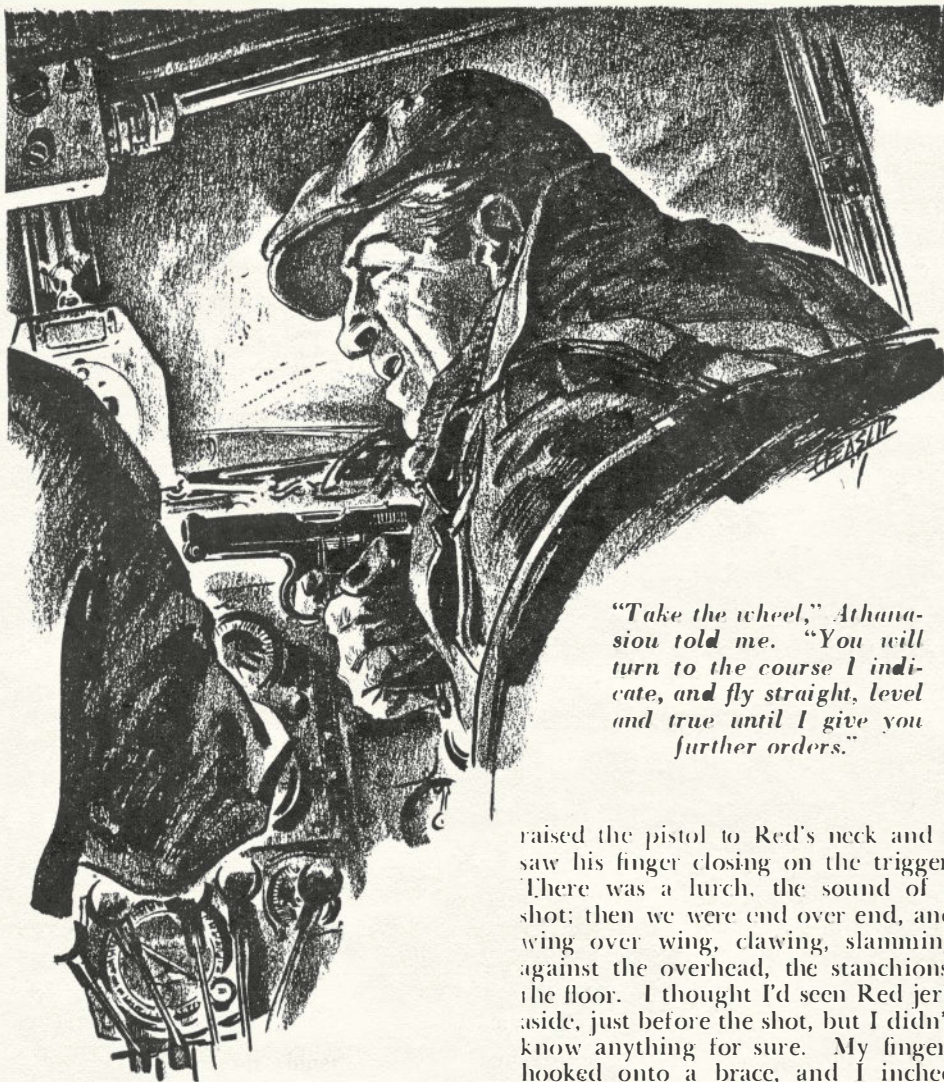
"Come, now," Athanasίου told me. I turned into the passage, ducking my head under the door-coaming.

I guess it was the pistol, the butt. Whatever it was made it quick, neat and complete.

I DIDN'T know how long I'd been out, when I got my head up. They'd not bothered to tie me, just dumped me in the space where you carry a radio operator on a legal line. There was crusted blood along my right cheek, from where the safety-catch of Athanasίου's pistol must have torn my ear. I kept my head low, trying to find what went on, what chance I stood.

There was some argument, forward, I couldn't follow. I saw the pilot, the one they called Valtos, get up out of his seat and say something to Athanasίου, standing inside the office, behind Red. Then Valtos came back, and I let my head loll across the board, keeping still.

Behind, there was another argument starting, and Valtos came forward, fishing the spare chutes out of the locker across from me. We'd be running into Bulgaria now, and the boys would be hooking up, readying for their drop. I wondered if they were going to drop the girl too, or if they were going to leave her body back in the cabin, for a souvenir, when they sent the ship south again into Greece—if they sent it south. There was a chance they'd leave the ship fly-



"Take the wheel," Athanasiou told me. "You will turn to the course I indicate, and fly straight, level and true until I give you further orders."

ing. Fat Boy wasn't the kind for parachute work, and he seemed to be in it deep enough so they'd let him live.

I saw Red's hand, then, reaching up to the stabilizer handle. He was cranking it forward, but the ship wasn't answering. I got a hunch, then, what he was trying to do. You can lock a stick hard, on a C-47, and wind the tabs far out of trim. You can hold it that way, until the time comes to turn over the wheel. Then let go. The weight of the wind on the tabs makes the stick jump forward when you release it, throwing the ship into a fancy bronco-jumping pretzel dive. A kick of rudder helps.

You can throw a pilot, that way, and earn a chance for a little infighting until somebody pulls her out. It looked as if that was what Red was setting up, while Valtos was gone. It looked like the only chance there was. I braced my feet forward, under the chart-board, and waited for the Valtos boy to get back on deck.

He had a seat-pack, bumping the back of his legs, when he passed me. I held my breath.

Valtos stood there, talking to Athanasiou, for a few seconds. Then he

raised the pistol to Red's neck and I saw his finger closing on the trigger. There was a lurch, the sound of a shot; then we were end over end, and wing over wing, clawing, slamming against the overhead, the stanchions, the floor. I thought I'd seen Red jerk aside, just before the shot, but I didn't know anything for sure. My fingers hooked onto a brace, and I inched forward, balanced for a rush, as we rolled into straight and level, and I saw Valtos winding back the stabilizer Red had fixed.

I kept coming, hoping they were too busy to spot me, but I forgot the fellows behind. One told me something that sounded like "Stoy!" and you didn't need a dictionary. He had a pistol on my kidneys. I stood still. Athanasiou pulled Red out of the copilot's seat, half-lifting him, dropping him in the aisle. There was enough blood to start a branch blood-bank, but most of it seemed to be coming from a long flap, across Red's temple, where a bullet had creased him, leaving the skin hang. Athanasiou seemed satisfied Red was liquidated.

"Come forward," he told me. He had a cut over one eye, himself. "You will fly the airplane now, on my instruction."

I had to step on Red's leg, to get to the seat. Red lay limp, one arm twisted across his face. I took the wheel and waited for the rest of my life to gallop past.

"Watch from the window," Athanasiou said. "It is clearing below." Valtos, on the other controls, dropped a wing so I could see ahead. There was a half-moon, and ahead a dozen

miles, I could make out a ridge of mountains, thin, narrow, a razorback of jagged rock.

"Take the wheel," Athanasiou told me. "You will fly directly to the mountains ahead, and along them until I hear the signal from a beacon. Then you will turn to the course I indicate, and fly straight, level and true until I give you further orders."

Valtos got up from the seat beside me, walked over to look at Red, and went back, the chute still banging on his bustle. There was still a chance my gimmick might work. Valtos, as far as I could see, was the only pilot in the crowd. He'd watch the needle swing, from dead ahead to dead astern, when we crossed the beacon. But Athanasiou might miss it. There was a chance I could haul tail south, into Greece, while my pals thought we were burrowing north into the Balkans.

I saw the needle on the radio compass start to creep halfway along the ridge, and I turned up to watch Athanasiou where he stood behind me with the phones.

"Say when," I told him, talking, trying to keep his eyes off the dial. "Tell me when you want the turn, tell me the new course."

"Now!" he said. "You will turn due north for twenty minutes. Turn now."

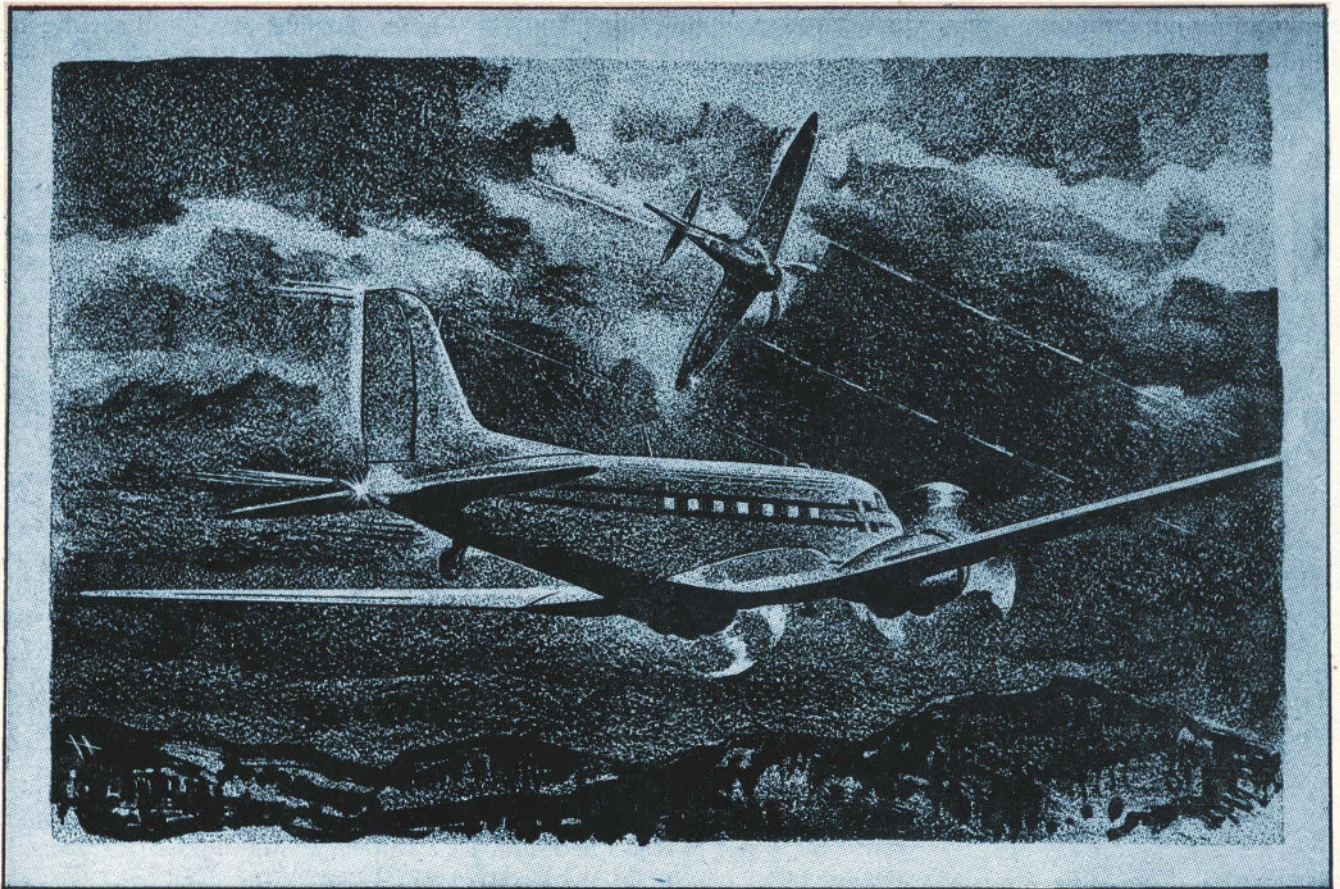
From the corner of my eye I'd seen the needle roll over, so I eased on rudder to bring our heading to north by the dial—but south when you considered the needle had already walked halfway around a circle.

"An amusing trick," Athanasiou told me, from behind. "Now turn again, or keep turning. Major Valtos warned me you might try this joke with the compass."

EVEN when you're down to the nub-end of a life, the last few minutes look good enough so you try to stretch them out. I came about, as he told me.

There was a chance they'd leave us living—me and the girl—but the odds were getting thinner than a Russ cigar. My own charts had been re-folded, while I slept off the first wallop, and I could see our position very simply.

The ridge of mountains, where the opposition had set their beacon, was fifty miles inland from Saloniki. The other way, fifty miles north, was a valley where two branches of the Struma river met. There were towns there—Gorna-Dzhumaya, Kyustendil, Dupnitsa—with no airfields marked, but plenty of level river-bottom for a belly-landing or a chute-drop. The clouds had shut in again, solid. The magnetic compass squatted, frozen, on the bottom of the bowl. And Athanasiou had the phones. All that was



The Greek Spitfires, spotting a strange craft bearing in from the Bulgarian border, had handled the rest.

left was the radio compass, and it said due north.

Under my left elbow I felt movement, and suddenly a red-orange mess of bloody Irish thatch rose up by me.

"Lie down, you damn fool!" I yelled at him. It didn't mean anything. Athanasiou could shoot him easier lying than standing, and I wasn't sure I didn't want him shot.

But Athanasiou wasn't watching Red Kelly. He had his hands cupping the phones to his ears, and he was listening, and watching out the windshield as if he'd seen a ghost. He jerked the phones off, without turning, and I saw what had him bothered.

Thirty feet off our port beam, with an Aldis lamp that winked as he pulled past, was a Spitfire. As he passed, I made out the blue-and-white bars of the Greek Air Force on his fuselage.

Through the phones, where Athanasiou clutched them, I could hear a command, in Greek. The Spit rolled out, then back, and cut across our bow so close he could have picked the aerial off us if he'd had his wheels down. He flicked two bursts of tracer as he passed.

Red was on his feet, now, and I heard Athanasiou grunt, then the clatter of a gun hitting the deck. The grunt switched into a squeal that stopped sharp. Then there was only the sound of Red's feet, hammering back to the cabin. The earphones

had been dropped on the aisle, beside me. I pulled them on. The Spitfire cut in front of us again, with a longer burst from his wing guns.

"You don't understand Greek?" the pilot was asking me. "*Français, peut-être?* English? If you understand English, wiggle the wings."

I wiggled. There was a shot from the cabin, behind me, but with six fifties cocked in the Spitfire, I had no time to worry about pistols.

"You will make a gradual descent, maintaining your present speed and course," the Spitfire said. "Prepare to land at Sedes Field, Saloniki, altitude fifty feet. Wiggle the wings again if you understand, and if you comprehend that you will be shot down, without warning, for the slightest change in course."

I WIGGLED. The cabin was cold from the hole where the bullet that creased Red had shattered the plexiglas. I was sweating anyway. Under my nose, in a thick, bloody, orange-freckled hand, came an uncorked pint of raki.

"Nice going," somebody said. "Nice going, Eddie. Have a nip?"

When I looked up, the red Irishman was grinning down at me from a smeared and welted face. I took the drink. We were flying close-formation between two throttled-down Spits when I saw the lights, and Red dropped the wheels for the landing.

There were a dozen jeeps, flinging dust-plumes up into the beams of the landing-lights, as they raced out each side of the runway; and when I cut the engines, we were boxed in tight among a couple of companies of helmeted Saloniki riot troops.

"All right," I started. "I only work here. What the hell—"

But something had swarmed over Red from behind. It was the little Greek girl, Katerini. She was hugging the big lug's neck, kissing him on alternate ears from behind.

"That was a fancy turn over the beacon," Red told me, when he got his face free. "I was laying there, praying. I saw the needle come around; then you made that clumsy bluff onto the wrong course. I couldn't have done it better myself."

"Maybe it was the wrong course," I told him. "Maybe it was the right one. I don't know. I don't know anything. If it wasn't for the Greek army, here, I'd swear we were sitting on some field in Bulgaria, waiting for the local sheriff to find a rope."

He looked puzzled, and said: "I saw you watching me, just before I handed Valtos the wheel and we went into our spin."

The spin didn't matter, I told him. The fact remained. We turned the compass once, over the beacon, and my money said the rest of the maneuvers couldn't head us any place but into Bulgaria.

"We turned twice, over the beacon," Red told me. "Why the hell you think I started playing somersaults? Why the hell you think I drained the magnetic compass, to begin? I turned us around once while we did the aërobatics. You turned us around again—and that really loused them up."

The girl was pulling him back, now, out of the plane where the gendarmes were collecting the Greeks that Red had spread around the cabin when he got the chance. Fat Boy was the only one he shot. The other two looked like a day's sleep might bring them back to where they could see their bruises in the mirror.

Athanasiou had already wakened, sullen, working his lips like he was proving somebody made a mistake, and he could show them if he got the chance.

I went back into the cockpit for my flight-bag, and I took long enough over the chart to find what really happened.

We must have by-passed Istanbul while I was out, and been heading down along the Valley of the Blinded Men when Red threw his airquake. The compass turned once, then, so when I got the wheel we were headed east, not west, along the mountain-range on which I'd taken my bearings. The second turn, crossing the beacon again, brought us back on a due-west bearing that Athanasiou thought was east.

This meant that north looked like south, Greece looked like Bulgaria; and the Greek Spitfires, spotting a strange craft bearing in from the Bulgarian border had very neatly handled the rest.

The only thing left to figure out was Red.

The girl was locked to him, both arms wrapped around one of his freckled elbows, when I left the ship. Talking to Red was somebody with the pips of a Greek brigadier, but Red was doing most of the talking.

THERE WAS NO reason, after all, a character like Red Kelly couldn't have been planted on Fat Boy's line, to watch him, for the Greeks, even for Uncle Sugar. But it's damn-all use asking that kind of people that kind of question.

I dug into my wallet for the envelope with my mad-money, and walked over toward the tower where a cat was tailing a TWA liner out of the hangar. I went into the tower to buy a ticket. There wasn't any Air Macedonia left, but there might be girls, back State-side, that are something like what made Katerini Stanos big enough for a hulk like Red Kelly.

It was worth a try. I had seven shirts still in the laundry in Ankara, but they could wait.

MAILED DEATH AND THE RED SEALS

IF it weren't for the ingrained habit of a New York subway rider—and some fancy little red paper seals—the most devilishly infamous bomb-plot in American history might have taken the lives of some of our greatest leaders.

It was on a pleasantly mild day nearly thirty years ago that Charley Kaplan, a postal clerk, hied himself home on a subway car. He had had a hard day at the office, spring fever was beginning to encompass him in its delightful tentacles and with the rocking motion of the car helping matters along, the urge to nap was very strong indeed. In fact, he did doze off, but stirred restlessly and finally awoke. His paper—he always got a paper to read on the subway.

He unfolded his paper and commenced perusing.

In big black type there was a story to the effect that the Negro maid of Senator Hardwick, of Georgia, had opened a package addressed to the Senator; that there had been a terrific explosion, and the maid had lost a hand.

Charley Kaplan felt himself grow rigid at a sudden recollection. He got off at the next stop, and hurried back to the postoffice, where he sought out an official to tell him he'd just read about the lethal package that had been mailed the Georgia Senator, and that the description of the package resembled a group of packages Kaplan had held up for lack of sufficient postage.

The packages were promptly examined—there were sixteen of them—and sure enough, they were all found to contain death-dealing infernal contraptions, set to explode upon opening.

The alarm was quickly spread throughout the nation's postoffice system to be on the lookout for similar packages. It soon was established that eighteen more of these deadly packages had begun their rounds in the mail, but the timely warning—plus a little luck—kept injuries down to that one episode in which the maid lost her hand.

For weeks thereafter many well-to-do families lived in panic of the postman. For instance, Mrs. John L. Lapham, wife of a New York broker, promptly took a package the postman had left her and tossed it in a bathtub full of water. It developed that the package contained preserved fruit.

Anyway, it was a good thing for the country that things didn't turn out any worse than they did. Among the men to whom these deadly packages had been mailed were Supreme

Court Justice Holmes, Postmaster General Burleson, Federal Judge Landis (who later became the iron man of baseball), Secretary of Labor Wilson, Commissioner General of Immigration Camineti, Attorney General Palmer, J. P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller.

In cases where the packages actually reached their destination good fortune stepped to the side of the addressee. Rep. Burnett, of Alabama, for instance, actually tried to open his package but because it didn't open easily he became suspicious. Acting District Attorney Fickett and Assistant District Attorney Cunha both happened to be in the hospital when their packages arrived, and by the time they were released, they had been amply forewarned about them.

But no matter how you look at it, Charley Kaplan and his traditional subway habit of reading the paper deserves a lot of credit for foiling the "great Red plot." (Yep, there was Red trouble in those days too. Only they were generally called Bolsheviks then instead of Communists. Because of the timing of the plot—May first—and because most of the people to whom death had been mailed out were in one way or another involved in the Government's stiffening attitude toward Bolshevism, it was generally believed that radical elements were behind the bomb packages, although no arrests were ever made.)

But perhaps the factor that played the paramount part in causing the bomb plot to misfire—even more than subwayite Charley Kaplan—were the little red seals.

To deceive the addressees, the packages were all done up in the handsome wrapping-paper of a popular New York department-store. Now, if the would-be assassins had been satisfied with just that, all the packages would have promptly gone through the mail as a matter of routine and Mr. Kaplan wouldn't have had the occasion to become aware of them.

But, in trying to make the packages even fancier by sticking little bright red seals along the edge, the heinous plotters overreached themselves. For they had put just enough stamps on the packages for them to go by parcel-post, but when sealed the packages automatically became first-class matter.

Thus it was that a routine postal regulation saved many of our nation's leading personages from serious injury or death.

—Harold Helfer

The Day's Work

by VERNE ATHANAS

THE work speeders stood idling, their unmuffled motors chuckling hoarsely in that first tingling crispness of dawn, and the crew stood in little knots, smoking and talking, waiting for the highball. They carried dripping, bulging water-bags, and paper-sacked lunches dangling from leather nooses drawn around the puckered necks of the bags, or tucked into old canvas water-bags with the top slit open. Big men, mostly, in skin-tight, pitch-caked jeans and ripped shirts, high-laced tight boots with steel calks in the soles, hats raked and twisted into every reckless and debonair shape in the world. These were the loggers.

The track gang, at the third speeder, loaded a flat-top trailer from the toolhouse, making a great clangor of steel bars and shovels and sixty-pound track-jacks. A different crew, men who moved with a flat-footed shuffle, in brogans with double soles. No calks in these, but sometimes a steel tamping plate screwed to the arch, butting up against the heel, to protect the sole from the edge of the shovel.

The camp boss came out of the shop with his quick nervous strides, over to the kingsnipe, bossing the loading of the track tools.

"Mike," he said, "I'll need a choker-setter."

"Sur-re," said Mike. He threw a look around his gang. "Ber-rt," he called, "you go wid the loggers."

Bert looked up, nodded, found his lunch-sack and his water-bag, and tramped over to the speeder. He climbed onto the step and sat on the lower deck, his water-bag between his feet. The trainmaster threw an impatient wagging motion of his arm from the shop door; the speeder operator hooted twice with his klaxon, and cracked the throttle; the speeder and its crummy began to roll.

A hard-muscled shoulder lurched into Bert with the jerk of the start, and he tried to make himself small, giving the man room. He felt suddenly displaced and ill-at-ease, here with this strange crew. He had a sudden small panic at his position.

He was going into a job that he did not know in the slightest, and he didn't really know a man in the bunch.

Eighteen lurching, jolting miles over the logging railroad, and then the vacuum brakes made little gulping noises, and the speeder ground to a halt, nose to nose with the woods locomotive, already spotted at the loader.

The crew piled off, headed purposefully in two's and three's to the idling cats, warming up on the landing, tramping past Bert without speaking, intent on their own purposes. He stood alone, without direction, a tall, yellow-haired lad, his promise of size not yet fulfilled, big-boned and a little gangly, his lunch dangling in one hand, his water-bag in the other.

He saw the side-push, whom he knew by sight, and he took a few tentative steps toward him, and then a sudden hoarse scream hit his ears like a club and made him flinch. He was instantly furious at himself for not recognizing the loader whistle, and he shot a quick sidelong look to see if his actions had been noticed. No one paid him the slightest heed.

The cats, huge logging tractors on endless steel treads, made a deep *broo-oo-oo-oom!* deep in their Diesel throats, spun on their heels in a grinding clash of steel, took their hulking roll across the uneven footing of the landing, dragging the long-boomed arches to the jangle of butt-hooks and chains. It was a brawling confusion in Bert's ears, a senseless jumble of sound and motion, with no coherence to him.

HE walked up behind the side-push. "What do you want me to do?" he asked. His voice sounded high-pitched and uncertain to his own ears.

The 'push ground bark under his calked heel as he swung around, and his eyes took in Bert in one swift merciless inspection: The brogans, the rolled cuffs on the denim pants, the unmarked shoulders of the shirt.

His voice was a dry husking rasp. "Hell! Another gandy-dancer! Go

with Kelsey, there. He'll tell you what to do." He turned away, ignoring Bert completely.

Bert felt a prickle of warmth in his cheeks, but the luxury of anger was denied him. Uncertainty smothered it. There was purpose in this roaring, bellowing confusion, he knew, but he was completely lost in it. He tramped toward the man called Kelsey, a hulking giant with thick sloping shoulders and small red-rimmed eyes.

Kelsey's cheek bulged with tobacco; his hat was raked up fore and aft and pulled low on his forehead, and a two-day scrub of beard blurred the line of his jaw.

Bert said: "The man said to work with you."

Kelsey looked him silently and deliberately up and down, his red-rimmed little eyes cold and malevolent. His slack lips puckered, and he spat a brown stream close to Bert's feet. Then he turned without a word and tramped away.

BERT felt his shoulders stiffen, but something inside said: *Stick it. Stick it out. You can't quit before you start.* He followed the man.

The going was rough, a litter of limbs and brush, crushed raggedly by the steel tracks of the cat, bellowing up ahead. He stumbled, slapping the water-bag hard on the ground; the cork popped out, and a jet of water soaked one leg.

Kelsey was unencumbered, having hung his things on the cat, and he strode with a peculiar stiff-ankled pace in his calked boots, never looking back. Bert hurried to catch up, holding the clumsy sloshing canvas bag before him, trying to fumble the cork back in.

The cat stopped, and Kelsey dived under the boom of the arch, behind the cat, threw chokers loose from where they hung on the bull-line butt-hooks. He picked up one choker, threw the kinked cable across a log, turned an unreadable look on Bert, and waved the cat ahead.

The next line, Bert was ready, and he stepped in alongside Kelsey and

IN THE BIG TIMBER COUNTRY OF THE NORTHWEST THE DAY'S WORK CAN BE A TOUGH AND HAZARDOUS EXPERIENCE FOR A BEGINNER—AND THE MEN ARE QUICKLY SORTED OUT FROM THE BOYS.



"What do you want me to do?" Bert asked. His voice sounded high-pitched, uncertain.

reached for the choker rings, anxious to do his share.

Kelsey roared in a sudden savage fury: "Get your damned hands off!" He wheeled and thrust a thick arm back toward the first stop. "Set up some of them goddam logs!" Then he was wheeling away with jerky, angry movements and waving the cat ahead again.

Bert looked about in numb bewilderment a moment, set his water-bag and lunch at the base of a handy stump and stumbled back toward the first logs.

The choker lay across the log, a twenty-foot length of one-inch wire rope, with an eye and iron ring in one end, a cast-steel nubbin on the other. A queerly formed cast "bell" slid free between nubbin and ring.

There was a sketchy hole dug under one end of the log, and into this

he thrust the nubbin. There was a kink in the choker, about two feet from the nubbin, and the thing twisted in his hands as he thrust. A wicked jag of broken wire ripped through his leather glove, and thrust its way deep into the heel of his hand. He jerked back, feeling the wire tear its way clear of his flesh, and he thrust again, and managed to jam the nubbin a little farther into the hole.

He threw himself clumsily across the log, found the other end of the hole, burrowed into it with his gloved hand. His groping fingers found the nubbin, and found a tough bit of limb that was buried crosswise to the hole, fouling the choker. Dirt worked into the cuff of his glove, and he finally got a grip with two fingers on

the nubbin, and pulled until little red dots flared across his eyes. It gave, and he smashed his knuckles on the rough under-bark of the log.

He came up, breathing hard, scrambled back across the log, hefted up the bell, threw it with a bight of the choker back across, followed it, and finally made the joint with the nubbin sliding into the slot of the bell. He straightened just as Kelsey jumped onto the log with a crunch of calks on bark. Bert suddenly realized that the cat was standing by, muttering hoarsely as it idled.

Kelsey looked at him, his lips twisting away from his big yellow teeth.

"God a'mighty," he said roughly, "one log!" Then he jumped down, wagged a huge hand at the cat-skinner.

Without looking at Bert, he said: "Shovel up there on a stump. Take a six-log strip to the back-line. Mebbe you can dig holes." Then in a sudden roaring to the cat skinner: "Let's git that damned unprintable obscenity back there, Lardhead!"

Bert stood a long moment, staring at the broad hostile back of Kelsey, feeling the sweat drying and stiffening on his face, clenching his big bony hands inside the leather gloves until the hot barb of the wire rip brought itself to him. He pulled off the glove, shook out the dirt, saw the blood

welling from the cut in his hand. The cat motor bellowed, and Kelsey roared, and Bert jumped back as the turning log brought a twenty-foot sapling lashing down past his face. His cuffed pants caught a sharp limb end, and he took a clumsy wheeling step to catch his balance.

Kelsey made a deep, disgusted grunting sound, and Bert turned away silently and trudged up the hill. He felt himself quivering with a cold nervous tension, and he fought his fingers, to make them stay uncurled. His shoulders felt stiff and unmanageable, under his blue cotton work shirt. His torn hand throbbed in a slow hot rhythm.

He found the choker shovel stuck in a stump top, a queer-looking thing with a blade no more than eight

and manzanita brush. Already the cat was out of sight, though he could hear it laboring with the load below, making its drag to the landing. Kelsey stood on a stump, tilting up a two-gallon water-bag to drink. It made Bert swallow, and his throat was dry and cottony. He wanted a drink, but he couldn't spot the stump where he'd left his water-bag, and he had no desire to call Kelsey's attention to himself again.

He jumped down and waded through the hampering brush to the nearest log. It was a big one, four feet through or better, and it had towered a full hundred feet high before it was felled. It had smashed a trough in the head-high manzanita in its fall, and the crushed and broken stuff was laced beneath. His shovel went easily through the woods loam the length of the blade, thudded abruptly into a tough stem of brush.

He moved down the log a foot or so, jabbed away again, feeling a rough limb grinding into his shin as he knelt beside the log, and he hit brush again. Anger boiled up in him, and he fought at the thing with a senseless rage, jabbing and twisting furiously until the manzanita, toughest of woods, gave before him. He staggered up, his breath snorting hard through his nostrils, flung himself across the log and worked from the opposite side, to finish the tunnel-like hole for the choker to pass through. He made two false starts here, before he got the holes lined up.

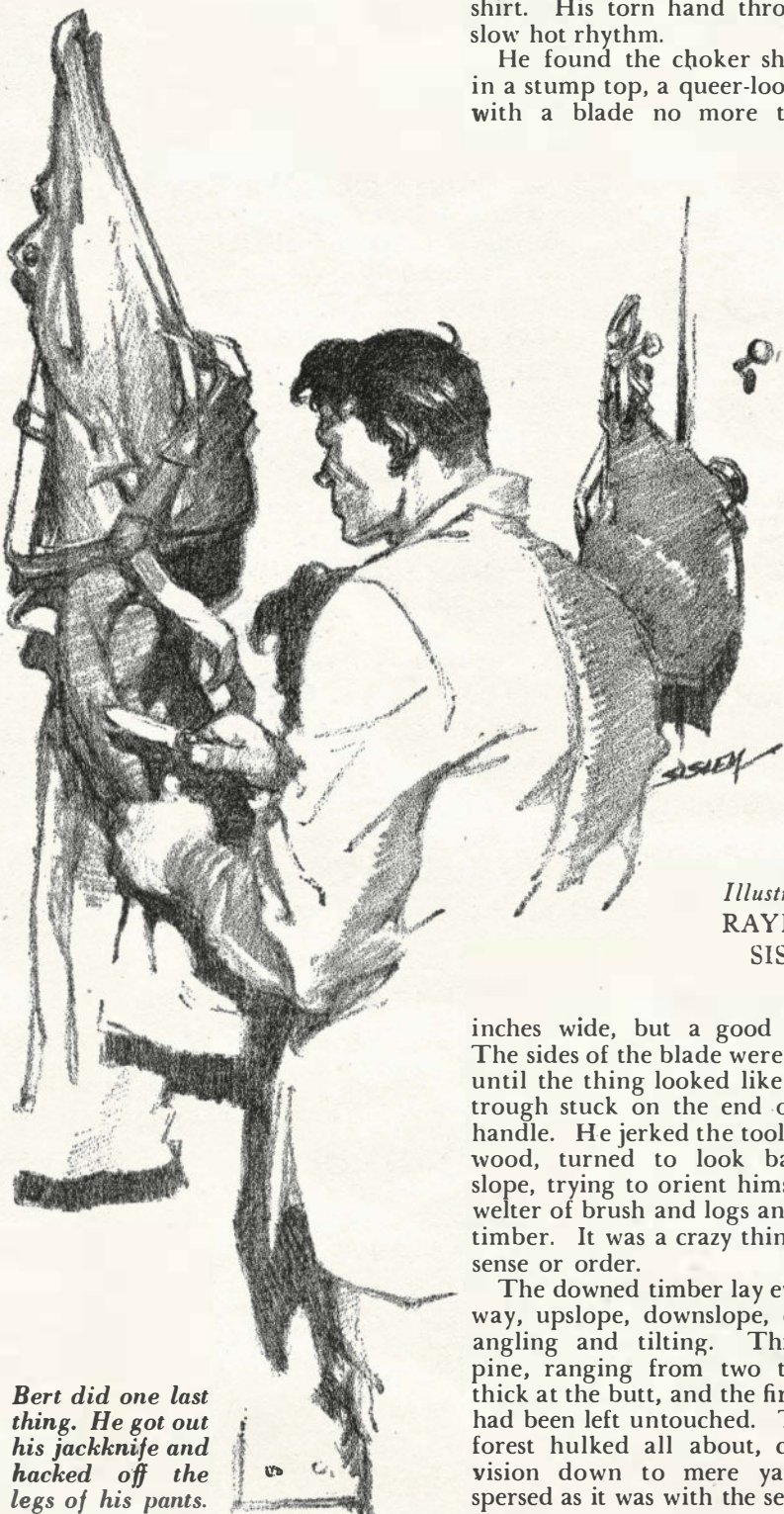
He heard the snorting of the returning cat below, climbed up on the log to look down-slope. Kelsey was working behind the cat, throwing chokers violently to the sides, and Bert started down toward him. Then he stopped, remembering Kelsey's fury when he had tried to help.

He wanted no more of that. He took the shovel and walked the log, toward the top of the tree. The trees were "bucked," sawed into log lengths of roughly thirty-two feet, and the trees worked down into from three to five such logs, diminishing in size as the butt tapered off to the top.

The next two holes were comparatively easy to get, and he learned to nick the bark of the top side of the log with the shovel to show the line of the hole when he crossed over to the opposite side, so that both ends of the hole would meet in the center of the log's belly.

The roaring of the cat faded away, below, and he dug four or five more holes. Then there was a sudden crashing of brush, and Kelsey was leaping onto the log, his face red and wild, tobacco juice dribbling from a corner of his mouth.

"What the hell do you think this is," he yelled, "a vacation?" He



Illustrated by
RAYMOND
SISLEY

inches wide, but a good foot long. The sides of the blade were turned up until the thing looked like a pointed trough stuck on the end of the "D" handle. He jerked the tool out of the wood, turned to look back down-slope, trying to orient himself in this welter of brush and logs and standing timber. It was a crazy thing, without sense or order.

The downed timber lay every which way, upslope, downslope, cross-slope, angling and tilting. This was all pine, ranging from two to six feet thick at the butt, and the fir and cedar had been left untouched. This uncut forest hulked all about, cutting his vision down to mere yards, interspersed as it was with the service-berry

Bert did one last thing. He got out his jackknife and hacked off the legs of his pants.

pivoted to fling an angry arm down-slope. "I set every damn' choker on the turn, and you're hid out up here settin' on your butt! Damn it, you're supposed to do some of the work around here!"

Bert felt his hands clenching on the shovel handle, and he took an unconscious step back before the raw violence in the face of the man. Then a little flame of anger licked at him and he retorted: "Why can't you tell me what you want? You said dig holes, and I'm doing it."

Kelsey roared back: "Goddamit, you're gittin' loggin' wages, same as me. You help set chokers, and dig holes when the cat's gone with a turn." He stood looming high above Bert on the log, breathing heavily from the climb in the mile-high elevation.

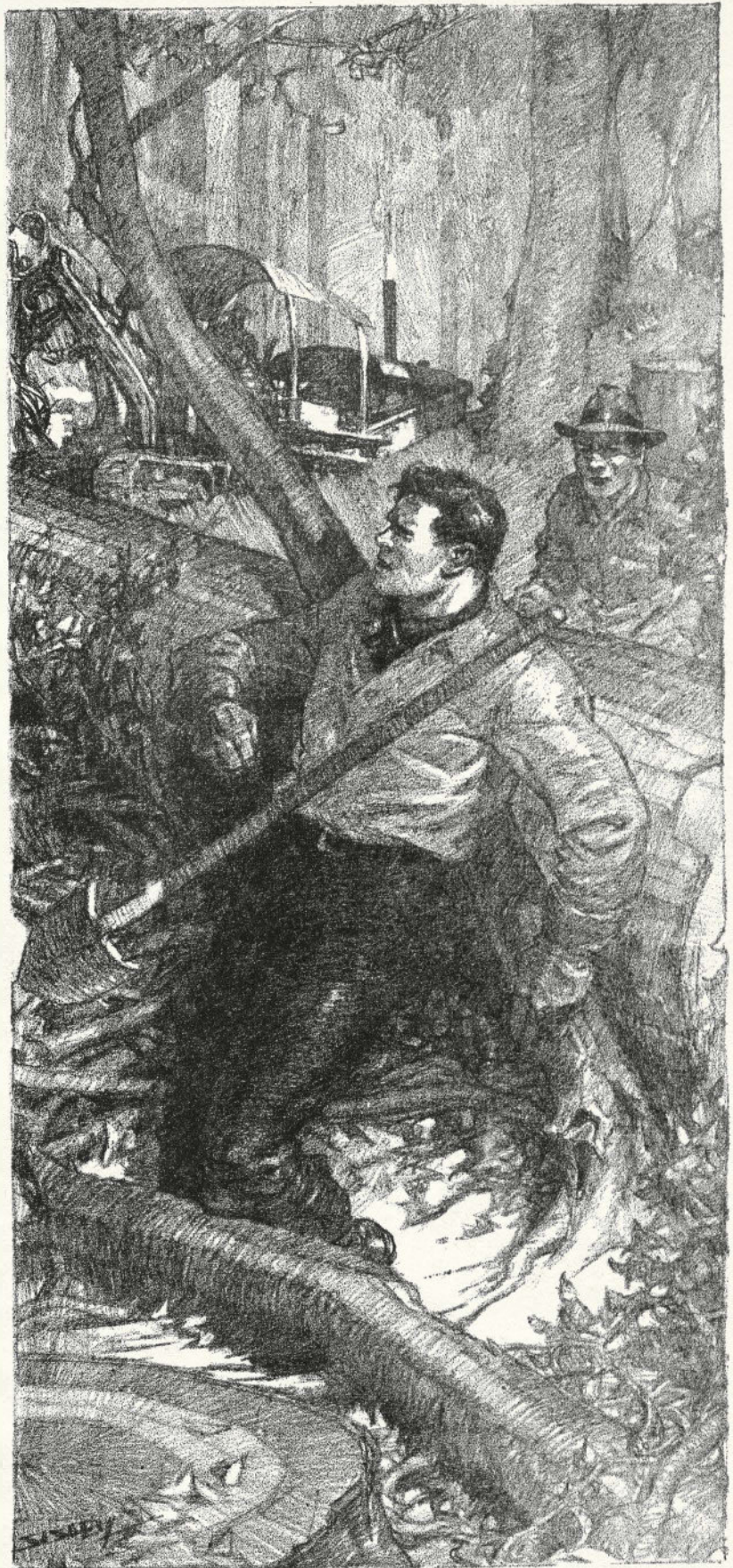
Bert said shortly, "All right," and turned away. He knelt, and thrust viciously with the shovel under another log. He had a sense of relief when the sound of Kelsey clumping away came to him.

He heard the cat coming back below, and he scrambled hastily up and crashed through the brush, took one whipping branch across the lips, a blow that brought tears unbidden to his eyes, and scrambled up on a stump in time to see Kelsey throwing the first chokers clear of the arch. He waited until the cat pulled ahead, picked up two chokers, threw them across his shoulder in imitation of the way he had seen Kelsey do it.

ONE of the cast steel bells got away from him, swung and hit him over the heart, eight pounds of metal that brought him to his knees, gasping for air. He pulled himself up, sick and humiliated, dragged the perverse cables to a log, threw them down.

He got only two chokers set up by the time Kelsey had the rest finished. Kelsey had the skinner bring the cat back, hooked his choker rings into the bull-line hooks, jumped clear as the winch gears growled the line in, picking the butts clear of the ground. The skinner brought the cat lurching ahead, dragging the three logs down parallel to the ones Bert had set up, spun the cat with an expert snap, cramped the arch and backed to swing the butt hooks squarely above the choker rings. Bert sprang forward, not wanting to delay things so much as a second by his own slowness—and then came that enraging roar from Kelsey.

"Git away from them hooks! How many times I got to tell you?" He thrust his way roughly past Bert, almost shouldering him aside, and the lad's bony fists came half up before he caught them. He looked up and caught the sardonic eye of the cat-skinner, a lean whip of a man with



There was a sudden crashing of brush, and Kelsey yelled: "What do you think this is—a vacation? You're supposed to do some of the work around here!"

deep lines graven from nostril to mouth corners by his body-racking trade. The skinner's face showed no expression at all, but he suddenly and shockingly winked at Bert, a broad, deprecating wink, and his thin mouth twisted just the slightest at one corner.

His foot moved almost imperceptibly on the brake pedal, and the cat eased ahead perhaps six inches. Kelsey, straining to get the choker ring onto the bull hook, suddenly could not make the last inch. He roared in a blind fury, and again that faint twitch came in the corner of the skinner's mouth. He touched the winch brake, and let the hooks sag. Kelsey made the hook-up, stepped clear, waggled him impatiently away.

Then Kelsey turned one long, hot, contemptuous look on Bert, and stalked away.

BERT jumped when the shocking scream of the noon whistle came rolling up from the landing. He felt his legs quivering under him with the strain and the nervousness as he scrambled down-slope to find the stump where he'd left his lunch and his water-bag. His dry, cotton-lined throat was reminding him that he had not had a drink all morning, and his shirt clung soggily to him where his belt bound it to his body.

Chipmunks had got to his lunch. They had chewed a hand-sized hole in the paper bag, eaten through waxed paper to the sandwiches and cake, and had pretty thoroughly messed what they hadn't eaten. The water-bag was tipped over, and three-quarters empty.

He tipped the bag up, drank greedily until the cool flow to his belly made him half sick. He let the bag down, took a couple of deep breaths, took another small drink.

He had no desire to eat, strangely. His stomach was tight and uncomfortable, and when he rooted around in the spoiled bag and salvaged a slice of bread and a chunk of cold roast beef from one of the sandwiches, he was filled, overfull, for his nervous stomach would not take to its work.

He fought the miserable sickness, made himself lean back against the stump, the rough bark of it hot to his back from the sun. He made a cigarette and lighted it, dragging smoke deep into his lungs. It made him giddy, after his half-day of abstinence, but it relaxed him, let some of the tightness drain out. He was feeling almost normal when the whistle screamed again.

He got up, kicked the paper lunch sack aside, and trudged up the hill, carrying the water-bag, now light and almost empty. The sun was steaming out the resinous smells of the woods now, and the scent was deep and pervading in his nostrils. He tramped



silently past Kelsey, sitting in a sullen hump on a log end, found his last tree and finished the two holes that were left.

He came back down to the sound of the cat, stood scrupulously aside while Kelsey unhooked the chokers, and managed to get two set up. He left them and went up the hill. Kelsey had left one choker swinging on the butt hooks.

He said without looking at Bert: "Take this one on up and git that top. I'm gittin' damn' sick and tired of runnin' up and down and doin' it all." He waved the cat ahead, and Bert followed it silently.

The skinner pulled his machine up alongside the tree, turned his head and raised his eyebrows in the question he couldn't ask above the roaring of the Diesel motor. Bert pointed to the top log, and the skinner shook his head, shrugged, and put the cat over an impossible tangle of limbs and cull tops. When he stopped, the arch was jack-knifed and cramped hard against the top, and the cat stood at a crazy rearing angle, nose pointed almost straight up. He cut throttle, and the deep *broo-oom—brooo-om* of the motor dropped to a tired grumble.

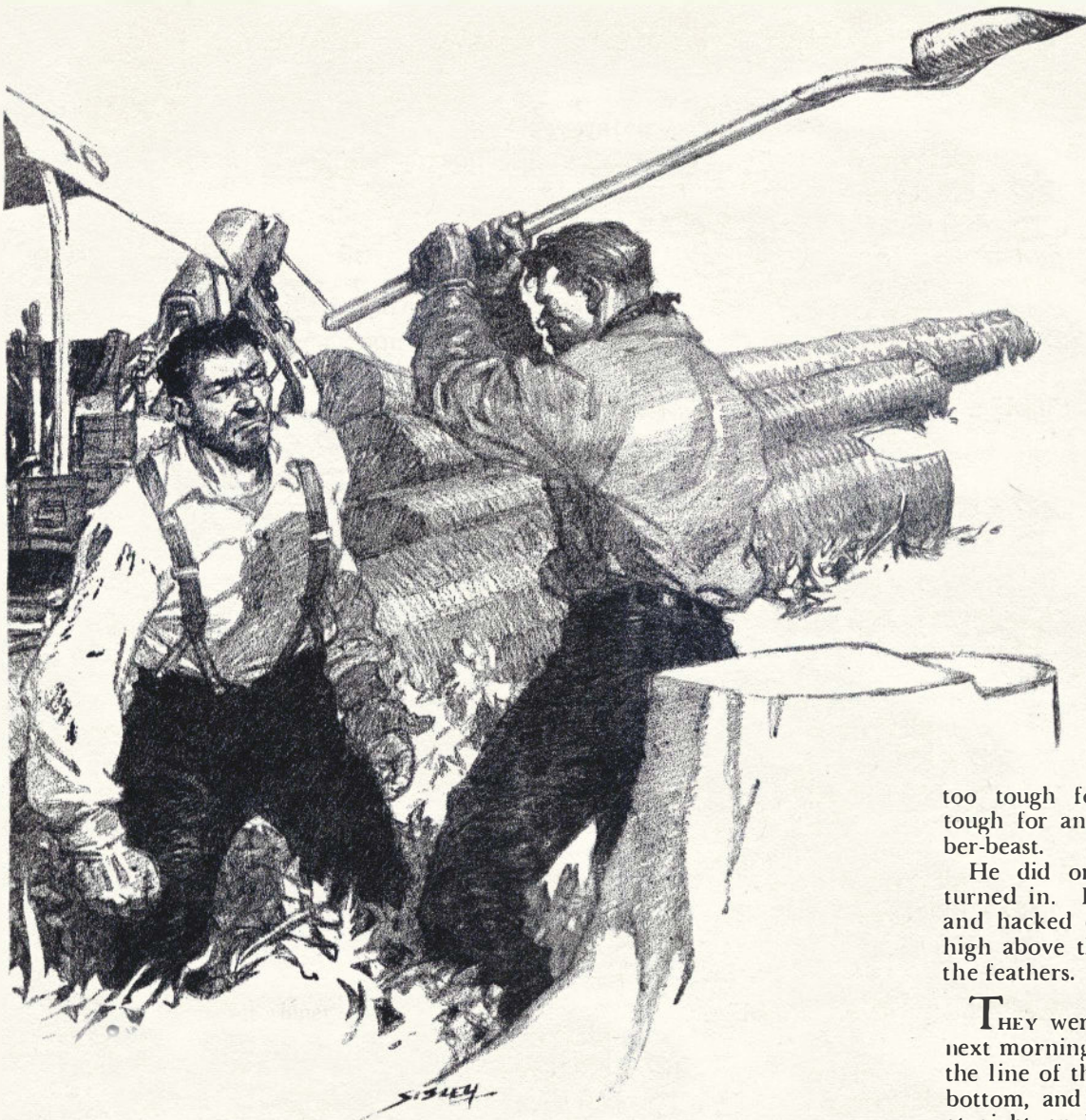
He watched impassively as Bert fought the choker nubbin through the hole, made the joint with the bell and tightened the noose thus formed. The

skinner reached around, cocked as he was by the tilt of the cat until he was lying almost on his back, and got his water-bag from where it hung on the protective bird-cage over the seat.

He took his drink, sloshed a little out to wash the mouth of the bag and extended it toward Bert in silent invitation.

As the first friendly gesture he'd seen this day, it was almost as shocking as the dead-pan wink he'd got awhile back. Bert found himself almost hesitating before he scrambled up on the log and came up to take the bag.

He took a drink, sloshed the mouth clean politely, corked it, and handed it back. He saw the man's tough, wise eyes on him, and saw the tiny twitch to the corner of his thin mouth. Then the lips suddenly parted and the skinner said in a rather sharp rasping voice: "Kelsey rawhidin' you, kid?"



Bert knew, coldly and logically, that he was going to smash in Kelsey's skull; and it was the most natural thing in the world to do.

Bert felt himself flushing, fumbled for his makings to give his nervous fingers something to do, and said non-committally: "He's a hard man to understand; and I don't know much about this."

The hard shrewd eyes showed something that might have been approbation, or merely sardonic humor. His was a hard face to read.

"Don't take no nothin' offa him, kid. He never learned it all in a day, neither." Then his hands were pulling the clutch lever in, and cracking the throttle. Bert leaped clear; the huge bellowing yellow cat climbed straight up, overbalanced, and came crashing down with a jolt that should have thrown the skinner through the air like a slung stone.

But he was sitting high and tight in the wide seat, hands playing the friction levers like reins, fish-tailing cat, arch, and log out through the clutter at a heaving roll.

The last load of the day cleaned the strip, clear to the uncut back line, and Bert shouldered his shovel and followed the load to the landing as

the quitting whistle blew. He was incredibly tired when he crawled up onto the lower deck of the speeder, and he was surprised at his own hunger when he ate supper at the long tables in the cookhouse.

He lay on his bunk, one of six in the frame bunkhouse. He smoked, and let his eyes drift without interest along the smoke-blackened cracks of the ceiling, the little black caves where knots had fallen from the rough boards. His ripped hand pulsed in a dull sullen ache, and he roused himself to douse it with iodine.

It brought the job back to him, the job and Kelsey. He didn't want another day like this one. But a timber-beast lived by a peculiar code. He'd learned that much in his past month on the track gang. You don't cry about the job. You don't bellyache about the weather or the cussedness of the way the logs lie. You work like a horse with the sun frying the sweat out of you, and you do the same when the frost turns your fingers to sticks. You grab her by the face, and you bull her through, and if it gets

too tough for you, bucko, it's too tough for anybody. If you're a timber-beast.

He did one last thing before he turned in. He got out his jackknife and hacked off the legs of his pants high above the ankles. Then he hit the feathers.

THEY were given a new strip the next morning. The railroad followed the line of the cañon, here, along the bottom, and the strips were laid out at right angles to the track, two or three hundred feet wide, and extending up the slope of the cañon side for a quarter of a mile or better to the back line. The strip they drew was comparatively brush free, but the ground was rough, and rock outcroppings thrust head and shoulders through the earth.

It was hot, harried labor here, for the cat had a short haul, and almost before they were straightened from the last load, the skinner was back for another. Kelsey's little red eyes narrowed and his slack brutal mouth dribbled tobacco juice and profanity.

Bert cuffed sweat from his forehead with the back of his glove, felt his shirt soaking up and sticking to his ribs, and fought the job with a silent desperation. But inevitably, the cat came back, and he did not have holes enough for the load. He had dug a trench two feet wide and four feet long, along this one butt, trying to find a break in the rock on which it lay, but the thing was bedded solidly.

He dropped his shovel at the cat's arrival, but Kelsey waved him impatiently back.

"Git the hole," he shouted. "I need that log for this load." And he threw in his inevitable slur. "Seems like any damn' fool could dig a hole."

Bert took it out on the shovel. The blade tip jamming into the rock hurt him clear to the shoulders. Then the cat was pulling up behind him and the motor was yapping impatiently at him, making a *bra-a-ap—bra-a-ap—bra-a-ap!* as the skinner jacked the throttle.

BERT'S fingers clamped on the shovel handle and he suppressed a wild impulse to turn and throw the tool straight through the bird-cage at this rawhiding skinner.

He did half turn, and then the skinner was throating down and leaning out over the track, jerking a thumb back at the arch.

"Grab the swamp hook offa the arch, kid," he was shouting in his harsh rasping voice. "Lay a choker out there, and I'll give you a hand."

He tramped back to the arch, wondering, found the hook, a forged thing that looked like an oversized peavy dog, with a length of wire rope spliced to the eye, and following the skinner's shouted and motioned directions, he sank the wicked nose of the hook into the far side of the log. Then he set the eye of the cable onto the belly hook on the cat, the machine bumbled backward, and the log rolled off the rock and neatly onto the choker. Nothing to do now but hook up the bell and ring the butt hook. Bert made the joint, and straightened up. He grinned and nodded gratefully at the skinner, who gave him his tight, tough little grin and nodded back.

Then Kelsey was storming up, roaring in that coarse infuriating voice.

"Dammit, can't you do nothin' right? You've ruind my next turn. I told you to take them two in the break—"

Something happened, deep inside Bert. It was hot, and it was cold, and it was neither. It was a twisting wrench, but it was calming, too.

He said, coldly and deliberately: "You told me to get this hole. You wanted this log."

Kelsey's little red-rimmed eyes widened, then narrowed wickedly.

His words sprayed tobacco juice from his lips.

"You're calling me a liar?" he cried in his deep, grumbling voice. "Why, you damn' punk—" His huge gloved hands came up, and he moved in eagerly on Bert.

Bert found himself quite automatically bringing the shovel back, gripping it with both hands like a baseball bat. He knew, coldly and logically, that he was going to smash in Kelsey's skull with it; and it was the most natural thing in the world to do.

Then the shovel was suddenly frozen in his grip, and the skinner's harsh sardonic voice was saying: "Don't kill him kid—just maim him a little."

Bert hardly noticed that. All he could see or sense was Kelsey's hateful, tobacco-spitting face, and he forgot the shovel and charged into Kelsey, clubbing at him with bony fists, feeling a deep compelling necessity to smash this man, beat that slack mouth to bloodiness.

He took Kelsey down with him, in that first rush: as he felt the great tough body give way before him, he whimpered deep in his throat, feeling suddenly cheated, as if he were getting away. He was an animal now, and when he could see Kelsey's face, mouth wide and roaring soundlessly, he smashed at it, hit it, hit it, hit it.

There was blood on Kelsey's face, suddenly, and his red-rimmed eyes were wide, and his mouth was open again. Bert smashed at him again, and felt that there was no push to the blow, and he followed it with his elbow, and felt his sleeve rip when it hit Kelsey's teeth.

Then something was clamped around his shoulders, as tight and unyielding as a choker snugged up, and it was dragging him back and up. There were sounds, too, but he ignored them, fought silently and wildly to get free, to return to the punishment of Kelsey.

Then the sounds were words, and it was the skinner's voice. "Easy, kid," he was saying. "Leave some for the camp-robbers. Take it easy."

Sense came back to him, with the recognition of sound, and he was suddenly drained, limp and weak as a newborn babe. His knees sagged, and

he had to fight them, to make them hold him up.

Kelsey was a mess. Blood and tobacco juice and woods loam made a mask of his bristling face. One eye was almost closed, and a deep ragged cut ran over the other. He rolled over, tucked his knees up under his belly, cradled his head in his hands, and lay whimpering—a sick, disgusted noise.

Then the skinner's arm around Bert's shoulders was leading him back. He found himself half sitting, half lying against a rough-barked log, and he watched dumbly as the skinner strode to the cat, got his water-bag, and went back to Kelsey.

Kelsey yelled when the water hit his torn flesh, and he spluttered and spat. Then his vital giant's body was alive, and he came up, weaving only slightly on his thick columns of legs. He cursed, deep in his throat, and his eyes were hot and hating on Bert.

Then the skinner was speaking—low-voiced, but very, very clearly.

"Kelsey," he said, "you had it coming. You rawhided this kid hard, and you took your damned meanness out on him because he was a green hand and didn't know a cat-face from his hip pocket. You asked for it, and you got it, and this is the end of it. This is Pete Muldoon telling you, Kelsey. You try to get this kid in a bind, and I'll snag you with the butt hooks and winch you through the fairlead. You go crying to the 'push about it, and I'll drop a snag on you. Mind, now, what I tell you."

HE wheeled back to Bert. "You, kid, you keep your gloves on till you're in camp. Don't let the 'push get a look at them fists." He grinned his tough little grin.

"Now," he said, "let's get to loggin'." He strode lightly to the cat, swarmed up over the treads and settled himself behind his levers. Kelsey went at a shambling gait down to where his first logs were set up, not looking back.

Just before cracking the throttle, Pete Muldoon leaned out of the bird-cage and winked again at Bert.

"All in the day's work, kid," he said. "You'll make a logger yet." Bert, taking a long breath, wondered.

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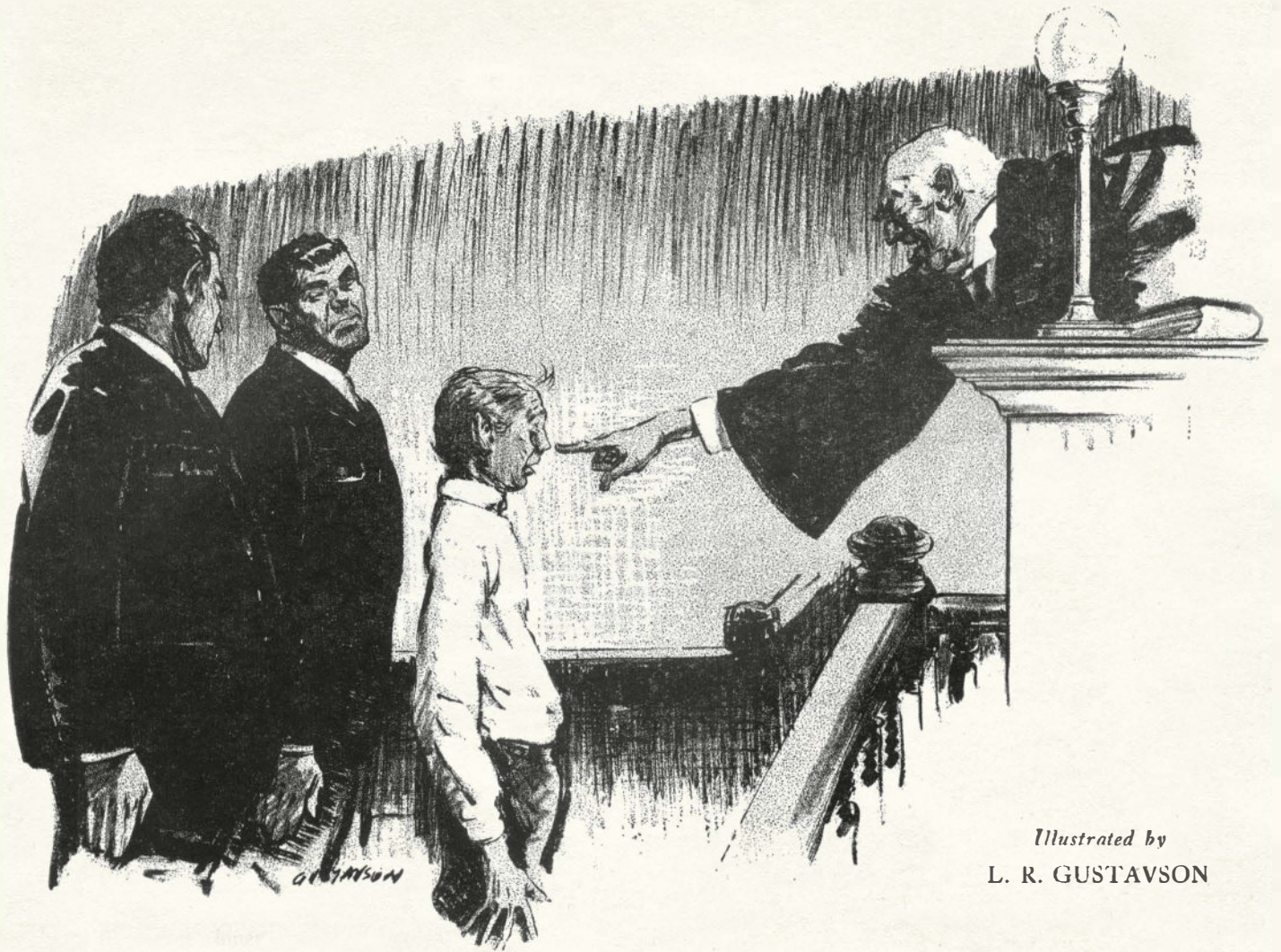
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For an Eye

High in the snow-choked mountain forest, a grievously injured man debates the old Mosaic law.

by OWEN CAMERON

THE pain came in waves, so bad at the peaks that the times between were like resting-places. Warner made no attempt to move, even to lift his head, but he knew it was dark, he was on the ground, and it was cold. Not all that at once—single impressions came to him like driftwood on the waves.

He groaned aloud, "Eileen!" without knowing it, but he heard the sound of his own voice, and for a moment strained to listen.

In his side and back pain spread without a defined center, as though

he had been kicked by a horse. The pain in his leg was different, sharper, on his shin below the knee. The bones of his hands ached too, but that was the cold.

There were pine needles against his chest, and it was dark, and he hurt like hell. For a reason, if he could remember it. The car—that wasn't quite it. Besides, it hadn't been dark then. Warner could hold only one thought at a time, but later he opened his eyes and looked and listened for the car. Nothing; he was alone in the world, or was it the sea?

Losing that thought, he floated alone for a while until he remembered the hitch-hiker, standing beside the car, looking up and down the road. He rose on a wave of pain until there was nothing else in his world, but he held the thought as a weary swimmer clings to a stick. He saw himself at the wheel of the car, turning with startled incomprehension when the hitch-hiker spoke in that wild, muffled voice. Teeth showing like a wolf's, the hitch-hiker had jabbed at him with the revolver, and Warner had reacted without thought. He

wasn't sure, but he thought he had kicked at the gun, and the roar of it struck him like a blow. Had been a blow, he thought, without connecting that with his pain.

Through another rise and fall of pain, Warner held on grimly, but when he tried to remember more, he found nothing but himself on the bare, freezing ground, pine needles against his mouth. That was now.

Trying to recall how he had come here, to direct his thought, Warner began to mix past and present. Again and again he put his mind back in the car, saw the road running straight before him, the banked trees pinched inward by perspective so that in the distance there was no road, only a gap in the treetops. It was a familiar road, leading to the valley, and memories of other trips led him over it to the valley, to home. His wife came from the house to greet him, tilting her face for his kiss. Her lips were dry and harsh as pine needles. . . .

Then he was hunting, very early in the morning. His hands ached with cold, and there was a tiny patch of sunlight between the great trees, and he wanted to stand in it for warmth, but he couldn't move. Then dream and reality swung together, and he was on his side in frosty ground, the morning sun making bright spots all around, though he lay in shadow.

For a moment his brain was clear as the morning, and he remembered being shot by the young hitch-hiker. Raising his head was a great effort, and he saw only uncut forest; no road and no car. Overwhelmed by pain

and sickness, Warner dropped his head, knowing he was near death. . . .

Consciousness returned at other times, in brief flashes without sequence. Once he found himself crawling, dragging one leg. Later he was so thirsty that not even the pain mattered.

Another time, it was dark again, and he was lying beside a huge log.

HOURS or days later he came to himself in a dry watercourse. Weak, filled with pain, yet his mind was his own again, and he sat up, moving his left leg around with his hands. That made him giddy, and he sat for a while with his eyes closed, weight resting on his arms.

A heavy cloudbank hid the sun, but he thought it was late morning. All around was the forest, near timberline by the look of it, and nothing else, though Warner even glanced overhead for a Forest Service telephone wire. He guessed he was facing north; he had a hunter's knowledge of the region, and might have recognized a major peak, but the trees hid everything.

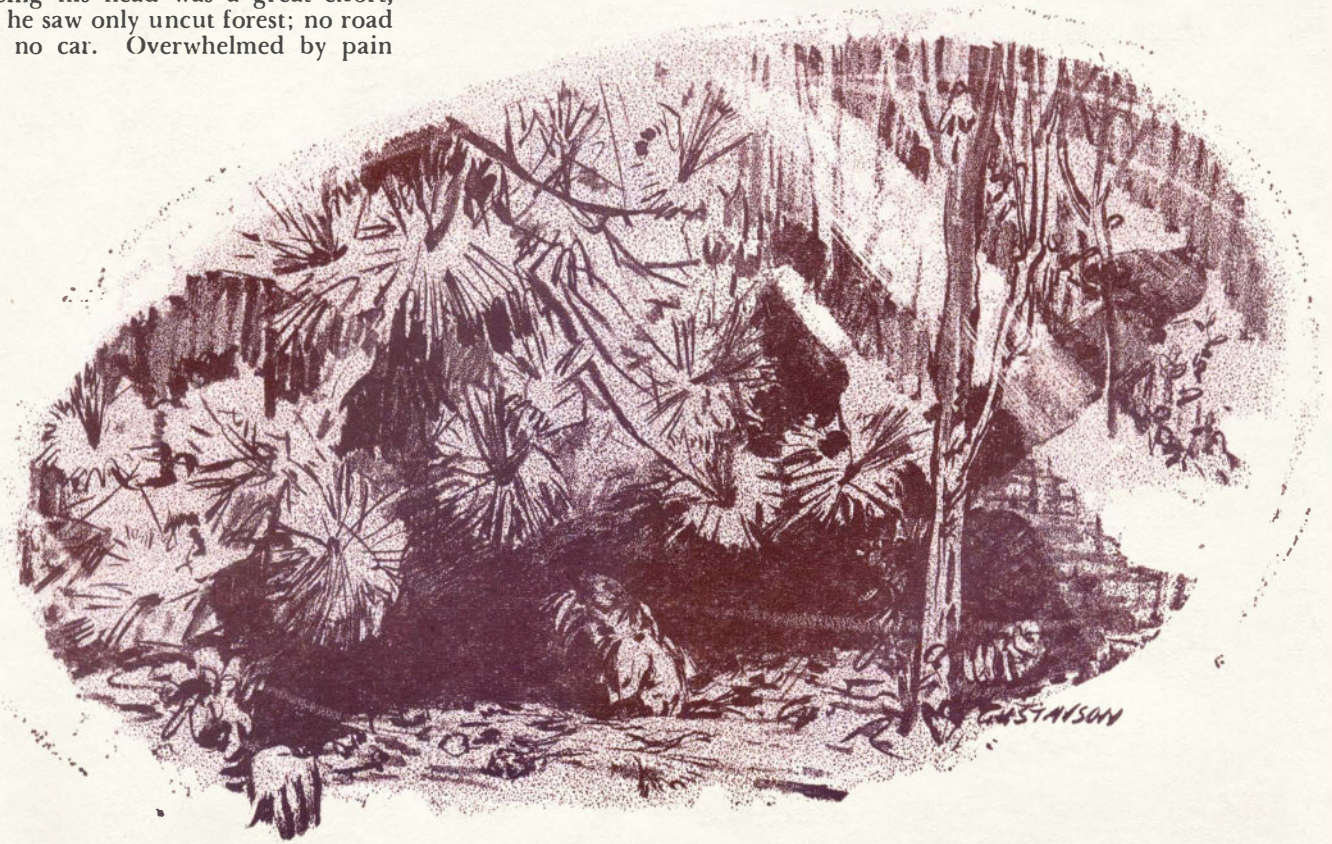
Cursing the hitch-hiker—but weakly—Warner unbuttoned his shirt. His fingers were sticks, and it took a long time. Undershirt stuck to the flesh, and when he pulled it free, the tiny wound oozed blood, like an ugly mouth. He probed along his ribs with fingers that felt nothing, dully wondering where inside him the bullet

might be. The leg wound appeared worse: a long slash that had spread blood over the inside of his trousers, sock and shoe. Seeing the white of bone, he felt sick.

For some reason Warner hesitated to draw attention to himself, and inhaled two or three times before letting out a subdued, "Hey!" He called again, louder, then shouted with all his power, but the stillness covered his voice at once.

Cursing the hitch-hiker again, he went through his pockets. Six cigarettes, but no matches; a dime and four pennies; two short wooden pencils; an empty envelope addressed to him; two aspirin tablets in a box. Warner put one in his dry mouth, but could not swallow, and spat out the bitterness.

Movement had started his chilled blood moving around the wounds, and pain increased. Warner thought of his wife, and whimpered in weakness and self-pity. He told himself that he was in a hopeless fix, with nothing left but to die here of thirst, or cold, or his wounds. But at the same time he was taking off his coat and shirt, and as he tore strips from the shirt he unconsciously explained to his wife, "*Well it was an old one, anyway.*" Carefully he wrapped the leg wound, then carefully unwrapped it, found two sticks and bound them to his leg. He knew little about applying a splint, but he felt better, as



For a moment his brain was clear, and he remembered being shot by the young hitch-hiker.

though he had helped himself a great deal.

Warner began crawling in the direction he believed to be west. That way was the valley, perhaps the road. The young hitch-hiker couldn't have carried him far. At that thought, he stopped, listening for sounds of traffic. Nothing, though in this cold overcast sound would travel far.

Warner dragged on. His breath rasped in his chest; he seemed to have been crawling hours; but when he looked back, the watercourse was only a hundred yards behind him, and he stretched despairingly on the earth, working his mouth to get moisture into it. After a while stubbornness pulled him to hands and one knee, and he went on again.

At first he steered around rocks and bushes, wincing at each shock to his leg, but then he began to hate it, and let it bump, saying savagely: "There, damn you!"

Before long he collapsed again and lay a long time with his eyes closed. He thought of his wife, and wondered how many hours he was overdue, and why no one had come hunting him. His thoughts went on to the hitch-hiker, blackly, and hate stirred him to move again. That happened many times, endlessly. Thirst was no longer in his mouth, but a part of him like the pain, so that he pulled his hand out of the muck two or three times before he thought, *Water!* He went casting in a laborious circle, like a crippled dog, and found a seep-hole the size of a hat.

WARNER lay a long time with his lips in the scummy water, though he did no more than sip and sip. Several times he slept, or fainted, and once his nose dipped under and he woke in terror, strangling. It was not easy to leave the water, but finally he did. Often he did not know he was crawling until he collapsed, certain he could not go on. Then after a while he went on.

Once he opened his eyes and stared at a snowflake inches away. Another settled beside it. He tried to pick them up, suddenly thirsty again, but they vanished under his finger. Sitting up, he lifted his face to the gray sky, and a flake fell on his cheek, out of reach of his tongue, and he whimpered. Then the knowledge of what snow could do to him came like a shout, and he looked round in panic. The flakes dropped in slow silence, not yet visible on the ground, though the topmost limbs of the trees were faintly shaded white.

Warner tried to crawl faster, but that lasted only a few yards. His lack of strength filled him with despair. What chance had he? A man might walk weeks in these mountains without meeting another human being,



In imagination he was tracking down the hitch-hiker and killing him in different ways.

"Why don't you lie down?" he asked himself. "What's the use of this? What's the *point* of it?"

But he continued to crawl. The snow was a broken curtain all around, its wetness tantalizing. He sucked leaves and pine needles, and soon could scoop up enough snow to moisten his lips, but his thirst only increased. He crawled on long after he had admitted he could go no farther, and this time fainted, then slept, waking numb with cold, no feeling in his hands below the wrists. He dragged himself up and on, leaving a strange snow-track, like a broken crocodile.

For some time he crawled diagonally toward the fence before seeing it, either because his senses were dulled, or it was so nearly a part of the forest. Of logs laid horizontally, only its length distinguished it from a wind-fall. Warner looked right and left for a hint of which way to go, found none, and turned right. Stubbornness now had hope to strengthen it, and he crawled a long while without resting, but after that his stops were more and more frequent. Pain was dulled to discomfort, but his hands were clumsy stubs, and often he plunged face-down in the snow. He grew drowsy, and coaxed himself to sleep: someone would come looking for him.

The snow-curtain thickened; visibility became less, and it was night again,

but the black line of fence was clear against the snow. Warner paralleled it automatically, his head sagging. Thought was gone; sensation almost gone, hope going; and he came to the gate with no elation. Even without the clogging snow, he could not have opened it, but it was possible to crawl through, and he dragged himself toward the shack, blindly, as an animal to the cave where it will die. He passed the small barn without a glance, bumped open the door of the cabin, and sprawled inside on the floor.

The room had not the stalest flavor of life. Moving his head, Warner saw a board table, a chair, boxes for seats and shelves, a stove, a tiny window with two panes out, springs on a homemade bedstead, mattress rolled and roped to the ceiling. . . .

Stove, that was it. A box held firewood and a gnawed mail-order catalogue. Too exhausted to feel panic, Warner searched patiently until he found matches in a tin can, fumbling over jars of beans, salt, sugar, coffee, six shriveled potatoes in a bag, and an iron-hard bread crust. He dropped matches, broke two, smothered two against the paper; a fire was hardly worth the bother. Dully he watched the flame grow, and it was a long time before heat reached him. Face and hands felt it first, and regretted the dreamy cold.



"You'll make it," he assured himself. "It'll be bad, but you'll get through all right." Like an automaton, he dragged on.

When it was warmer, he slept, waking thirsty in the cold room. After rebuilding the fire, he ate snow and packed it on his throbbing leg, slept again. At last he woke hungry, and cooked half the beans and two of the potatoes. There was a bullet in his body, and he resolved to eat only a mouthful and wait the reaction, but he could not control his hunger. Nothing happened except mild cramps from the half-cooked beans.

From the window he could see a wide white clearing. This was some cattleman's summer range, and only temporary safety. The snow had stopped; the firewood was gone, and he had broken up all the boxes and the wooden bedstead. Warner guessed that four or five days had passed since the hitch-hiker had shot him. His wounds were not fatal, but when he tried to put weight on his leg, pain made him cry out.

Next day he made a tortured passage to the barn for wood, and found a couple of pounds of weevily beans in a pail, a sack half-full of rolled

barley, a broken bale of hay, and a rusty single-bitted axe.

Warner occupied himself dragging dry boards to the house, catching snow-water from the roof; cooking his soup of barley and beans. Though he would not let himself calculate how long he could survive here, he knew it was not long. Once a man had lived forty days without food, but this was December, and it would be April before the high country was open to travel. The meadow might be twenty miles within the winterbound area—a long trek for a healthy well-equipped man. The road from the gate must lead to the valley, but Warner dared not follow it. He was unable to leave, and would starve if he stayed. It was unjust, after what he had come through; and the injustice, the pain, the hunger that was coming, he blamed on the hitch-hiker. Sometimes he prayed that he might live just long enough to kill that man.

Warner's daydreams began with his wife and ended with the young hitch-hiker. The homecoming scene was cut

short so that he could go after his enemy and kill him. On scraps of paper he wrote a farewell message that was a cry for vengeance. He described the hitch-hiker exactly, objectively, and set down the little he knew about him: Named Belton (*not sure of the spelling*, Warner wrote), he had come from Iowa originally, Reno that morning, and Warner had picked him up at Susanville. Had been a grocery clerk, wanted to be a truck-driver, had never done farm work. . . . Warner dredged his memory for every word the hitch-hiker had spoken. At the end he wrote, almost as an afterthought: "*You won't get this if I make it all right. But always remember I love you, Eileen.*" And because he knew what things troubled her, he added, "*You know this doesn't hurt. Like getting tired and falling asleep.*"

He might have written more, but it was growing dark. The white world outside was merely dim, and as he sat looking from the window (there was a lamp, but no oil) movement startled him. Three deer walked from the

forest and halted facing the shack, then trotted on to the dump of willows in the center of the clearing. Warner watched the dark patches move on the snow for a long time, wishing and scheming. . . .

Next evening and every evening the deer came out of the forest, always by the same path. They represented food and life to Warner, and day and night he tried to think of ways of killing one. If he had food, if he could hold out until spring—

He woke with the plan in his mind as though it had formed while he slept. With the axe he had hewed two crutches from boards, and he hobbled to the barn even before starting a fire. He carried all the baling wire he could find to the shack, and made a wire rope, carefully, warning himself he'd be lucky to get even one chance.

He worked all day making the snare, with freezing hands and a growing ache in his leg. The deer-trail was clearly marked, and he chose a tree visible from the window, pulling the strong, slender fir to earth with the weight of his body. A notched sapling held it, and light pressure on the trigger would spring his running-noose of wire.

All that night he watched from the window, but the deer did not appear.

Next night all three trotted into the clearing. Hobbling to the snare, after they had gone, Warner saw in the moonlight the heart-shaped tracks that circled his trap, and laid this, too, on the hitch-hiker, so that he could not sleep for hating.

In imagination he went home, ate rich warm foods, and looked at his wife's face. Not for long; he went quickly on to the hitch-hiker, tracking him down and killing him in different ways. But when he finally slept, the hitch-hiker came into his dreams like a wolf, and at daybreak Warner woke in terror, believing his enemy had come into the cabin with an axe.

He huddled over the stove until his watery coffee was hot. Glancing idly from the window, he saw the hanging shape without recognition, then yelled in triumph.

It was a doe, the body-surface already chilled. Snow and earth were marked by her struggle, but Warner felt only fierce joy, and then the weakness of a man unexpectedly reprieved. He saved for food everything but hide and hoofs, and from the hide scraped all the fat, before tossing it outside. Cooking and eating as he worked, he gorged himself until he was sick, and hated the hitch-hiker for this also.

After that he ate meat boiled with barley and beans, and the days went by, all alike inside the shack. There was nothing to do but eat and sleep. Warner had never been gregarious,

had no need for people about him. Loneliness was something he had never suffered from, though after a long trip he had always driven pretty fast, going home.

His dreams were vivid, often colored, and twice seemed clairvoyant. Once he dreamed of a cat in the snow, and next day saw a small animal cross the clearing; a marten, he thought. Another time he dropped the stove-lid and burned himself, and had an odd sense of experience duplicated, until he recalled dreaming the incident exactly as it happened. He wondered about his other dreams, and made notes of those in which his wife appeared.

Once it snowed for eight days, and snow rose as high as the window sill. Warner had torn out the stall and racks in the barn, but walls and roof remained. Fuel was no problem, but in two weeks, he knew, food would be. His estimates of how long the meat would last varied with his mood, but there was never enough. Winter had forced the deer to lower country, and none came into the meadow. He ate more and more sparingly, and promised himself to stay alive until spring, to pay off the hitch-hiker—but logic was solidly against hope.

The body wound had healed well, except for a lump on his back; the bullet, he guessed. His leg mended more slowly, and a large, hard, painful knob formed on the bone. It would support his weight, if he was careful, and he limped about without crutches. But even if he had been perfectly sound, he could not flounder far through the deep snow. He had tried it.

When he had counted twenty-two days, Warner guessed that a month had passed since the shooting. His friends and Eileen would have searched, and easily traced him as far as Susanville, but the hitch-hiker might have abandoned the car five hundred miles away, and perhaps by now people thought he was dead, or—

It would be better, perhaps, if his wife believed him dead; and from thinking of her, Warner's thoughts went again to the hitch-hiker, and he caught him and killed him.

Twice in cold, cloudy weather he heard the sound of machinery, faintly. A power-saw, perhaps, or a truck laboring up grade, a dozen miles or more distant. One morning an airplane droned over, very low, while Warner stared at it helplessly. After that he kept dry wood and damp straw ready for a signal.

A few days later, knocking down a joist in the barn, a curved stick fell on his shoulders. It was a frame for a snowshoe, something a boy might have made, but as he looked at it, an idea stirred in Warner, and he went back to the cabin and dug the deer-

hide out of the snow. Next he walked across the clearing for a dozen willow shoots. The trip through the soft, deep snow took all his strength.

For a few days he ate well, and rested, and prepared for his escape. The willow he steamed and shaped, tying the ends with wire and hide, using strips of hide for webbing, and made two pairs of clumsy but practical snowshoes, and an extra frame. Two burlap sacks he cut into sleeveless shirts; two others were boots; and the last would be his packsack. There would be about twelve pounds of meat, the axe, the extra snowshoes to carry.

Excitement made him feverish, but he would not let himself hurry. He made plans and he balanced chances against risks, but at the same time there was no question of staying. Not now, even if there had been food enough. He was going home; he had to go home, though often he confessed this need with his hatred of the hitch-hiker, and said aloud: "We'll pay him yet, Eileen."

WARNER started before sunrise, planning to travel until dark. Not even at his most optimistic, could he pretend his leg was healed, but it would carry him. "Have to," he said. He was getting in the habit of talking to himself.

The crude snowshoes held him on the surface of the snow, but their weight tired him. Before he had gone a mile his leg ached, the cold had begun to gnaw at him, and the day was less than half gone when exhaustion forced him to stop. There might be ten or twenty miles ahead, and a part of him began to regret having left his shelter.

From the underside of a dead log Warner chipped some dry wood, and scraped snow off the top for his bed and fireplace. Ten matches; he used one, and after the fire had burned to the heartwood, he dozed. When he woke, he went over the arguments for going on and returning, but the question was only in his mind. Whatever in his heart had set him crawling in delirium, drew him on now.

"You'll make it," he assured himself. "It'll be bad, but you'll get through all right. Damn him!" The hitch-hiker, he meant.

He traveled by starlight, the world sharply black and white. At sunrise he ate and slept, and after that the narrow little road started down the mountainside, and walking was easier. On the second day he was in sugar-pine forest, below the smaller fir and white pine of the highlands. There were side-roads, in the trackless snow neither more nor less important than the one he was on; when in doubt, he turned right. Once he scraped snow from a Forest Service sign, to read

the name of a lake and a fire-lookout, neither familiar.

Four days later he came out of the wilderness, nearly beaten. Only stubbornness kept him moving. He was cold, wet from the waist down, and every muscle ached. He had cut a crutch to support his bad leg and, because it had to be stabbed through the snow, progress became slower and more tiring. Like an automaton, he built fires, ate, slept, woke and dragged on, doing it all over and over again.

THE road turned and turned, forever white and blank, and then without warning he was looking at a dark brown house with green trim, other buildings beyond it. Warner stood and stared unbelievably for a long time, and before he shouted, he had seen that the chimneys were smokeless, the snow around the house unmarked. From the size and number of the buildings, this Forest Service outpost was important in the summertime, but it was shut up now. Warner would not admit that, and hurried on so that he reached the back door breathless, and could only pound on it with his crutch.

Ready to weep with disappointment, he went all around the house and returned to the back door. After vainly trying to pry it open with his axe, he broke a window and climbed into the kitchen, to limp through the rooms looking joyfully at everything, for the first time admitting to himself that he had not been sure he would ever again come into the life of the world.

There was an oilstove, and he lit it; there was a radio, and he turned it on, then quickly off, frightened by the burst of sound. He looked at himself in a mirror, startled by his thin, pale face. There were electric lights, neat beds ready for use. Warner touched a woman's dress in a closet as though he had never seen anything like it before, and read through a letter on the dressing-table without understanding a word.

The oilstove was a large one, but Warner also started a fire in the kitchen range, and greedily examined the stocked cupboards. He found a box of cookies and ate every one, ate a can of shrimp, part of a can of asparagus, half a can of cooked ham, and all of a can of pineapple. He made fresh strong coffee, and when he found three packs of cigarettes in a drawer, he was very happy. He slept in a real bed, and woke as a civilized man, warm and safe. He yawned and stretched and smoked in bed, but in a little while restlessness grew again.

After breakfast he looked over the house more carefully, leaving the radio tuned to the local station. At first he had listened carefully, pleased with the sounds of music and voices, but his

first joy at coming out of the wilderness alive was already wearing thin. The thought of his wife was an ache in him, though his imagination went on from her to pursue and punish the hitch-hiker.

The other buildings, he decided without going to them, were garages, storehouses, an office for the ranger. The house interested him more. It was a home; people lived here. Perhaps they didn't stay in the winter, because they thought it too lonely.

Warner laughed aloud at that, and said: "They'll be back. Maybe I'll wait, and maybe I won't." He knew he wouldn't.

The calendar month showed November; the latest of the newspapers he found was dated November 22. Warner believed it was now mid-January, and was pleased when the news broadcast told him it was January nineteenth. In a day or two he would be home. He would make himself rest here at least one more day; his leg might not carry him through, otherwise.

Staring from the front window, he forgot the dying radio, seeing himself walk along the familiar street by his own house, ring the bell, and wait. He heard his wife's quick steps as she came from the kitchen . . .

The sound of his own name startled him and he swung about to face the radio.

. . . although Belden's attorney hopes for a last-minute reprieve, the Governor said he could find no extenuating circumstances. Belden confessed to firing two bullets into Warner's body at close range, without provocation. After his arrest in the salesman's car, Belden led officers into the wild mountain country where he had left Warner's body, but was confused by a recent snowfall. Later he professed to remember the exact spot, to which he led searchers in a snowmobile, also without success. The District Attorney has stated he believes Belden thought he could not be executed if the body was not found, but only last-minute intervention by the Governor can keep Belden alive after ten a. m. Friday. Motive for the slaying was Warner's car and twelve dollars in his pockets. Forestry officials say the body cannot be recovered before spring, if it is ever found.

San Francisco: Two young University of California students met death early this morning when their car crashed head-on . . .

"Day after tomorrow," Warner muttered. "Then he thought I was dead."

Bewilderment changed to fierce joy as he realized what he had heard. They'd caught him. And he had confessed to the shooting, and—

"Now he's paying it back," Warner cried exultantly.

He wanted to hear more, but the radio gave him nothing but foolish music. Warner was sure the announcer had said Belden was to be executed at ten o'clock Friday morning, and he thought about that, sitting with his head down, grinning.

"An eye for an eye, and a life for a life," he told himself.

What if these people returned within the next forty hours? He peered out the window again. The snow of the roadway was perfectly flat and smooth; no one had been here for a month. But it could happen, to rob him of justice, and Warner thought of going into the woods and staying there until the hitch-hiker was dead. His tracks would remain, and he told himself:

"I'm all right here. Why should anyone come now?" Gloatingly, he added, "He's getting a little of what it's like, but they're letting him off easy. It's over in a minute. I wish—"

There would be more news later, but he was too eager to wait patiently, and prowled about the house. Far back in a kitchen cupboard, he discovered a bottle of beer, opened it, and carried it into the living-room. Lifting the bottle ceremoniously, he said, "Here's to law and justice. How do you like it now, brother?"

It was the best beer he had ever tasted, and after the first long pull, he sipped slowly, thinking first of his wife and then of the hitch-hiker, as usual. Probably Eileen was sorry for him. She was always sorry for people. Like her husband, she had a basic spiritual toughness; her sympathy was all for others. No matter what her own pain and grief, she would pity Belden, and help him if she could. Even if she had crawled and suffered beside Warner, she wouldn't hate the hitch-hiker. It was a quality she lacked.

He wrenched his thoughts away. "I wonder if they give him a clock to watch?"

This was not exactly the vengeance he had planned. Better—much better. Fate, whatever you wanted to call it, had taken a hand. His part was passive, he had nothing to do with what happened to Belden, one way or another.

"I won't say when I arrived here," Warner told himself, and had a cunning thought: break the radio! "Day after tomorrow I'll go on to the highway. I won't know anything about it. Well, suppose I'd stayed up there another week?"

HE sat fondling the beer bottle absently; after a while muttered, "Still, I wish I'd caught him myself. This isn't as good, really."

But wasn't this clearly an act of God? He burst out angrily; "Let him go through with it all the way. Didn't I? I got myself out—let him, if he can!



*"An eye for an eye, and a life for a life,"
Warner told himself.*

Dying's easy, to what he put me through."

And later: "He'll be warm, they even feed them. Plenty warm, at the last!" He laughed harshly.

He made himself think of his homecoming. It would be a cruel shock to walk in on Eileen unannounced. Better to have someone warn her, gently . . . His thinking slid on in that familiar groove to the hitch-hiker, but there was no point in scheming vengeance now. That was out of his hands. It had been his dream, now it was the hitch-hiker's reality.

"Wonder what he's thinking of?" Warner asked himself. "I wish I could speak to him, so he'd know what he was paying for. Tell him—tell him . . . Oh, hell!"

For a while longer he sat as he was, trying to persuade himself that he couldn't reach any inhabited place in time to save the hitch-hiker. It was too late to start this day, and his leg was too weak to carry him. Warner believed in his heart that he could have tracked down and killed the hitch-hiker mercilessly, but sitting inactive while the man died was a different thing. He moved to prepare himself for traveling, reluctantly at first, but with increasing briskness.

"If you're going to do anything, do it. You might have a long way to go," he told himself.

Abruptly he stopped what he was doing, muttering, "Should be one, at that," and went limping outside.

The wire stretched from the forest to the smallest building, the ranger's office. Warner kicked in a window to get inside, and cranked several times on the telephone. The wire might be down, he thought, and tried to hope that it was.

A man's voice said: "Hey! This you, Briggs? What are you doing in there?"

"No," Warner told him. "I—my name is Warner. . . . I just walked in here."

The name meant nothing. "Who? Briggs around?"

"They think I'm dead," Warner said. "A man—he's going to be executed. Life for a life, you see? My life. I mean, I guess I owe one, and—" He broke off, knowing he wasn't making sense. It had been a long time since he'd talked to anyone. "Could you get me Bob Scobie, on the newspaper? He'll know what to do. This is important, not just—"

"Wait a minute. Warner? The one who was killed?"

"Yes. I was hurt, up there." Warner gestured as though the other could see him. "Leg was broken, or something, and I couldn't get out before. I heard on the radio they're going to execute the kid, and I—"

"Hold it! Hold it!"

WARNER waited, at first rigidly, then relaxing, his elbows on the desk. Dim, flurried sounds reached him, and once someone said loudly: "I'm telling you!"

Later a crisp voice asked him his name and other questions, and told him to hold the line.

There was a longer wait, more questions, more waiting, and then a tired voice asked:

"Mr. Warner?"

"Hello. I want to—"

"Do you know a man named Roth?"

"I work for him. Listen, I—"

"His daughter's name?"

"Alice. Listen, they're going to execute a—"

"Just a moment. Know her puppy's name?"

"They're going to execute a man!"

Warner yelled angrily. "Why don't you quit this-fooling around and—oh, I see. You want to be sure I'm me.

Why, he's a registered Airedale named Belle's Tinker, out of Belle Starr by Duke Rufus, and they call him Stinky. I gave him to the kid on her—"

"That's enough," said the tired voice. "Where are you?"

The crisp voice cut in. "This is Dennison, Forest Service. He's at Tamarack Station. We can get him out from the highway, but I think the newspaper would send a helicopter, if—"

"All right. . . . Warner—do you need a stretcher, a doctor?"

"No. They won't execute him?"

"What for? All right—Dennison, was it? Take care of it from there. I'll have someone at the airport."

"Yes, sir."

There was the click of a connection broken, and Warner cried frantically, "Wait! Wait a minute."

Dennison said, "Take it easy. We'll be right out for you."

"Can you get me a number in town? I— There's somebody I want to tell."

"Sure. Or we'll—no, you hold the line. What number?"

Warner gave the number of his own home and waited calmly, smiling a little.

Then Eileen said quietly: "Yes?"

His heart gave a great bound; his smile froze, and he moved his mouth foolishly, unable to say a word. She said, "Yes?" again, and he filled with panic, thinking she was about to hang up, and managed to croak:

"Darling!"

He couldn't go on, his throat was too tight. The line was silent, silent, and suddenly fear for her unlocked his throat, and he cried: "Eileen, are you all right? It's me, Eileen. Are you listening—are you all right?"

"Yes," she said, gasping. "Oh, yes—oh, yes!"

Neither of them said anything more for a long while.

Up, Red Dragon!

CAPTAIN ARTORIUS—KING ARTHUR TO BE—STOOD ACCUSED OF THE WORST CRIME KNOWN TO FIGHTING MEN. "A MAN LIVES AFTER HIS LIFE, BUT NOT AFTER HIS HONOR," DECLARED CAPTAIN ECLANIUS, THE PICT WHO ACCUSED HIM. "A WARRIOR OUGHT NOT TO OUTLIVE HIS LORD."

by PAUL JOHNSTONE



STANDING erectly in the purple-draped Presence Chamber, young King Arthur saluted the aged Wizard Merlin. Throned in his great chair, Merlin's golden diadem flashed as he responded with a curt nod. "Speak, Captain Artorius!" he said.

Neither man would have recognized himself under the familiar names we have given to them. To a Briton of that year, our A.D. 504 (though the computations upon which the monk Dionysius the Needy was then engaged in far-distant Constantinople would not reach Britain for centuries) the aged man upon the throne was Ambrosius Aurelianus, Great King over the many kings of the "successor-states" of Roman Britain. To his Welsh-speaking subjects of the West, he was Emrys Wleclig, the war-lord, who battled year after year to preserve what a century of isolation and incessant barbarian attack had left of the wealth and pride of Kelto-Roman Britannia. . . .

A Roman of ancient lineage, whose ancestors had held high office under the Empire, King Ambrosius did not suspect that some of his more backward subjects, awed by the splendor of his court, had begun to confuse him with the half-mythical priest-kings of Stonehenge. In time, Martinus Ambrosius Aurelianus, named for two saints of Latin Christendom, would become in tradition Merlin Ambrose the wizard, son of a demon father, whose spells alone marshaled the blue stones and erected the great gray trilithons on Salisbury Plain. . . . It was well that the proud and pious old king did not know!

The broad-shouldered young man who stood before the King in the white linen tunic, baggy blue woolen

trousers and tight leather boots of a cavalryman, yet carried no sword at his side—he would have known himself as Arthur, or Artorius in the formal Latin of the king's court. But he was no king, and no king's heir. True, his father had been an underking in Cornwall, years ago, lord of two hilltop forts and a few hundred acres of barren moor, before he fell under the sword of an Irish invader. Reared in exile, Arthur had entered Ambrosius' service as the esquire-like *uassos* of his foster-brother Cavo Cupititanus (who would be transmuted by passing centuries into Sir Kay). They had gained the high honor of admission to the bodyguard of Deogratias, one of the warlike sons of Ambrosius. Both had won fame and spoil as duellists, in the single combats preceding every Dark Age battle. The cheerful brown-haired broad-chested Arthur had found greater favor with his superiors than his tall, surly foster-brother. In swift promotion necessitated by constant losses in battle, Arthur had become Captain of Prince Deogratias' bodyguard. But now the fighting-season was over; the severed head of the Prince lay in a fresh grave outside the Roman walls of Corinium,* and Arthur stood accused of the worst crime known to fighting men.

FACING the white-haired king, stern in his grief, with his circle of solemn councilors and grim-faced guards, Arthur spoke. Low at first, his voice gained power until it boomed through the high-ceilinged hall: "O King Ambrose, when Deogratias led us to meet the Saxons outside Portus Magnus,** I was the Captain of his guard, his house-host. Charging knee to knee,

we rode into the Saxon wedge. . . . As I had counseled him, they were too many for us. We broke their front, only to be hemmed in. The infantry saw our plight, lost heart and fled. Then was true fighting found! The heathen spearmen thrust at our steeds. Still we kept driving forward, making for their White Horse banner. Spears broken, we drew swords. I struck and struck until my blade was sprung, its tang rattling loose inside the hilt.

"PRINCE DEOGRATIUS scanned the battle, and saw we fought alone. He gave orders to turn, and break a path of escape, those unhorsed running beside the riders. After we won free, they would pause, and some ride double. My horse slain, I ran beside the Prince, my shield to his right knee. That was no easy journey! Sometimes my shield helped the Prince; sometimes his sword cut a path for me. We won free—and the Prince toppled against my shield! I saw his gilded saddle, all red with blood. His thigh—his left thigh, away from me—had been chopped open by a Saxon *seax*. His blood was a torrent.

"I laid him on the ground, covered by my shield. The guards built a fence of shields about us. With the Saxons charging, howling, I tried to stanch his blood. I was too late. . . . He opened his eyes. 'No use, host-comrade,' he said. 'Don't let the heathen have my head to stick up on their bloody pillar—cut it off! Cut off my head and take it home to Dad. Tell him it was a good show. . . . Yes, and take my sword. Little Romanus—' He died.

"O King Ambrose, it is woe to tell what I told you before! There was no time and no help. With my sword I cut off my chief's head, and wrapped it in his red cloak, and hung it from

* Cirencester, Gloucestershire.

** Portchester by Portsmouth, Hampshire.



his saddle. I sheathed my own bent sword and took his—I should have taken the golden baldric and sheath, but I did not think of that then. I put my thighs on that blood-wet saddle, and with the Prince's sword cut us a way to freedom. Three hundred we rode into battle, and two hundred we came out.

"I laid the sword and the head of Deogratias before you, and told the tale as I tell it now. . . . When our chief was dead, we might have charged back into the Saxon host, and died to the last man. I did not give that order. If that is fault, it is mine, for the guards never lost courage. I did what my chief ordered. Yet am I alive, he in death. That is the reproach that is mine in every street, in every wine-shop. . . . While my own sword is being repaired, at the shop of Belinic the Master-smith, I have gone swordless, that I might not break your good laws against brawling. Now one of my own comrades has called me coward and traitor and no-man, in the ears of many. I have borne enough, O King! It is my right—give me men's truth!"

THE King gazed at him bleakly. "Both sides must be heard, before judgment is given. Think well on that you ask, Captain Artorius! Think on what I have spoken to you, of Britain's plight, her need of every fighting man to stem the heathen tide. . . . Now, Captain Eclanius, what is your word?"

A lean, hard-featured man stepped forward. Under his kilted tunic, his hairy legs were bare, and bare his splay-toed feet. Yet there was a torque of twisted gold strands about his neck, and massive bronze bracelets aflame with the reds and yellows of Keltic enamel-work decked his muscular

arms. His dark hair had reddish glints, and his cheekbones were large. Beneath them his face tapered rapidly to the chin, aggressively jutting its goatish beard. He was Echlann Gall, the Daring.

He spoke in Latin redolent of heather and peat smoke. "It is a Pict I am, out of Alban, and I say what my tribe says—*A man lives after his life, but not after his honor.* That man left his honor at Portus Magnus! A warrior ought not to outlive his lord."

King Ambrose gestured impatiently with gold-headed scepter. "We have no men to throw away in vain gestures of chivalry. And beyond that, Artorius obeyed his leader."

Echlann's hard mouth twisted. "And did he, now? Who save himself heard those words? What if he needed horse and sword to make his own escape? What if it was he cut Deogratias down?"

Arthur whirled on him, with fists clenched. His deep voice throbbed with anger. "You say I did that—you, who were not there!"

"Aye!" Mockingly, Echlann wagged his head. "I was not there. I would not know. But it is the men were there who say you had sharp words with your chief, ere battle was joined, and you against joining it. Now Deogratias is dead, and yourself say 'twas your sword lifted the head of him. You, the Captain of his house-host, have outlived your lord, and your honor is dead with him! That is what my mouth says, and my hand will make it good!"

"And I say—" Arthur checked his furious outburst, glanced at the King. "That is the way it is, O King Ambrose! He and his cronies cast those words at me, day by day. I obey your laws, and my own men begin to doubt

me, as I bear these insults. Give us men's truth!"

King Ambrose sat in his royal chair, lean and old and grim. He spoke at last. "Captain Eclanius, you have served us well. We can overlook much from an old comrade who stood beside us at Mount Damen, when we taught Octa, Hengist's son, the taste of defeat. . . . Much, but not this slandering of another brave man! Deogratias was my son, not yours! This is my judgment: here and now, you will make full apology, or—leave my service forever."

ECHLANN started violently. His deep-set fiery eyes glared at the King. "A pity your wits are dimming in your old age, King! A pity your old eyes can't see—I will not tarnish the honor of a chief of Alban by asking any man's pardon for speaking truth in deaf ears."

"Is that your answer, Captain Eclanius?" asked the King.

"It is that!"

"Then are you no man of mine! Honorius, see that he and his men are given their full pay, as they surrender the arms we have given them. . . . Eclanius, you have until tomorrow night to leave Corinium, and three days beyond that to be out of my realm."

"No! O King Ambrose, do you not do that!" Arthur broke in. "The Picts are our best regiment of foot. If one must go into exile, my going will do the army less harm. I have no following—"

"You have me, and every true man of the Prince's house-host!" Cavo Cupitanius, tall and terrible in his rage, laid hand to sword. "If Arthur goes into exile, it is we go with him!" He had lapsed into the common British

speech. "By my sword, which is no gift of yours, King Ambrose, we are worth ten regiments of lousy, bare-legged Picts!"

"Will you speak those words to me, and we in some quiet place?" asked Echlann.

The sword of Cavo hissed from its sheath, shining under the oil-lamps. A shocked outcry rose, and the King's

"Sometimes my shield helped the Prince; sometimes his sword cut a path for me."



guards moved toward the furious men. Arthur, closer, seized Cavo's hand, drove his foster-brother's blade back into its sheath with a penetrating clang. He looked toward the King. "O King Ambrose, this quarrel is becoming a festering wound, deadly to the armies of Britain! Let it be lanced now—let me meet Echlann, life to life, and heaven to judge between us!"

"It is my sword will judge and doom you!" spoke Echlann. "King, let me prove what a coward he is!"

The old King's eyes were wise and weary. "You are children both. Echlann, for ten years have you taken the prize for swording in my games; this spring you all but lost it to Artorius. Jealousy is an evil thing! Artorius, you have lost no honor in my eyes; you are still the most brilliant of my pupils, an old head on young, strong shoulders. Yet I know it is bitter to you that you are an exile, rather than a prince in your own land, as you would be if I had been free to go to your father's aid.

"A firm man, with a clear conscience can ignore the sneers of the envious—if these things hurt you, it is because they are blows on an old sore. Pride, too, is an evil thing! Remember that Deogratias lies unavenged, that Por-

tus Magnus is Saxon ground tonight. Is this the time for the defenders of Christendom to rend each other? It is my word to you both—clasp hands and forget this foolish quarrel."

"The word is gone forth from him," said Arthur steadily. "In far cities they will hear the tale of my shame, which is untrue. Let Echlann stand before the whole host and confess he spoke without knowledge and without truth. Then will I clasp his hand."

"Let my tongue wither, ere it speaks such trash!" growled Echlann.

Ambrose the King shook his hoar head. "So we waste strength while the Saxon prospers! Now must judgment be given. . . . To send one of you into exile will only fan the flame that is kindled between your partisans. To send both into exile is to see you fight in another place. Either way, is but loss to Britain's cause. There is an old saying, and it the wise one: *Not good the act of one sword, that will not send two others back into the sheath. . . . Aye, you shall have 'men's truth,' sword to sword, that no others*

need draw blade in your behalf! So, for jealousy and pride I must lose either an old comrade or a keen pupil. Let this be known to both of you—our gravest displeasure rests upon you for this thing!"

Silently, Arthur and Echlann lifted right arms in the Roman salute.

II

MUFFLED in their woolen cloaks against the November chill, the folk of Corinium streamed from their city's bastioned gates toward the tiered seats of the "Round Table"—the ancient Roman amphitheater, which now served as an exercise-ground for the soldiers of Ambrose, as well as a public meeting-place for open-air feasting and ceremonies. To be a "Knight of the Round Table" was to be one of the mailed horsemen who strove for the rich prizes offered each spring by Ambrosius in his great Games. Thus the bloody sports of heathen Rome, in a nobler shape, served the "last Roman," Ambrose Aurelian, as a means of attracting soldiers to his standard, and hardening them for rougher work

ahead. Here we find an explanation of the reckless chivalry, the adventurousness, the incessant mimic combats which characterize in tradition this lost life of Christian, sub-Roman Britain.

At Caerleon, deep in the West, where the Saxon never made the land his own, the circular Roman arena is still the "Round Table." Even so, a duel to the death between warriors of fame was a rarity. Save for a few monks and nuns, rigidly debarred from such performances by their vows, the whole population of Corinium was there. They did not fill the sloping seats nearly to capacity, for like all other Roman-built cities of Britain, Cirencester had suffered from the century of anarchy that preceded and followed the withdrawal of the Legions. Yet the eastern cities—London and the rest—had suffered so much more that Corinium's two or three thousand inhabitants made her probably the most populous city of the island, as in Roman times she had been second only to London. Certainly she was the chief remaining stronghold of Romano-British culture. There might still be seen the spotless togas of the self-conscious town councilmen, the staves and short swords of the civic police, the top-heavy coiffures of jeweled debutantes and dowagers, the rouged faces of the *meretrices*, the crunching hobnailed boots of the Roman foot-soldier. They were all there, clustered about the inner barrier, leaning forward, tensely waiting.

IN his royal box, beneath an awning of purple velvet, upheld by gilded spears, flanked by guardsmen in molded breastplates of gilded bronze, King Ambrose lounged unhappily. Bending his diadem-decked snowy head, he spoke first with an eager-faced boy of ten squirming in the seat at his left, then with the stately, purple-robed blonde girl at his right. They were his grandson, Romanus, only son of slain Deogratias, and his youngest child, still unmarried, Flavia Aurelia. The boy was frankly delighted, Aurelia ostentatiously bored.

In the unchanged ritual that still precedes a major prize-fight, publicity seekers took advantage of the gathering to be introduced with appropriate fanfare. Sidonius the Cantian would present his famous trained-bear act in the same arena the next holiday; a town councilman nervously read announcements concerning new penalties for delinquent taxpayers. He departed hastily, followed by hisses and flying garbage. Tedion the Dumnonian, a squat, grinning fellow of enormous width, challenged all comers at wrestling, backing himself with a side bet of six hundred minimi—the tiny, seed-like bronze coins of

free Britain; a wandering bard from the North Country bawled forth his stereotyped praises of the city and its valiant, nobly generous inhabitants and valiant, nobly generous king, then dropped his tiny, twanging harp to scramble for tossed coins; three jugglers, clearly suffering from hangovers, were hooted and pelted into flight; John the Assyrian, graduate astrologer from Babylon, newly arrived in the city, proclaimed himself able to predict the futures of noble and commoner, man and beast (for the benefit of those who played the horse-races) at unprecedentedly reasonable rates. He was heard out in awed silence. Then at last, a trumpet-call!

Gates at opposite ends of the arena swung open, and the crowd roared as from each a horseman came trotting easily toward each other, long spears held shoulder-high, points slanted forward and down. Turning, they faced the royal box, spears lifted overhead in salute.

Lowering his trumpet, the royal herald bellowed out the names and rank of the principals, with the cause of their quarrel; he reminded all present that they were bound to watch without interference, and to accept the result as the judgment of heaven. The duel would begin on horseback, but might continue on foot. All tactics were fair, and the winner could give or refuse mercy as he willed. . . . A wave of the king's scepter cut short his oration, and sent Arthur and Echlann to their "corners."

As the riders waited with poised spears, the throng above buzzed with comment and disputation. Leather-lunged bookmakers offered three to two on Echlann. The Pict rode armorless save for his jockey-cap helm (the peak worn backward) and round parrying-targe of bronze; so had he always ridden to victory, depending on catlike speed, cunning and endurance to worst his armored foes. Bare of shaggy limbs, reddish beard jutting, the Pict bestrode his restless black pony with the complete confidence of a proven champion.

Across the stretch of hard-pounded turf, Arthur was mounted on a heavy gray stallion. The burnished scales of his mail clothed him in blue-white radiance. His shield and red-plumed helm were white-enameled. The repaired sword hung from a shoulder-baldric, in a sheath of shining bronze. His baggy blue trousers and yellow jack-boots contrasted with Echlann's bare limbs, beneath tartan kilt and bull's-hide cuirass. Arthur's feet were spurred, his horse equipped with stirrups and high-peaked wooden saddle—all the new-fangled devices of cavalry warfare introduced to Europe by the Huns about A.D. 375, and eagerly appropriated by Roman lead-

ers like Aetius, and Ambrosius, who while in exile had served his apprenticeship in war under the conqueror of Attila. Like a true Roman *cataphract*, Arthur carried the ten-foot stabbing lance, while Echlann grasped three slender, needle-pointed darts. They typified eras a thousand years apart—Arthur the incoming mailed chivalry that would dominate Europe until the days of the longbow, Echlann the ancestral Kelt of the pre-Roman Iron Age.

"It's murder!" protested a visitor. "The armored man on his big horse will ride right over that poor fool on his little nag."

"Keep your tunic on, fellow!" laughed a native Corinian. "We've buried a score of armored men on big horses who tried to ride over Echlann Gall."

Rising from his seat, King Ambrose lifted high his gold-headed scepter. The crowd-noise faded. A brief, flat trumpet-note. Arthur's long spear lifted, poised. Held overhand, thumb almost touching his mailed shoulder, the Briton's lance would stab forward and down, unlike a medieval knight's couched weapon. . . . "Three to two on Echlann!" a bookmaker's voice broke the momentary silence.

The King's scepter flashed and fell. The trumpet brayed.

GRAY stallion and shaggy black pony trotted out. As they neared their meeting, the pace quickened. Shields were lifted. The crowd gave tongue. Under the scale-mail, Arthur's wide shoulders twisted for the lunge that would transfix the man on the pony—Echlann threw his dart, straight at the broad chest of the gray.

Alert for that move, Arthur's trained wrist dipped his long spear. The long blade rang as it turned the Pict's dart. Recovering quickly, the Briton stabbed at his foe as they flashed past. His steel grazed the back of Echlann's leather cuirass. "*Alban a-bu!*" exulted the Pict.

The nimble-footed pony turned more swiftly than the huge stallion. Arthur swung the gray around—and Echlann's second dart went home. Screaming in pain, the tall horse reared high, fell crashing. A cloud of dust puffed up under floundering hoofs, suddenly stilled.

Slipping to the turf and drawing sword, Echlann trotted toward his fallen foe. Thrown free by the dying horse, but half-stunned by that fall, Arthur lurched up, barely in time. His shield rang. He struck back, felt his blade bend on the Pict's heavy helm. The crowd screamed. Echlann Gall went backward, three staggering strides, shook his head and showed white teeth in a dazed grin.

Quick as Echlann had been to seize his advantage, Arthur followed, sword

upswung. . . . As one man, the watchers leaped up, screaming astonishment. The thirty shining inches of steel that was Arthur's sword-blade arched gracefully through the air to fall a hundred feet behind his mailed back. He struck down, then stared at the empty, useless hilt in his hand. Instantly, he knew—*Belinic the Master-smith had tightened the loose hilt, overstrained the tang, the blade's tail, inside the grip. It had broken, leaving him—*

In swift rage, the Briton smashed shield to shield, struck with the heavy hilt at Echlann's hairy face. The Pict ducked, rocked as the hilt-knob clanged on his helm, recovered, slashed. Deep went his blade into the rivet-strengthened poplar wood of Arthur's protecting shield. Quickly the Cornishman tried to grapple, but Echlann wrenched his sword free. They rocked apart.

"*Cultell! Cultell!*" roared Cavo Cupitianus. "Your dagger!" His straining voice penetrated the uproar. Arthur, his head clearing, drew his heavy-blade dagger, and sheltered behind his deep-gashed shield.

Echlann Gall did not rush. Under shaggy brows, his keen eyes were sea-blue, sea-cruel. Amid reddish shag, his teeth gleamed whitely. "You're done, Cornishman! Down on your belly—do me sword-point homage, and maybe I'll let you live."

Sword-point homage. . . . Arthur knew its meaning, though he had never seen that brutal rite of subjection enacted. It was an old thing, old and cruel and evil. Stripped naked, the beaten suppliant crawled to his conqueror's feet, then rolled on his back, arms outstretched and mouth open to receive the victor's sword or lance-point. Teeth clenched on the steel, a foot planted on his chest, he must undergo a long litany of humiliation and give appropriate answer by gesture of his hands, or die at the whim of the man above him. To do sword-point homage would in itself remove him from the company of self-respecting men. Yet, what other chance was there? A short dagger, against the best swordsman of all the armies of Britain! He was half-stunned, weak, sick, eyes blurred, his armor a crushing weight. It would be life, life. He was young to die. Honor, what was it, after all?

Beyond the Pict's mocking face, Arthur's shock-dazzled gaze focused on a purple-draped box, on the worn face of an old man, brows wrinkled under circling gold. Ambrose the king was leaning forward, staring tensely. The old king, who had given him his chance. . . .

"While I live, I am not beaten," said Arthur to Echlann Gall.

The Pict glared at him, as if puzzled. "Then it is your shame and not

mine, for this unequal fight. Glad I am you gave me refusal, for now the fury of slaughter is on me. *Alban, Alban, Alban a-bu!*"

The poplar shield grew splintered and blotched. Chalk flew from its wood, enamel from its fittings. The dagger turned a stroke from Arthur's face, from his neck, but Echlann would never let him close. They fought till breath failed them both, rested and fought again, rested and fought. . . . Slowly, slowly, Arthur wearied under the weight of his mail. Sweat streamed down his reddened face, into his eyes. Unwearied, Echlann plied his blade, striving with cunning feints and double and triple strokes to break through that splendid defence. A thrust slipped between the scales, bit deep into Arthur's side. A half-parried slash sliced his forehead to the bone, sent red streams into his eyes. His left arm was agonized with weariness, but he must not let his shield droop low. He fought on, and like distorted giants his shadow and Echlann's fought too, growing longer and longer on the sunlit, red-sprinkled turf.

IT happened swiftly, at the end. Brushing sweat and blood from his face with his bare forearm, Arthur was almost too late to parry; Echlann's hissing blade sank through his ruined shield, grated on his left elbow. Echlann tugged free, staggering. Pain and rage for an instant brushed aside Arthur's deathly weariness. They were four or five paces apart. Arthur flipped his dagger, caught it by the point, threw it, quick as thought. Echlann, closing, ducked late. The knife flew, spinning. Point-first, it might have split the Pict's skull, but the distance was too short; it was the knobbed hilt that broke his nose, and sent him reeling.

Roaring, blinded, Echlann slashed down. His blade bit deep, deep—into the turf at Arthur's feet.

Before the Pict could disengage, Arthur fell on his sword-arm. Shieldless now, he used both hands to Echlann's one. He found the hilt, won it.

Before he could lift the sword, Echlann grappled. His buckler hammered on Arthur's helm. He had a dirk, lifted, stabbing. . . . Arthur freed the sword, made an upward slash. They fell together.

Arthur rolled, lurched up. The sword was still in his hand. Echlann sat up, burring Pictish oaths. He threw the dirk, and missed. His jockey-cap helm had fallen off, and as he shook his head his tangled hair fell over his face. He looked down, then laughed. Lounging back on both elbows, he stretched his neck, awaiting Arthur's stroke.

Peering with dimmed eyes, Arthur blinked at the pulsing gush of arterial

blood, forming a bright crimson pool under Echlann's thigh. *Just like Prince Deogratias. . . . It was a quick death.* Echlann sighed, flopped back, limp. Arthur floundered to his knees. With fumbling fingers he lifted the baldric over his head. It caught on his helm—now he tugged it free. That stout leather strap and long bronze sheath—just right—he knelt on Echlann's chest, lifted that red-dripping leg, and got the leather around it, with the sheath inside its loop. No, higher! It was a perfect tourniquet. Just turn the sheath round and round and round.

III

LIMP and bloody, Arthur and Echlann Gall were carried from the arena. King Ambrosius used language which shocked his daughter and interested his grandson. Not one good soldier lost, but two! The report of his physician that both might live did little to cheer him. He had small use for crippled men. But Arthur's use of the improvised tourniquet to stop the swiftly fatal rush of blood from Echlann's torn thigh, just before his own collapse, left the King curious. The next day he visited Corinium's military hospital, in the old Temple of Mars—a conversion which had appealed to Ambrosius' wry sense of humor.

Arthur lifted a hand in feeble salute, smiling up from his cot. Then he shook his bandaged head. "I was groggy—it seemed I had to stop that blood." His smile faded. "It was like Deogratias all over again—a pity I wasn't that quick with the Prince."

"That is done," Ambrose dismissed the thought of his dead son brusquely; kings must not weep. "Is that your sword there?" He pointed at the sheathed weapon hanging from a peg on the wall. "Strange, the way it broke at your first blow! I'd like to examine it. My men should have good weapons."

Arthur chuckled. "Then, see Echlann! This sword is his—mine now, by right of victory. Cavo brought it to me. You can tell Echlann I gave him the baldric and sheath, and he can have what's left of my sword to go with it. If he don't like the trade, he knows where to find me!"

Bedded across the room, Echlann growled deep in his throat.

IV

SPRING came, and with it the annual crop of recruits, drawn by the prizes and the glory of King Ambrosius' great Games. In masked face-casques, they tilted; with blunted broadswords pin-tipped, they fenced for "first blood;" Cavo Cupitianus was the new champion. Arthur and

Echlann were lookers-on, the Pict still too lame and Arthur's wounds still slowly healing. Then they were summoned together before the king.

"It is your own doing," said Ambrosius, in his private chamber, pushing aside his maps and regimental rolls. "Your feud was dearer to you than Britain's cause. No—I know you are willing to serve, but you are not fit. You both have much to learn, like any raw recruits. Well, those who cannot do more must do what they can. While my last son rides to war, I stay to guard Corinium—and this year, Arthur of Cornwall and Echlann of Caledonia, you shall serve with the city's guard." He paused, hawk eyes keen upon their reddened faces. "Have you aught to say? Will you serve as comrades?"

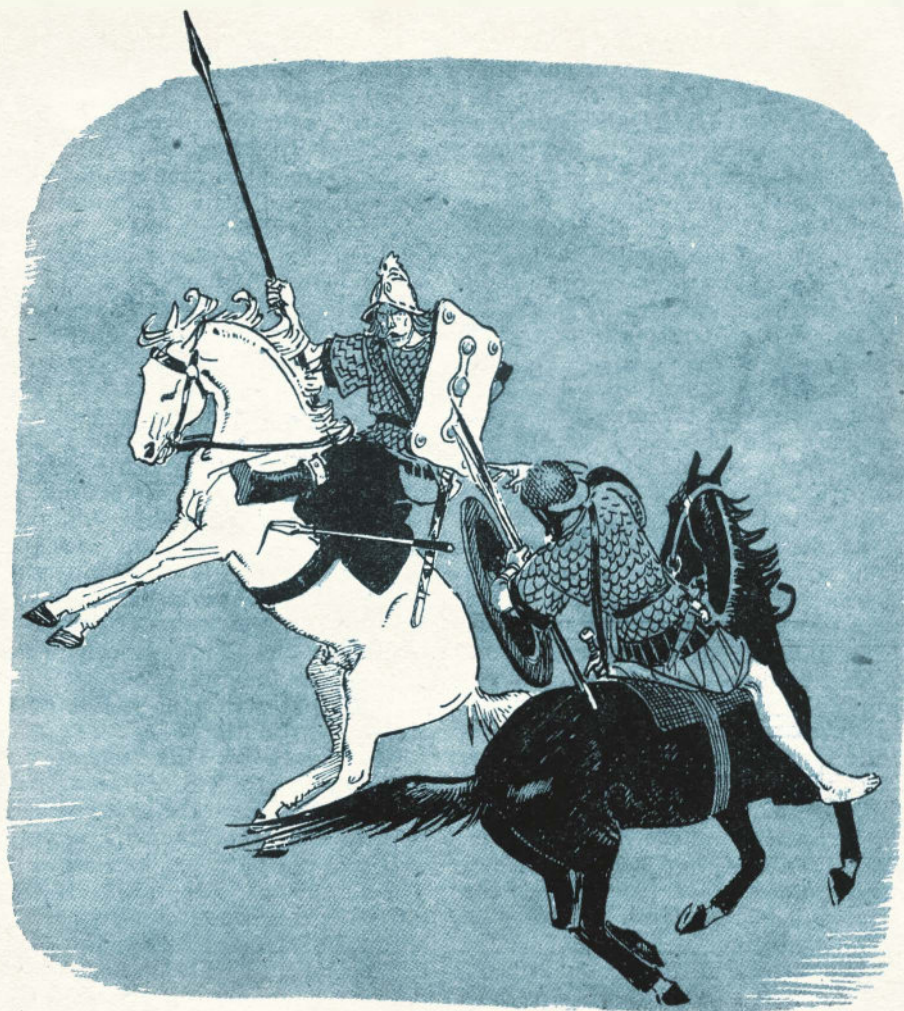
Together, they saluted, silently. The King sighed. "Well, well—dismissed!"

V

CONSPICUOUS in his scarlet cloak, King Ambrose leaned from the city's battlements, peering through a fragrant haze of wood-smoke. "Ha, I see them! Horse and foot and—what a train of wagons! Osla has something up his sleeve besides his dagger."

Around the two-mile circuit of Corinium's wall April sunlight picked out twinkling spear-points and glinting helms. They clustered thickest about the Northeast Gate, above which the king stood, surrounded by his officers. Beyond them on either side were the city militia, faces pale under ancient helms, eyes straining northward toward the burning suburban villas whose smoke screened the advancing enemy.

Osla the Great Dagger, King of the Saxons encamped along the Middle Thames, was an old foe of King Ambrose. Ten years before there had been a truce, well kept on both sides. But now, Ambrose had sent his whole field army southward, to check the rising menace of Aelle the South Saxon, he who called himself *Brytenwalda*, the Wielder of Britain; and Aelle's riders had slipped through tangled Andred-wood and across the Thames to Osla's stockaded camp, beyond Oxen Ford. Osla had listened to the *Brytenwalda's* message, then called in his own half-breed spies, sent them across the border—meanwhile calling up all his fighting men. When the spies returned, confirming Aelle's words, Osla struck, straight for the heart of King Ambrosius' realm. As they marched, following the old Roman "Akeman Street," fording the lazy Evenlode, hastening through oak-shaded Wychwood, crossing the gently-flowing, trout-rich Windrush, Leach and Coln, sharp-



Echlann's second dart went home. Screaming in pain, the gray reared high.

eyed watchers—the shepherds of Cotswold, guiding their fleecy flocks from winter folds to the greening pastures of the windy uplands—had spied that winding, crawling serpent of armored men, had kindled warning beacons.

Even before dusty horsemen could reach Corinium's gates, the guards on the wall had sighted those red, angry eyes glowering and blinking their tale of nearing danger. So, King Osla's sudden thrust did not take Cirencester unaware, though dreadfully under-garrisoned. Gallopers sped northward to Vi'rancōn,* westward to Glevum,** southward to Aquæ*** carrying the summons of Ambrose. But they would come late. . . .

Out of the powder-blue haze of the burning suburbs trotted a thin column of fair-tressed horsemen. Riding at ease, just outside javelin-range of the walls, they calmly scrutinized the defences of Corinium. A rising cry of anger rippled along the walls as they passed, pointing here and there with long spears, nodding high-peaked helms in agreement. Slowly they made the two-mile circuit, splashing

*Worcester. **Gloucester. ***Bath.

through the little River Churn (*Corinos*—source of the city's name) which, flowing under the Roman walls, bisected Corinium on its way to join the Thames. King Ambrose followed their leisurely progress with furrowed brow.

"Pray God our allies come swiftly!" breathed Arthur.

The King shook his head. "Pray God they come not too soon. All our best is gone south with Casner, out of my call. If Osla should catch our city levies in the open, he'd swallow them at a gulp. I sent only for mounted men, and bade them ride warily, not come rushing to destruction."

"But,"—Arthur lowered his voice—"can we hold the city, with so few regulars—just the Picts and your body-guard, to stiffen the militia?"

"We must." The king's thin fingers caressed his ivory sword-hilt. "We must! Corinium is the key-point; free Britain falls or stands with us—and Britain must stand! The citizens are good enough fighters, behind their walls. It is only in the open field they are no match for the Saxon phalanx." He shook his helmeted head ruefully. "I gambled on Osla's faith

—and lost! I have one of his sons as hostage—but what good would it do us to hang the boy?"

"It would be one Saxon less—ain't that enough?" rumbled Belinic the Master-smith. His portly figure encased in a gilded breastplate, this captain of militia eclipsed his king in splendor. His huge arms were laden with golden bracelets, his strong but pudgy fingers a constellation of jeweled rings. He was by far the richest man in the city, and very conscious of that fact. "O King Ambrose, y' are too soft!"

The King ignored him. "While Osla surveys our defences from without, it might be well if we did the same from within. Come, gentlemen!"

IN the blue dimness of foredawn, Osla struck. As watch-fires burned low and weary sentries yawned, naked *seax*-men rose from the gurgling Churn, having swum under the iron-pronged portcullis that guarded the southeastern water-gate. With chopping, stabbing knives ("snouted" exactly like the American Bowie knives of thirteen centuries later) they slew swiftly, quietly. The portcullis pulley screeched, and the iron grill rose. A column of Osla's mail-clad thanes rose also, from their places beside the river-bank and poured into the city. . . .

In his tiny sleeping-compartment, Arthur woke to the din of horns and babble of frantic voices from the street. "Saxons! Inside the wall! Corinium is lost!" Shrugging into mail-shirt, donning helm and shield, he snatched his sword-belt from the wall and made for the door. Half-dressed citizens, young and old, were pouring from their homes, wild-eyed, calling to one another frantically. Panic had begun to take hold.

Arthur used his great voice. "Hold!" he shouted. "Corinium is not lost. Clear the street, that we may march to save her!" With a score of the royal guards who were off watch, he mounted and rode to the Forum. Ambrosius was there, fully dressed and armored. Arthur wondered if the old King had slept at all. A stream of messengers, some horsed, some running, were coming and going in every direction. Off to the southeast rose a growing tumult. Orange-red, flames bloomed over gabled housetops. A rueful, moaning cry lifted from the townsfolk streaming away westward. "To the West Gate! To Glevum!"

Ambrosius, on the Basilica steps, spoke crisply to his captains. Trumpets pealed; mailed horsemen blocked the westward streets with crossed lances. An iron-lunged herald relayed the King's command to remain within the Forum square. "The West

Gate is closed—we have not lost. Men, to your companies! Let the rest pray for our victory, and *keep off the streets!*" Milling, grumbling, the crowd obeyed.

With Ambrosius were Porius, his guard-captain, Echlann Gall, still limping from his wound, three or four others. Turning from a messenger, so breathless as to be almost unintelligible, the old King showed white teeth. Arthur felt a renewed surge of admiration for the indomitable old warrior.

"It might be worse," said the King. "It soon will be, if we act not! Osla has the southeastern water-gate, and is pushing a column along the Churn. All along the north wall his men are attacking with rams and scaling-ladders—that is the meaning of their many wagons. They came with gear for the assault ready-made, instead of taking time to build them on the spot. Osla grows craftier with age!" Belinic the Master-smith came shouldering into the group. "Then we must split our forces—half to north and half to south."

"That is what Osla hopes," said King Ambrose. "No, we must strike with all our force at the worse menace, then turn on the other. The north wall will not be taken in a moment. The real danger lies south. If Osla can widen his penetration to the Calleva Gate and open that, Corinium will be his. . . . The Water Gate is narrow; if we recover it, lower the portcullis before Calleva Gate falls, the Saxons inside are doomed men!"

"Lead us, Emrys Wledig!" In their excitement, men forsook Latin for their native British speech.

The King nodded his crested helm. "I have already dispatched our best company of archers to reinforce the Calleva Gate. We shall not strike the point of Osla's spear, but its shaft—I count sixty horsemen. These I shall lead. I do not think Osla has extended his front much beyond the Churn. It is from that side we can best recover the Water Gate. Let Echlann's Picts and the citizen reserves follow us, to hold what we regain. . . . Britons, it is for our homes we fight, this day. *Up, Red Dragon!*"

"*Up, Red Dragon!*" came the answer, thunderously. A grizzled cavalryman of the Guard lifted high his lance-staff. Against the paling sky, Arthur saw again the familiar, bobbing, reptilian figure of the Red Dragon, its leathery, ragged wing flapping in the dawn-wind. Such inflated effigies had been carried before the greater generals of Rome. Now, under Ambrose, the Dragon had become the standard of free Britain; as *Y Ddraig Goch* it is still the emblem of that shrunken but unreconstructed Keltic Britain which is Wales—Cymru, *Combrogia*, Comrade-land,

the land of those who learn comradeship in their defence of the homeland against heathen destroyers. In many a battle, lost and won, the Red Dragon of Ambrose the King had led the soldiers of Britain. Seeing it there, rampant and blood-red against the gray sky, now greening toward dawn, British hearts lifted with it. Hoofs clapping on cobbled pavements, the sixty horsemen followed the old King, the old ragged battle-standard, and sang as they rode. Clanking war-gear and ringing hoofs beat time to the rough rhythm of that "warrior's triplet" verse;

*Heaven above and Hell below
And all between, we will make know—
Britain is Britain, to the last blow!*

Following the wide esplanade inside the city's wall, they struck a ragged mass of Saxon spearmen, split it, drove forward with stabbing lances. They won to the Churn's waters, splashed through to win the Water-Gate. Saxon war-horns were bawling. Thanes in chain-mail charged shield to shield, long swords lopping slender British lance-shafts. His lance broken, Arthur whipped out the blade he had won from Echlann. His first blow split a grinning, blond-bearded face from helm-edge to chin. A thrown axe *whished* past his own face. A Saxon broadsword, blunt at point but sharp of edge, clove his wooden shield to the iron boss. His counter left an armless hand clinging to the Saxon sword-hilt. He threw the shield away. Thrusting at close range, men slew and were slain with little noise.

A sword rang on Arthur's helm. Swaying in the saddle, he struck back—felt his blade go deep. Sticky warmth spurting up his arm to the elbow. Eyes clearing of shock-dazzle, he found his steed climbing the far bank of the Churn. His trousered legs were wet and cold. "*Alban a-bu!*" That was the war-cry of Echlann's Picts, charging close on the knights' heels. Porius, holding the dragon-staff he had snatched from the dead hands of its bearer, turned to the King at his side. "That does it! We've—" His voice faded. A javelin quivering between his shoulders, where its needle point had pierced his mail, he toppled. The King caught the staff, held the Red Dragon high. "We've won!"

VI

WITH daybreak, the Saxon spearhead, broken at the Water-Gate, melted under a rain of missiles. Slanting across the city, the blood-stained victors swept back to the north wall. Here the scaling-ladders had been placed, under a barrage of Saxon arrows and slingbolts.

On the wall-top, around the North-east Gate, Saxon swords had won a widening space. Trotting up the wall-stairs, the Picts checked them. King Ambrose mounted a bastion tower, gave orders. *Creak-Boom!* the long timber of a catapult lashed out, and a half-ton stone fell into the midst of a Saxon group moving up to the attack. From other towers, other catapults spoke, as the growing light made accurate fire possible. King Osla's own horn called his thanes back. The wall was cleared.

Inside Corinium, fear had given way to the heady exultation of victory. Men brandished spear and sword, beat on the thick oaken valves of the gate. "O King Ambrose, lead us to vengeance and victory! Lead us! LEAD US OUT!"

ATOP the tower, Ambrosius surveyed the milling Saxon ranks, rapidly steadying into line, then the Britons within the walls. He spoke into the ear of his herald, iron-lunged Widno, who relayed his master's words to the crowd below: "Closed are the gates—let them remain shut! Stand fast, every true Briton!" Outside, the Saxon ranks awaited the attack that did not come; inside, the tumult slowly died down. Grumbling, the civic militia returned to their places.

Afternoon came. The Saxon camp was astrid. Split into their marching units, the heathen host filed past the southern walls, rumbling wagon-wheels mingling with their shouts of derision. From the walls, the Corinians answered them. King Osla's thanes, mounted and spear-armed, formed a moving screen about the baggage train. From the southwest corner-bastion, King Ambrose saw his foes take the road to Aquæ Sulis, that aristocratic spa which is now Bath. Pushing back his high-crested helmet, the old King rubbed his brow and sighed; the lines in his face had deepened.

At his elbow, Belinic the Master-smith gave a cry of rage. "My farm—they're headed there! My wife and children! My sheep and cattle—King, we must follow and give battle, ere they sweep the land bare!"

Many of the bright-armored magnates of Corinium joined in the Master-smith's cry. The Romano-British man of wealth lived on his country estate, which might include a half-dozen villages of share-cropping rural serfs. The less the town-councilmen saw of your property, the less your taxes were! Now, before their agonized eyes, a torrent of ruin flowed toward their homes. The demand for battle gained volume as the Saxon rear-guard waved mocking farewells.

"A night attack might work," said Echlann Gall. "If we took them before dawn, and they were sleeping—"



Arthur lifted that red-dripping leg, and got the leather around it with the sheath inside—a perfect tourniquet.

"With militia?" asked Ambrose. "Could you keep them silent, blundering through the dark? It is we would be caught, and you know it."

Echlann nodded. "Aye, but I hate to miss a fight!"

"Lead us! Lead us!" came the chorus of estate-owners. Ambrose turned on them, eyes bright with anger: "*Satis!* To sally out would be putting our necks in the noose. Do you think Osla displayed his full force under our walls? Half his army went through the open country, waiting his call. And you'd give Osla his wish! Not so are wars won. Had you thought as much of the safety of your families as you did of evading my tax-assessors, they would be safe behind our stout walls. Silence! Back to your posts—this southward march may be a trick!"

Muttering angrily, banging shields against the parapets, the city magnates obeyed him. Eyes wise and weary, Ambrose watched them go. A long lifetime in defence of civilization against raw savagery, and still no peace, no rest! "Captain Artorius," he spoke softly, thoughtfully, the rasping note of command gone from his voice: "I am not loved by all within these walls. I have made Corinium my capital, instead of Sorbiodunum, the stronghold of my ancestors, for Corinium is the hub from which roads radiate—the central point in the defence of West Britain. Yet the Corinians recall they once had a king, Vitalinus, who bought peace for them from the Saxon."

"At the cost of shame for themselves and ruin for their land," said Arthur.

"When I built my Long Wall* against the Saxons," continued the King, "I had to leave Vitalinus' realm

*The Wansdyke—the great earthwork which stretches, roughly east and west, for eighty miles across southern England, from Inkpen in Berkshire to near Bristol.

on the Saxon side. It lay untouched, prospering as the heathen hosts marched through to devastate the lands beyond. Then I overthrew Vitalinus and brought Corinium into the war. It has been a long, long war, and no end to it in sight. . . . Some men have never forgiven me for that."

"Who?" asked Arthur, softly.

King Ambrosius shrugged his tasseled shoulders. "I know some, not all. *Watch!*" His voice changed, softened. "I would be a righteous ruler, under God, to bind up the wounds of our land. I put no trust in tattlers, nor in terror. Yet in this evil time, I must be wary, wary of treachery!" He glanced at Arthur. "You're tired, lad! When did you sleep?"

"Night before last."

"And you scarce fit to wear armor! Get supper, then to bed. I have scouts following Osla, to bring warning if he turns. Sleep well, and join me at breakfast, you and Eclanuis. I have a plan forming. . . . We'll discuss it then."

Coming to that breakfast in cloak and tunic, Arthur and Echlann Gall were met at the door by news of the King's death.

VII

KING AMBROSE lay on his own bed, with its polished bronze frame, and soft feather mattress. His lined face was calm, almost happy. Clad only in his undershirt of white linen, he lay on his right side, atop the wrinkled covers. Between his shoulder-blades jutted the rough black staghorn handle of a Pictish knife. A single bead of dark blood stained the coverlet. Arthur and Echlann stepped closer, silent, moving softly as if not to disturb a sleeper, their eyes alert. A tiny movement pulled Arthur's gaze to the King's white hair, stirring faintly in the gentle breeze. He bent forward peering,



In one voice, the crowd answered: "King Romanus, be victorious!"

then turned. Yes, the breeze came from an open window. On the floor inside, and on the small balcony outside the window were muddy stains—the tread of splay-toed bare feet.

"A Pict's dagger," moaned Honorius, the Chamberlain, wringing his plump hands. "And the footprints of a barefoot Pict at the window—they tell me half the buildings are chalked 'Ave Eclanius Rex'—Hail, King Echlann!"

Hand on sword, Echlann Gall glared about him. "That is no doing of mine! Who of my Picts can write? Am I the fool to think Britons would hail me as their King? Ambrose was

our friend, our protector, our paymaster—we Picts are not such fools as that, by Lug's long hand!"

"Where were you and your men?" asked Arthur dryly.

Echlann's eyes blazed at him. "Other men than Picts can go barefoot! In the South Gate towers we were, all night. I take oath no man of mine had a part in this deed."

"A Pict's oath—hmp!" sniffed Honorius, keeping well away from him.

"I think he speaks truth," said Arthur quietly. "In their tower, they could have slipped over the wall and been miles away ere the deed was

known. When you told us at the door I saw Echlann's face—he was the surprised man! No, Honorius, the deed was not done by a Pict, nor yet with that Pict's *skene dhu*."

"But—you can see—" stammered the Chamberlain.

Arthur nodded. "I see a stab-wound with a wide mouth, which yet bled but a drop. Why did it not bleed more? *Because the King was dead before he was stabbed.*"

"Then what killed him?" Echlann and Honorius spoke as one.

"This!" Arthur gently moved the white head, parted the hair. "See, here on the back of his head, the

bruised flesh dented in. That was no gentle blow! A slingbolt slew our King."

Echlann and Honorius glanced at the floor. "No," Arthur went on. "His slayer would have taken that with him. He meant the killing to be blamed on the Picts." He strode to the window, pushed wide the hinged casement. "Ugh! Too tight for me. The man who came through this window had narrower shoulders than mine—or yours, Echlann."

Echlann grunted.

Turning from the room of death, Arthur strode down silent corridors, and left the house. Echlann and the Chamberlain went with him, to a garden-courtyard below the balcony. They studied the soft ground. "Two men," said Arthur. "Yes," Echlann nodded, "and both wore shoes till they came under the balcony. Here are deep shoe-marks, where the other man boosted Bare Feet up."

A rosebush waved thorny green tendrils in the breeze. Arthur plucked a wool thread from one. "A scrap from someone's cloak. A good red-and-green one, you'll notice."

"Um!" said Echlann. "We Picts wear skins, not wool. But the town dudes—Flavia Aurelia should ha' been wed ere now. Maybe it was her lancy man."

Arthur's fist tumbled Echlann into the rosebush. Red-faced, save for the white scar on his brow, the Cornishman stood over him. "Bridle your filthy tongue! She is now our chief, and to be respected."

Echlann rolled, swiftly kicked at his angry face. Arthur jumped back, and the Pict bounded to his feet, crouched like an angry cat, hand on sword-hilt. "If ye think—"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" Honorius came puffing between them. "No more scenes, I implore you! Ah, this terrible time! Let us do what we can to maintain order and decency."

Arthur nodded. Echlann spat on the ground.

VIII

TWO weeks passed. Corinium lay islanded in a sea of devastation. Empty lay the paved Roman roads, bright in the soft April sun. A few wayfarers crept fearfully from thicket to thicket and scurried across open moors to bring tales of horror. Southward, smoke soiled the blue sky. . . .

A meeting of the Royal Council, presided over by Flavia Aurelia, had authorized messages of recall to Prince Casner, who would investigate his father's murder. But Casner was far to the south, grappling with the hosts of Kent and the South Saxons. Until his coming, his sister would act as Regent, with military command divided

between Arthur and Echlann—an idea of the Princess, which pleased neither man. There had been some outcry against the Pict, subsiding as Flavia made the true facts known.

Two scouts returned, haggard men on weary ponies. Osla's host, now burdened with immense spoil, was once more moving on Corinium!

Crowds gathered in the Forum, the central square, before the Basilica. Men bunched, speaking low, glancing over shoulders. Others moved from group to group, vehement and assured. Then, all at once, a resounding cry: "A King! Give us a King! A King to lead us to victory! A King!" Shields rattled, and spears flashed.

Summoned in haste from his evening meal, Arthur entered the Basilica, wiping gravy from his brown mustachios and tightening his belt. The tumult outside was thunderous. *Clang-bang!* "GIVE US A KING!" "*Clang-bang, Clang-bang!*"

Flavia Aurelia, black-gowned, sat in her father's chair, in the almost empty Council Hall. Echlann and Honorius were beside her, and a gray-bearded Councilor was hobbling to his seat.

"My Picts can clear the Forum, any time at all!" Echlann was saying, as Arthur drew closer.

"No!" Aurelia sprang to her feet. Her fiery-gold aureole of hair, and pale oval face contrasted vividly with her mourning garb. "Most of that crowd are honest folk, distracted with long anxiety. Someone is working on them—if only we could quiet their minds."

"Cold steel is a great quieter, Lady," grinned Echlann.

"There are better," said Arthur. "You know the saying: '*Not good the act of one sword, unless it sends two others into their sheaths!*'" Aurelia flashed him a grateful glance. Echlann sneered. "Name a better way, Cornishman!"

"I will," said Arthur. "Give them the king they ask, ere someone else does! There is here a grandson of Ambrose."

"Romanus?" Aurelia stared. "He—a child—could not control that mob. It would be his death."

"I think not," insisted Arthur. "He is a handsome boy, not fearful—a goodly sight in his small armor, belted with his father's sword—a sight to lift hearts. Let us give them their King!"

Flavia Aurelia twisted slender, gold-ringed hands. "He is so young—"

"Ten—were there not younger Emperors of Rome? And you, his aunt, to be his regent."

Flavia Aurelia looked at the sturdy Cornishman with deep perplexity in her gray eyes. "Artorius—my father trusted you. Even when he was angered at your duel with Eclanius, he told me that . . . Yet, here is danger.

Casner, my brother, is the last-left son of Ambrosius. The kingship is his of right. If he returns to find we have crowned Romanus, his nephew, in his absence—"

Arthur nodded. "He may be angry. Would it be better for him to find Corinium a gutted shell, Saxon-wrecked, without light, without life, without folk? Casner is grappling with Aelle, the Saxon over-king; we cannot guess when he will return—if ever. Princess, I took the *sacramentum*, the soldier's oath, to your father. It stands this day, with you in his place. What you order, I will do. But this is my counsel; give Corinium a King!"

Echlann hiccuped. "Princess, the Cornishman has a big mouth. Yet even he is sometimes right. Now I—"

Aurelia spoke her own thought. "I am the daughter of the King. The Council chose me regent in Casner's absence. Could not the people trust me, yet awhile?"

"Yes!" Honorius, the old Chamberlain, seconded her. "Why all this talk of making kings while we have a legitimate ruler? Why such haste?"

Arthur lifted his hand. "Listen!" he said.

BELINIC the Master-smith, teetering atop the driver's seat of his resplendent two-horse chariot, waved fleshy arms above the crowd. His bull voice roared across the Forum:

"Worst danger ever, with the Saxons closing in on us! What leadership have we? A weak-kneed Council, headed by a slip of a girl! And military leaders? A dirty hired Pict, under suspicion of the assassination of our late, beloved King! And who else? A Cornish exile on the make, with a knack for outliving his commanders! Such is the safeguard of our lives! We must act—not next week, not tomorrow, but now, *tonight!*" Belinic paused, wiped his eyes. "Friends, I know how you feel," he resumed, in a lower tone. "I too have dear ones, out there somewhere, maybe in the hands of the Saxons—" his deep tones throbbed—"For the sake of our dear ones, our wives, our children, we must *act!*" Again his voice rose thunderously. "Let's choose a king for ourselves! A man we know! A man we can all trust! I ask this assembly to—to suggest a name—"

"*Romanus Aurelianus!*" Arthur's words slashed across the master-smith's rhetoric like a trumpet blast.

Belinic tottered on his lofty perch. Turning, he goggled toward the Basilica. Arthur and Echlann stood on the marble steps, swords bare in their hands. Between them and two steps above, stood a slender boy of ten. Flickering torchlight gleamed on the massive helm of Ambrosius, on the sword of Deogratias, lifted in a sol-

dier's salute. Romanus Aurelianus held it firmly in one small hand, his left arm flung out as in greeting to the massed Corinians. Under the great helm, his face was pale, his lips, tight-pressed into the same thin line as those of Ambrose Aurelian, familiar to every citizen. Then, suddenly, as all eyes fastened on him, the grandson of King Ambrose smiled, broadly, bravely. A thin, clear, young voice was heard in the sudden silence.

"Alleluia!"

Since the memorable day in 429, when St. Germanus of Auxerre led a British army to victory with a war-cry taken from an Easter hymn, the soldiers of free and Christian Britain had gone into battle with that cry on their lips. It had not always brought the miraculous results of its first usage, but it was yet a cry of happy omen, to warrior, to churchman, to every Briton.

In one voice, the crowd answered him. "*Romane, Rex, tu vincas*—King Romanus, be victorious!"

Flavia Aurelia stepped to the side of her nephew, lifted the bronze helm by its crest. On tousled dark locks she laid a circlet of thin gold—the diadem of Ambrosius. About them, saluting swords flashed, clashed on lifted shields. Up, up, went the cry, ringing through the spring twilight. "*Romane Rex, tu vincas!*"

IX

ON the second day of his reign, King Romanus perched on the battlements of the East Gate tower and looked for the first time on his foes. There were yellow-haired spearmen on horseback, circling and prodding onward a great mass of bawling cattle, then a still larger body of sheep—harvest of their circuit through the lush pastures of Cotswold. Another body of Saxon horse accompanied squeaky-wheeled wagons piled high with plunder of every imaginable sort. Then more Saxons afoot—the churls those duty it was to serve the haughty thanes. Another moving screen of horsemen, herding their prey—but this time their cattle was human beings. Men, women, children, heads adroop, bound neck to neck with long ropes, stumbling with weariness. A small figure fell. A blond horseman bent to drive home his spear, then cut the rope and re-tied it. The slow procession went on, leaving the small body on the trampled grass beside the road. Young King Romanus caught his breath. "Captain Artorius," he asked, "why don't we go out and fight, and set those poor people free?"

"That is what the Saxons are goading us to do." Arthur spoke softly, as always when repressing his fury. "O King Romanus, your wisdom must

shield your folk! How many Saxons do you see?"

"Why—" Romanus hesitated. "Maybe a thousand or two."

"Between three and four thousand. They are picked warriors. Inside the walls we have maybe five hundred men armed—less than a hundred veterans. Only with heavy cavalry have we ever matched the Saxon in the open field—and there is not a single *ala* at Corinium today! Now, King Romanus, shall we give battle on those terms?"

The boy-King sighed. "I suppose not. It's really not much fun being a King, is it? Did you count those soldiers, Captain?"

Arthur turned, looked down within the walls. A wide avenue was filled by a disorderly column, marching toward the gate. Thunderous but indistinct, their shouting drifted up. He recognized the insignia of units which should have been at posts along the city walls.

"Open the gates! Victory or death!" That was the voice of Belinic. "Victory or death! Death to the Saxons! Open the gates!" echoed the mob, brandished weapons flashing in the noontide sun.

Arthur glanced about him. At his side stood faithful, grizzle-bearded old Cac'muri, his man, holding Arthur's shield in readiness. "King, stay here atop the tower—Cac'muri, guard him well!" He snatched the shield from his servant. "The rest of you come along!" He took the circular tower stairway three treads at each stride, drawing sword as he plunged downward.

The outer door was unbarred. He flung it open. A wild-eyed youth was lifting the upper gate-bar from its place. The flat of his blade smacked on a tousled pate, and the youth crumpled, face down. The bar rattled back into its sockets.

Belinic lurched toward him. Helmed and with drawn sword, clad in his gilded cuirass, the armorer was a formidable figure. His massive jowl thrust out, fleshy underlip drooping to bare long horse-teeth. "Well!" he bellowed. "Ain't that a brave soldier, to kill one o' our own lads? Why don't you try that sword on a Saxon, or are you just too plain yellow?"

Arthur sidled toward the middle of the gate. With an effort he spoke calmly. "The fellow's only stunned. Keep back, or you'll get worse! In the King's name, I order you back to your posts." He glimpsed the white face of one of his men in the tower doorway. The mob outnumbered them ruinously, but if they could form a line—

Belinic laughed—hoarsely, angrily. "King's name! To hell with your baby King! We gotta have action. . . .

Up there on the wall, I seen my wife—yes an' my children too—and a damned Saxon whipping them on with a rope-end! There's hundreds of us here with our families in the same fix. We're not gonna let no baby King nor no yellow-bellied Cornish traitor keep us penned inside the walls while them horse-eaters march past, bold as brass! It's our last chance, men! I say, let's save our families—go out and fight, win or die!"

"This is rebellion," said Arthur evenly. His words were drowned in the roar of acclaim for Belinic's oratory.

"Okay, it's rebellion." The smith's eyes glittered feverishly. He inched forward, sword ready. "No Saxon takes Belinic's wife, while Belinic lives!"

"You could not recognize her, from your post," disputed Arthur. Three of his men were beside him now.

"I guess I know my own wife!" roared Belinic. "Listen, men! The baby king and his coward captain won't lead us. Hide while the Saxons lead away our wives and wealth, say they. Well, there are men inside Corinium that won't take that for an answer!"

"Hail!" shouted his followers.

"Rubbish!" snapped Arthur. "You are running into the trap Osla has set. While Corinium holds out, free Britain lives, get that! Prince Casner is on his way with troops—we can win yet, if you don't throw our chance away! To give battle now is suicide."

"Listen to the coward!" bawled somebody, back in the mob. "Soldier, we ain't scared of you—you ain't behind our backs like you was behind Deogratias at Portus Magnus—haw, haw!"

"Listen here, Arthur!" Belinic leaned forward. "You ain't the only commander here. We got Echlann on our side. Your guys can't stop his Picts an' you know it! Better get on the winning side while there's time. Open that gate!"

ARTHUR's heart sank. Echlann hated him, could be depended on to side against him. And—only five soldiers had joined him, back to the gate. No more followed. The others must be watching from inside, irresolute, awed by the fury of the mob. How could he stop the raw fury of a Pictish sword-charge with such lack of material? Worse yet, if Osla perceived the wall-sectors emptied of defenders—

"You are all traitors to your King and city!" His voice shook with rage. "Get back to your posts!"

"Listen to 'im!" thundered Belinic. His keen ears caught the tremor in Arthur's voice, interpreted it as fear.

"Traitors, are we? Men, who is your King? Who d'ye want to lead you out to win back your kith and gear? *Who is your king?*"

The answer was prompt. "Belinic! King Belinic! Hail! Hail! Hail!" "Do you hear that?" And Belinic showed his long teeth in a triumphant snarl.

"Out—swords!" ordered Arthur. With trembling hands, the five drew, stood awkwardly at his right side. He drew a deep breath, put the full power of his lungs into a sudden shout. "On your lives—stand back from the gate!"

A torrent of mocking laughter answered him. The mob surged forward; then hung, hesitant, just beyond reach of the waiting steel. Belinic took a forward step, huge shoulders hunched. His blade half-lifted, he glanced back. "Come on, men! We'll win or die!"

"Then—die!" Arthur clashed shield to shield, stabbed over the rims. Belinic writhed backward, fell, kicking. He clutched at his bull neck, spouting red. A wheezing gasp, then he collapsed, a pricked bladder.

"Next!" Arthur stood over the man he had slain. At his side, five blades lifted with new resolution.

"Men—Britons!" Arthur strained his great voice to drown the mingled outcry of dismay and anger. "Hear me! I am your captain, your defender. I've killed a madman, who would have led you to your ruin. . . . Corinium stands, free Britain lives! Help is coming, coming, coming! If you are true warriors, back and guard your posts, ere the Saxons come swarming over our good walls!"

THE mob wavered. "No—yes! He's right! Nay, 'tis a coward's counsell what—he that killed Belinic in fair fight? Nay, he struck when he wasn't looking! Not so! Liar! Liar yourself, Sulpidius Fishmonger!" So they milled, arguing, all but split into opposing factions. Teetering in the balance, if he could win them—

Arthur lifted his sword high—the blade he had won from Echlann Gall, red-beaded now with the blood of Belinic. "Hear this! I but wait for the—"

It was the merest chance that his sword was lifted, that his eye caught the instant flicker of a flying projectile. To cut at it was swordsman's instinct. In that sliver of time, his blade moved an inch or two—rang, bell-like, and dropped from his numbed hand. He staggered, covering with his shield. At his side, a groan arose. "Slingers! Now we are done!"

"Get him! Come on, boys!" The crowd boiled toward them. Five swords lashed out—the rush halted abruptly.

Sss-bong! One of the faithful five clutched at his dented helm, reeled, pitched forward face-down on the rutted cobblestones before the gate timbers.

"Now we got 'em!" exulted a voice, discreetly well back. "Come on—kill the swine!"

Arthur shook feeling back into his hand. Bending, shield lifted, he reached for his sword. The shield quivered and boomed at the impact of a leaden slingbolt. His fingers closed on the hilt. A spear stabbed at him. Arthur lunged, rising, and the spearman skipped backward.

SHeltering behind their shields, Arthur and his four stood firm. *Sss-spat!* . . . *Sss-bong!* The bolts came at measured intervals, aimed at their faces. *Only one slinger, but he's an expert,* judged Arthur. "Cover your faces!" he warned. "Those bolts can't pierce a shield!" Yes, but neither could they spot the slinger, or reach him if they could! How long could they keep the mob in check, pinned down, forced to cover up?

One of the four dropped his sword. Bent with pain, clutching his broken wrist, he fled into the tower. A rush, blows given and taken—the mob spilled back like a broken wave, leaving one of their number writhing on the cobbles.

"Wait—listen!" implored Arthur's voice, booming behind his shield. *Ssss! bong!* The slinger tried again, failed by an inch. "Cap'n, let's charge!" implored the man at his side. "Them bolts—we'd be sheltered in that mob."

"No!" he made whiplash decision. "They'd get us from behind. Stand firm—shields up!"

It was all they could do. If only he had archers or slingers in the gate-towers, instead of old Cac'muri, the boy-King and the hesitant militiamen! What a chance for the Saxons, if Osla but knew!

The curious pause lengthened out. No more bolts—the hidden slinger must be watching for an unshielded face. . . . The mob milled about, shouted, cursed. Its first fervor was gone, but its mood remained ugly. Only a little stimulus, and they would rush. . . . Arthur tried to harangue them from behind his shield, but his efforts only provoked jeers. "Yah—Cornish swine! Let's see the color of your face!" A few stones came flying, with poor aim. Then a sudden yelp, far back; "Here come the Picts! Lead us, Echlann Gall!"

Arthur heard his faithful three catch breath in dismay. A hundred Picts, each a demon in battle—they would not hesitate to close with armored men! With the Picts for spearhead, the mob could roll over them, open the gates, pour out into

Osla's baited trap. . . . Well, he would stand his ground. Never again could men say that Arthur had saved himself!

"Way for Echlann Gall! Way for the men of Alban!" came the proud, chanting challenge. The city mob sidled over. Through the passage opened came Echlann's "centuria" of Picts. Tall, lean, sinewy men, they came on, unhurried, striding easily. Small, round bucklers aswing in their left hands, *up-down, up-down!* Right hands held light throwing-spears, bronze-bracleted arms cocked to the shoulder. Naked to the waist, vividly tattooed with the mystical symbols of Old Alban in red and green and blue, kilted in fiery tartans, lean muscles rippling, hairy-faced and hairy-chested, white teeth and blue eyes shining with anticipated delight of slaughter, Echlann's Picts were the grinning images of Mars. Leading them came Echlann, helmed and leather-jacketed. His longsword dribbled red on the cobbles. So there had been fighting elsewhere. . . .

Grinning hugely, his broken nose twisted askew, the Pict lifted his red blade in ironic salute.

"Hail, Cornishman! A tight corner you're in, the day!"

Arthur returned his salute. "Hail, Pict! I still have sword-room. . . . Will you try men's truth with me again?"

That was but a sudden inspiration. "Men's truth"—the code of fair play which called on the larger force to give single combat to a lone challenger—would give them a little time. Maybe the Saxons would be gone, or Aurelia could do something. . . . A faint hope, but he had no better. He would give the Pict—

"Men's truth!" Echlann laughed resoundingly, with real mirth. "Lug's Hand! As the blue sky is overhead, and the green earth underfoot, and the white-waved sea round about, while those remain it is I and my men will stand with you, against all comers—Is that truth enough for you, Arthur of Cornwall?"

HE whirled, and his Picts whirled also, spears lifted against the mob, which shrank, cried out in protest, began to thin at the farther edges.

"Hear me!" Echlann's Caledonian twang flavored the South-British he spoke fluently. "This man before you is a hero of heroes—he has slain the chief of the slayers of our Ambrose!"

"How's that?" bawled someone. "How d'ye know who killed King Ambrose?"

"Hearken!" rasped Echlann. "It is I who know of the killing and of the vengeance, and this the tale of it. . . . Belinic hated the King. Why? Because he deemed himself the bastard

son and heir of Vitalinus whom Ambrosius drove from Corinium."

"Aye!" Heads nodded in the crowd. "He used to rant o' that."

Echlann went on: "There was more than that. The King had found Belinic was cheating, furnishing cheap weapons instead of the good ones called for in his arms contracts. He'd have stood trial for that if the King had lived. But somebody must have talked. . . . And Belinic lusted after the King's daughter, and knew he stood no chance while her father lived. Yet more . . . It was Belinic egged me on to taunt and challenge Arthur. He had Arthur's sword in his shop. Instead of repairing it truly, Belinic filed through the tang, inside the hilt, so it would break at the first hard blow. Then he bet on me to win."

"I HAD guessed that," said Arthur. "Why did he hate me so?"

"He judged you faithful to the King—an obstacle in his path. . . . After I lost the duel and his bets, he hated me also! But when you took my sword, leaving me yours, I saw the filed tang. . . . I took the broken sword to Belinic, and asked what he would give for it, holding the tang where it took the light. That skinflint took one look, and paid me a hundred gold *solidi*! He thought he was paying me for silence, but I'd already shown the sword to Ambrosius! Now we knew he was the guilty man, not any of his underlings. The old King was wroth. . . . But a spy of Belinic's reported my visit to the King. Before he could be summoned to judgment, the King must die. So Belinic called his henchman, Corroi the Hunter. Together they lay in wait, outside the palace."

"Where were the guards?" demanded someone.

"Doped with drugged wine. Belinic had many hirelings! The night was far gone when the King dismissed his last guest and his servants. He stood at the window, breathing the air. He turned, and Corroi's sling-bolt struck him down. But they must be sure he was dead—and sure that I was blamed. Belinic boosted Corroi up, and Corroi slipped in at the window, took back his bolt, and carried the old King to his bed, and stabbed him there with a dagger one of my boys had given the smith in payment for some work, years ago. While this was done, Belinic's rascals were chalking up the town with signs, making me the goat!

"Belinic thought his destiny was to be King. He took this as his chance. All his blether about his wife and children was to gain your favor. He wanted Aurelia, and if the Saxons widowed him, 'twas little that Belinic cared!"

"And how do you know all this stuff?" yelled a voice. Others chimed in. "Yeah, how about that?"

Echlann's beard waggled, rusty-red in the sun. "When a man is accused of murdering his King, he looks about him. When Arthur found the dent in the old King's skull, I thought of Corroi. I found Corroi parading a new, expensive cloak, of green and red wool. Just the kind that had left a thread on the rosebush outside the King's window. Of course it had been Belinic's, given to Corroi as part payment for the deed. Corroi was cagey. He'd only say he found it, in an alley. He turned down a drink from me, for the first time in his life. I guess he was afraid his tongue might wag. . . . But then I found John the Assyrian!"

"The great astrologer?" asked a man in the front of the crowd. "What did he tell you?"

Echlann nodded. "Nothing at first, until I invited him to my quarters, to sample some heather ale one of my boys brewed. Ah, losh! There's nothing like heather ale, ye know. A crafty fellow, that John, but with no head for drinking against a Pict! He'd had many a customer here in Corinium, John said, and the things they asked him! I could tell tales on more than one of you—but he remembered Belinic at once, as his best customer of them all. The first time he came, Belinic asked if this would be his lucky night. The star-gazer thought he was speaking of gambling, and said yes. Then Belinic asked if the astrologer had any good poison. John said he didn't, but he did have a fine sleeping-potion. The smith bought it. That was the night the guards were drugged, and Ambrose killed!"

"After that, said John, Belinic came back every night. He wanted to know when he would be King. He was so fierce about it, the astrologer got worried. He told Belinic at 'the Kalends:' only, John says he meant 'the Greek Kalends, which is never. Of course Belinic thought he meant the *next* Kalends—"

"AND today is the Kalends of May!" spoke Arthur.

"Aye. . . . My Picts have John the Astrologer in their tower lockup. I meant to have him testify before Prince Casner. But when the astrologer let drop that about the Kalends, I knew to be watchful this day. When he marched on the gates, I marched too. Now that is the true tale of how King Ambrose was slain, and your own eyes have seen how he was avenged by Arthur."

"What about Corroi?" asked Arthur. "There was a slinger here—"

"Corroi it was! A block off, I saw our new King, young Romanus. He

was up on the parapet of the tower, waving his dad's long sword. He kept pointing with it at a house. . . . That one, it has a flat-roofed shed behind its gabled roof. I looked, and there was Corroi with his sling, crouched in the shelter of the roof's peak. Corroi was never a very brave man. If he had known that Belinic was dead—but I guess the crowd was too thick. . . ."

"And then—"

Echlann grinned, looking at his reddened blade. "One of my boys boosted me up. Corroi knew me for Belinic's friend, your foe. . . . He winked at me, as he fitted a bolt into his sling. 'This one,' he said, 'splits Arthur's skull,' and began to whirl that sling of his. . . . He made a little mistake there. It was *his* head that split!"

The crowd joined his laughter. "Good old Echlann—Avenger of the King!"

Echlann clashed sword on buckler until he got attention. "Nay! Not me, but Arthur is the true avenger—for Corroi was the hand of it, while Belinic was the head. A cheer for Arthur, stout lads, all!"

The Picts raised their shout, banging shields and spears. Slowly at first, the crowd joined in. "Arthur, Arthur! Hail, Arthur the Fighter!"

UP on the wall of Corinium once more, Arthur turned at last from gazing after the Saxon rear-guard. He looked at Echlann, scowling beside him, eyes on the departing foe. The Cornishman drew a deep breath, pushed back his wide-brimmed helm, brushed brown locks into place. He cleared his throat. "For men's truth of the best," he said, right hand extended.

Echlann's battered face turned redder than his whiskers. "We of Alban pay our scores!" he muttered ungraciously. But he took Arthur's hand.

"One thing still puzzles me," mused Arthur. "Belinic was a hard, cunning man, a sure-thing bettor. Yet he tried to lead the townsfolk out to their sure destruction. What could he gain from that?"

Echlann leaned against the parapet and roared, slapping his hairy thighs. "He-oro! After he slew the King on what the astrologer told him was a lucky night, Belinic trusted in his stars, as John the Assyrian read them for him. He asked John if he, Belinic, would ever lose a battle. . . . Now, what could the poor loon answer, and he needing Belinic's silver? He said 'No': so, Belinic had no fear of the Saxons. He was striking for the glory and power of kingship—but the astrologer lied to him."

"Did he?" asked Arthur, smiling. "Belinic did not quite lose Britain's battle—but he came deadly close."

Homer and Hector

a paradoxical parable in terse verse

by
Peter Wells



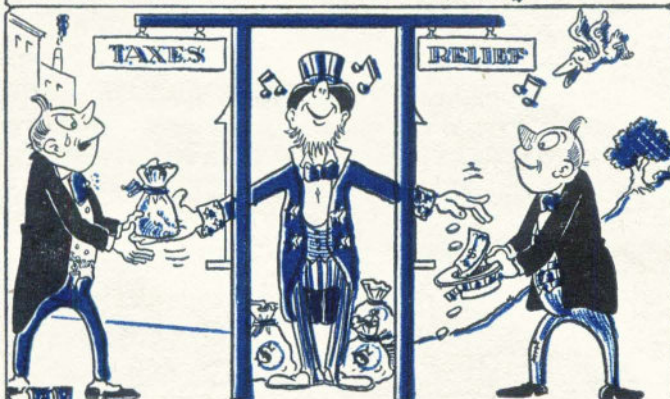
Full of years and virtues mild,
Stands *Homer Jones* "undefiled..."

Here is *Hector* - Homer's twin -
Red of nose and full of Sin!



Homer's youth was spent in study -
Julius Caesar was his buddy...

Hector played hooky and smoked
see-gars -
His leisure was spent in low-grade
bars!



Homer made dough in large green stacks
{And fed old Heck with his Income Tax!}

Poor old Homer, from working late,
Untimely reached his blessed estate...



His will is read - what's *this* we see??
Hector's the only - the sole Legatee!!

Lately, when asked whence came
his large pile,
Hector says, "WORK!" and he
smiles a great smile!

Kristian Nye and



the Shell Song

AS A BOY IN MINNESOTA HE HAD HEARD THE SIREN SONG OF WIND AND WAVE
IN A TREASURED OLD SEASHELL; THE TEMPTATION HAUNTED HIM WHEN HE
WAS A MAN GROWN; AND THEN HE JOURNEYED TO THE PACIFIC.

by JAMES EDWIN HEWELCKE

CONFUSED, Kristian pulled his gold Roman-dialed watch stiffly from the unfamiliar pocket in his Sunday vest—the watch his father had left him.

"You're an hour slow, sir."

"Not me," the bus-driver said over his shoulder. He pulled his eyes from the gleam of the highway long enough to consult a watch strapped to the dashboard. Then he said:

"You just forgot to move back your hour-hand when we crossed into Nevada. First trip to the coast, Mister? Oughta see the Golden Gate from San Francisco Bay bridge. Get in around sunset—three hours' riding. Quite a sight if the evening's clear." Then the driver had to swing off onto the shoulder to avoid an overladen express truck from one of the river canneries.

Three hours, Kristian told himself with quiet exultation. *Three hours more and I'll see the ocean.*

They had left the rolling Mother Lode behind in the morning mists. Now, in the valley, Kristian's eyes lit familiarly on the rich Sacramento delta land sliding past his window. Dairy farms, miles of fragrant alfalfa, asparagus fingers poking through the black loam; acre on acre of dust-gray sugar beets, and the stooped human figures toiling along the symmetrical rows. Some of the pickers waved as the bus careened past. Kristian wanted to wave back, as he'd wave to the farmhands from his tractor at home, but he was deterred by the thought of the man sitting next him. The man wouldn't understand.

At first Kristian had tried to draw the man out in conversation. "I'm from North Dakota, neighbor," he said heartily. "Name's Nye."

The other, who had boarded the bus at Reno, looked up from his paper in surprise, grunted something about passing through Dakota in the war. Partly from pride, mostly from homesickness, Kristian started telling him of the golden summer prairies, and the sweet spring days that made you

glad you had nostrils. The man's eyes drifted impatiently from his newspaper to the highway. Finally he got up, moved to a rear seat. "Excuse me, Mac. I'm way behind on the sack."

But Kristian saw him in a corner of the driver's mirror, reading as before. If the stranger had shown a grain of interest, Kristian was going to confide the reason for his trip. Now, he resolved, he wouldn't tell a soul. The shell-song was too precious, anyway, to share with a stranger. Morose and disappointed, he watched the telegraph poles flick past, counted the silvery water-tanks rising on girdered stilts over hamlets like Petersburg. He watched the ribbon of highway unreel, the staccato cars wink by. The highway glare filled his tear ducts, and he wiped the water on his sleeve, forgetting the neatly folded handkerchief that Gail had tucked in his breast pocket when he left. Three hours, and Kristian Nye's long trip would be over. . . .

The trip he had waited all his life to make: the trip to the sea.

KRISTIAN had been barely ten when his father, Gunnar Nye, had put him on the Northern Pacific train for his grandmother's, over the Red River in Minnesota.

He had never been away from home overnight; but a ten-year-old boy can be a nuisance during a confinement; and his mother, he understood later, had urgently needed quiet and rest. To Kristian, who had seen nothing but his father's farmhouse and out-buildings and, maybe on Saturday afternoons, the frame store-fronts of Petersburg, Fargo seemed like the biggest town on earth. He winked back the starting tears when the conductor refused to let him get off and walk along Broadway Street.

"Your pop says you're not to get off exceptin' at Barnesville, son." And his father's word was law.

It was a querulous and resentful Kristian Nye who marched up to

the wisteria-covered two-story shingle house that his Grandfather Oleson had built. Grandmother Oleson was a gaunt formidable woman swathed in more petticoats than an onion has skins. But Grandmother Oleson knew boys, having raised three of her own. Without much ado she led Kristian to her high-ceilinged kitchen, plunked him down at a table covered with blue oilcloth, and tied on her apron. She served a great bowl of *lutefisk*; she plied him with crunchy-warm *flad broed* she had baked on top of the gleaming iron stove that afternoon.

WHEN Kristian felt the skin of his stomach stretch like a drum, and the kitchen's warmth was beginning to make him nod, Grandmother Oleson poured him creamy milk from an earthenware crock and speared a round *fattigmand* from a deep pan in the oven. She cut it precisely in two, eating her half between meditative sips of black, black coffee. When Kristian had drained his milk glass, and the pastry was nothing more than a pattern of crumbs on the oilcloth, she led him up a dark carpeted staircase to a cool clean bedroom.

"Tomorrow we talk, child," Grandmother Oleson said, and kissed him good-night, once on each cheek, just as his mother did. Sleep came to Kristian, in that bottomless goose-feather bed, before the swish of her petticoats had vanished down the hall.

The next day they did talk; at least, Grandmother Oleson talked. And how she talked!

Kristian listened, hearing wonders he had not dreamed of or envisioned. She told him how his grandfather had sent for her, his bride, from the Haltingdal valley in Norway; how timidly she had sailed steerage on the packet to New York, and crossed this robust new land without knowing a word of its speech. Peder Oleson had worked in the Minnesota lumber-mills, cutting green triangle pine. He had died in the Civil War, scouting for John-



It was not hard to imagine his plow a ship in which he could sail anywhere he willed.

ston: the Red Fox they'd called him, with his fierce Viking mane and pale blue eyes—a jealously stalked target. Proudly Grandmother Oleson took down her husband's saber from its place high on the mantelpiece alongside the shell, and let Kristian hold it.

Kristian knew that the stiff old lady was granting him a privilege; but he really wanted to hold the shell.

The instant he set foot in that hushed parlor, his eyes had been drawn magically to the shell. It was a great iridescent whorl, propped between Grandfather Peder's picture and sword over the polished brass andirons and fire-screen. Kristian had never seen a shell so big. The open end was fluted like a gramophone horn, he'd seen once in the mail-order catalogue. Something latent stirred in his mind, remembered from his teacher's talk in the one-room Petersburg school—something about music.

"Would you be so kind, best-mother—" He handed the heavy sword carefully back to the old woman, whose sharp eyes were misted like her native fjords.

"Ja, child?" She must have read his thoughts. "You would listen to Peder's shell?"

She laid it in Kristian's cupped hands. It was smooth as glass, convoluted like an enormous snail. Eagerly Kristian pressed it to his ear; and in an ecstasy of discovery, he heard a faint echoing. While his grandmother smiled down at him, he jabbed a thumb in his other ear, giving himself utterly to the shell-song. No matter if the fluted rim cut his cheek;

there was the sound, even as his teacher had promised. How long had the shell lain here, singing its tiny song, with no one to listen? He took it from his buzzing ear, and the dimmed room was the same, and his grandmother was smiling as before; only Kristian was not the same. Kristian could never be the same again.

"What is the song, best-mother? What makes the shell sing?"

Grandmother Oleson, whose voice was deep like a man's voice, spoke sadly, as though Kristian were not there.

"They say, small one, that the shell remembers its home. Your Grandfather Peder gave me this shell before he left for America. It was for our betrothal."

"What is betrothal, best-mother?"

His grandmother kissed him on the top of his head, where the stiff cowlick kept springing up. "It means, Kristian Nye, that some day you have a sweetheart who waits till you are a big enough man to earn for a family."

"And I give her a—shell?"

"Ja. To hold near her ear and sing to her at night. When you are away, and cannot sing for yourself."

There was more that his grandmother told him: about the steep mountain ravines, and the rivers that rush perpetually to the sea, and the blue Skagerrak, and the sun that slants all night on the mad whirling *krukeng* dancers. But all else was lost for thought of the shell. Kristian rejoiced that the shell could sing, because he knew from the sudden eager drumming in his heart that he would one day see the ocean himself.

After two swift weeks Kristian came home. He found that he had gained three pounds and a baby sister. At nights, in the bare pine loft that was his bedroom, he prayed for another baby to follow, soon. Not that he was especially fond of babies, being a boy, but because he wanted to visit his Grandmother Oleson again.

The six years that followed seemed an infinity, without start or ending. They were like the highway after the bus left Great Salt Lake, Kristian thought now. You didn't turn for almost a hundred miles; then without warning you slowed down, banked, climbed—and discovered foothills and spurs, then mountains rearing out of the flat plateau.

THAT same autumn after returning from his grandmother's, Kristian discovered the books.

Before, he had always hated the lime-green school with its scratchy blackboard and its bell tower summoning him to six hours' imprisonment. Now the quaint pastel maps alongside Mr. Christensen's desk took on a new immediacy. Almost overnight Kristian learned to rattle off the names of European capitals: Oslo, Copenhagen, Paris, Berlin, London. Not the bald statistical capitals of the geography book, but live teeming cities, with richly dressed people promenading streets wider than the Red River at floodtime, and shop windows piled with delicacies one could not imagine. . . .

Winter nights when the wind sighed over the prairie and hungry coyotes yelped at the fat white Leghorns hud-

dled in his father's henhouses, Kristian read till his candle guttered and his fingers were numb, till he fell off to sleep with the shell-song in his ears.

He discovered *Long John Silver* and the *Hispaniola*. Verne's *Nautilus* and Dana's *Pilgrim* he boarded as a vicarious stowaway. When the State library commission sent traveling libraries to the school at Lakota, he rode the twenty rutted miles in his father's buckboard to borrow the stories of Conrad and McFee. These were the years when Jack London exploited the Klondike, when Roald Amundsen threaded his brave sloop *Gjoa* through the Northwest Passage, when Vilhjalmur Stefansson, whose undergraduate pranks at Grand Forks were still local gossip, penetrated the forbidding Arctic wasteland. The world was infinite; and the world was Kristian Nye's.

IN summers, when prairie roses bloomed along the roadsides, and wild blue flax flowers peered through the grain, Kristian would pause in his chores and gaze at the horizon with longing, till the fiery sun and the stinging horse-flies reminded him of his work. At such times the prairie seemed boundless as the sea, the wheat wind-stirred into restless waves. It was not hard to imagine his plow a ketch in which he could sail anywhere he willed.

While his older brother and his sister put by their chore money week by week for a small-bore rifle to hunt rabbits, a pair of steel hockey skates, a pressure cooker to preserve the high-bush cranberries the children picked each fall, Kristian saved for a thick red-covered book called an atlas.

One day before Thanksgiving his teacher lent him some back copies of

the *National Geographic*. Printed on the shiny pages were actual pictures of far-away lands. On the inside cover, the advertisement was. Kristian knew no rest till he had spent four dollars for a money order and mailed the coupon to New York. Two weeks of exquisite anticipation followed; then, on a December morning, the R.F.D. wagon stopped by his gatepost, and Mr. Verberg handed his father a package.

Kristian pelted out the front door, forgetting his woolen stocking cap and scarf. He didn't feel the cold stinging his cheeks, didn't see the sparrows huddled against a drift fighting over the suet strips his mother had tossed there last night. All Kristian saw was the puzzlement that plowed wavy lines in his father's broad forehead.

"Is it the mail-order book so early, Anton Verberg?"

"No sir, Mr. Nye." Even the farmhands, and the neighbors and storekeepers who had known Gunnar Nye for years, always addressed him as Mr. Nye. "Seems like it is something for your boy. . . . Oh, hello there, Kristian—"

The letter-carrier took the package from the father's hands and laid it in the son's.

"Where are your mittens? And cap, boy?" Gunnar Nye demanded. He propelled Kristian back toward the house. "Do you want the pneumonia? Is it your poor mamma should be a nurse also? Go in: I speak to you when I finish cleaning the walk."

Kristian's sister Ingeborg watched, twisting and untwisting her yellow braids, while he feverishly undid the strings, ripped off the outer cardboard, spread the new atlas proudly on the kitchen table. It smelled of

buckram and printer's ink and Mr. Verberg's buckboard. Turning over the pages with tremulous hands, Kristian told Inge about each country.

Here, all pink like cake frosting, was Norway. This little sawtooth line was the Hallingdal valley, whence Grandmother Oleson came. All this blue space—Kristian traced the Great Circle route with his fingernail—was ocean, and the ocean flowed over the whole world, washing the boot of Italy and lapping against the sands of Hawaii, all at the same time.

"Is the ocean bigger than the prairies?" Inge asked with round eyes.

Kristian gave her a condescending laugh. "Women have no idea how great the world is. That's because they have to stay home and cook, like Mamma, and so will you, Inge. But I'm going to travel and see the ocean. You wait and see—"

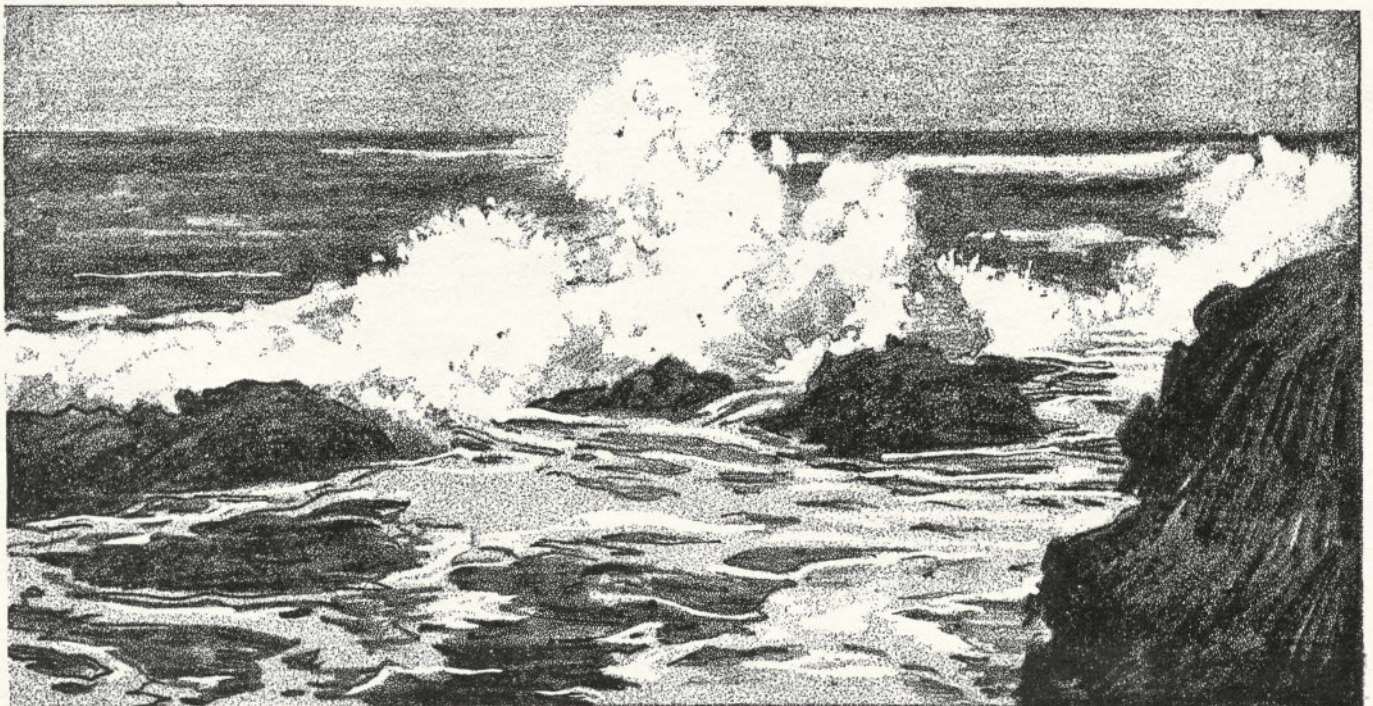
His father's feet stamped off snow on the kitchen porch burlap and he came into the kitchen.

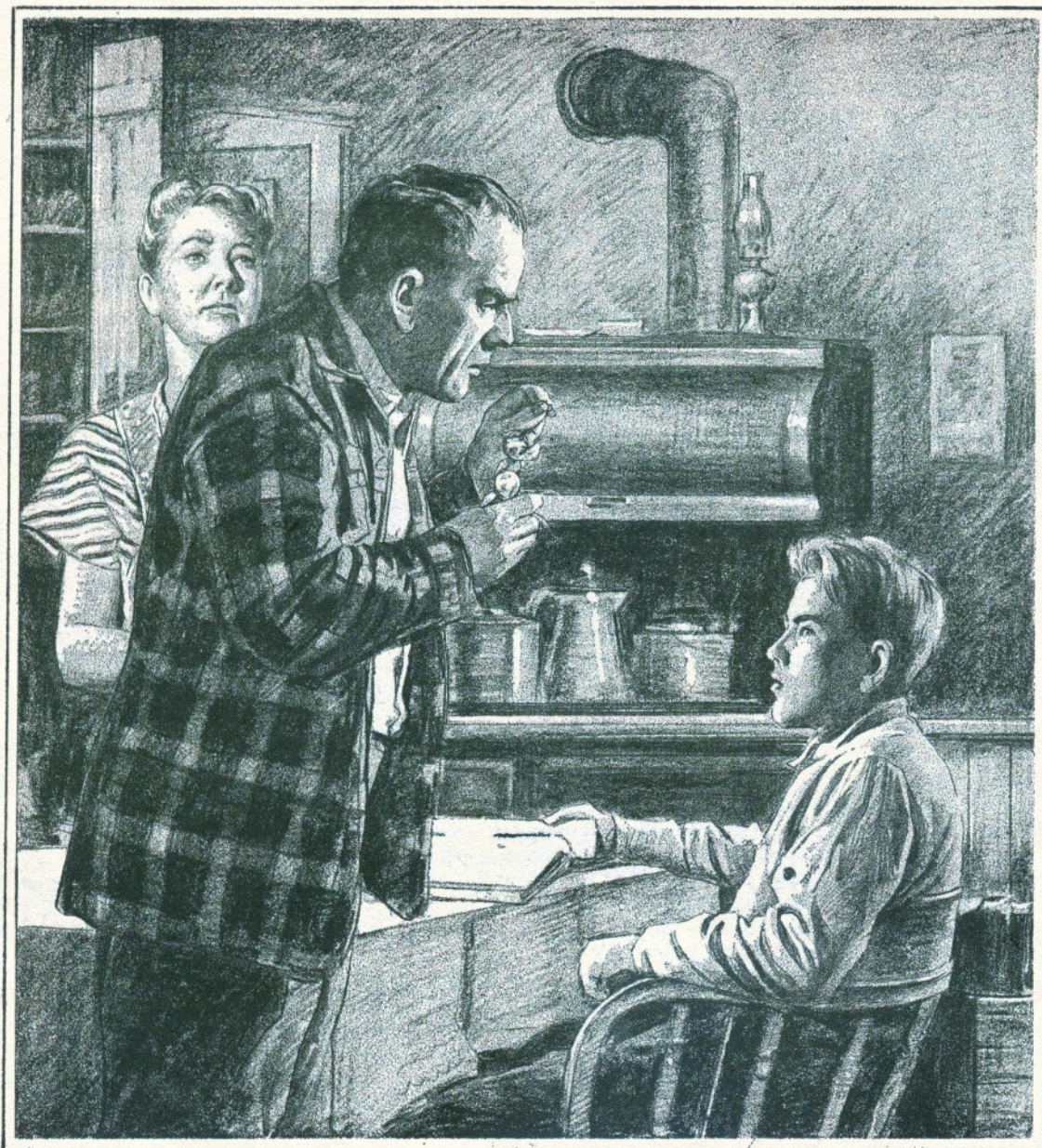
"WHAT is it you are going to see, Kristian?" He took off his round silver glasses because the kitchen warmth steamed them over.

"What is this book?" he demanded, and put his glasses back on. Turning to Kristian's mother, who had just come downstairs, he shouted: "What is this book?"

"You do not have to shout, Gunnar," the mother reproved. She had the same dignified face and deep voice as Grandmother Oleson, only her coloring was pale, and her sunken eyes were prematurely tired. She addressed herself to Kristian: "Is this the map-book, my son?"

"Map-book!" his father snorted. "What good is a mapbook, then?"





"What is it you are going to see, Kristian? What is this book?"

"It tells of other lands, Father," Ingeborg sang. Inge's blonde sunshine could always penetrate Gunnar Nye's storming. He listened impatiently to his last-born. "It shows Norway, Father, all pink like cake frosting. And the big ocean, that Grandmother Ole-son crossed. And—"

"Enough, small one." And to Kristian, severely: "What does this book cost?"

"Four dollars, Papa." Defensively: "It was my chore money. I earned it."

"He earned it," Gunnar aped his son's tones in mock-pity. "It is that school, Mamma, giving him these ideas. That Mr. Christensen. For this we pay taxes, ja?"

"It is not Mr. Christensen." Stubbornly Kristian closed the atlas, pushing it under the wrapping so that his father could no longer see it.

"Now he speaks back, also. He is impudent, that one." His father

stalked over to the stove, extended his lean-sinewed hands over the polished black lids. "Talking of travel, reading nonsense about ships, when he ought to be studying."

A sensation like cold water trickled down Kristian's spine. His mouth went dry. A roaring came into his ears louder than that of the shell, when his father, towering over him, said:

"You will be so kind as to return this trash and ask for your money back."

"No." Kristian clutched the papers protectively around his atlas.

"Kristian," his mother started to say. "Do not answer your papa—"

"I have been thinking, boy, now that you are fifteen. You should be learning to run this farm. You will not have time to waste on map-books then. Travels you want?" His father laughed dryly. "You will find plenty

of travels, running the cultivator, plowing and sowing. After harvest you will travel to Grand Forks with the wheat. One year, maybe, a trip to the midwinter fair at Park River."

"No," Kristian choked, backing away. He looked from his mother's tired face to the perplexed child's eyes of Ingeborg. "No, I will keep the atlas." His voice shrilled into treble, and in his rage he ran upstairs to his room and flung himself on the bed.

He blinked at the tears running salt into the corners of his mouth. He would not quit high-school just a year before graduation. He could hear his father and mother arguing downstairs. His father said: "Back it goes." His mother countered patiently: "But it was his own money, Gunnar." The porch door opened, closed; Inge called something; then through the rimed window-pane Kristian saw his father stamping across the drifts, a

paper-wrapped package stuffed under one arm. His father went to the barn, harnessed the spring wagon, cracked the whip on the bay gelding's back. And Kristian watched, shaking, nauseated, till they passed out of sight beyond the naked cottonwoods.

There were no more tears now; only fists knotted in defiance.

"I will run away," Kristian resolved, and blindly he began emptying his bureau drawers.

Underneath the sweater his mother had knitted for his last birthday he found the shell. . . . And in memory he stood once more, awed, stricken, beside his mother in the hushed Minnesota house. Grandmother Oleson had asked her to bring Kristian; she was not interested, she wrote, in saying good-by to baby Ingeborg, to Kristian's older sister Ragna, to his brother Bjorn. Red-eyed, he had crossed the hall runner into her bedroom and faced her gaunt figure on the hard square bed. "I will not see you more, little one," she said, lapsing into the dialect of her homeland. "So I have for you a present." The voice that had been like a man's rattled and wheezed like the north wind in dead box elders. Grandmother Oleson pulled her mottled hands from beneath the embroidered coverlet; she held out the shell.

"Take it, Kristian." She grimaced to veil the pain. "Good tour, then, little one; quick return."

LAST of all Kristian Nye packed the precious shell. *Could it be a good tour, he wondered, when I am running away?* He thought of his mother's anxious voice calling and hearing no answer; of her running upstairs to find his bed empty. Ragna and Bjorn would be sent to inquire at neighboring farms. Too late his father would lament: "Ah, perhaps I have been too hasty." And when Kristian did not come back that night, no, or the next, Gunnar Nye would smoke and look silently at the fire and wish he had controlled his temper. Of course Kristian would write them when he got to San Francisco; maybe before, even. He would sign on a freighter, sail to the South Seas where it was always sunny. In his racing imagination he pictured the magic Samos of Tusitala, the never-never paradise of *Typee* and *Omoo*.

Down to the kitchen he stole, sniffing longingly at the fragrances there: The rye and barley flat-breads, the smoked lamb and veal, the plump brown hams and sausages that hung in the storeroom. His mother was baking *fattigmand* in the oven, and it required all his resistance not to steal a piece against his journey. But he reasoned that she might see him, if he ventured past the corridor separating the storeroom from the kitchen porch.

She might say, "Where are you going, Kristian?" And when he told her, she would cry as she did at Grandmother Oleson's funeral, and Kristian would have to stay and comfort her. One travels fastest alone, he reassured himself, and stepped out into the biting prairie winter.

Now that his booted feet were actually on the first step of their journey, Kristian began to think more practically. Stamping to keep his blood moving, he cast up in his mind the different exits from town. U. S. Highway Two, beyond the rye-fields, would bring him west to Minot, then through the Bad Lands to Montana. But carriages were scant in this kind of weather; chances are, some neighbor who knew him might ply him with questions. The Great Northern had a flagstop up the road outside Mapes, where the grain elevators thrust up from the plains like enormous arrowheads. But even if Kristian could make the 3:19 into Williston, near the border, he didn't have the fare.

Bitterly he watched his breath steam away in the frosty air. The four dollars he'd spent on his atlas would have bought him a ticket to freedom. . . . But if he hadn't bought the atlas in the first place, he would have no reason for running away now. He was almost abreast the R.F.D. box when he heard the *clop-clop* of a horse's feet on the ice-covered road. Before he could decide whether to run or to stay and ask for a lift into town, Mr. Verbarg hauled on the reins and peered moistly down at Kristian, his eyes like frozen clams.

"*Gott im Himmel*, boy," Mr. Verbarg puffed, "is all of your family crazy also?" He gave Kristian a hand, pulled him to the seat.

"Your *Vater* is down at the Johnsons', boy. Sick. Tell your mamma come, I wait. We bring her to him; then we go find the *Herr Doktor* in Lakota."

Stunned, Kristian hurried mechanically up the house path—the path that his father had cleared that afternoon.

It was ten-fifteen by the chiming Swiss clock on Johnson's mantel before Doc Davis set Gunnar Nye's hip bone, there in Johnson's glaring white kitchen. It was a complex fracture, he said; the horse must have been driven or frightened to kick a man so hard. Doc splinted the fracture but there wasn't much he could do about the bronchial pneumonia that set in.

Not Kristian but his father went on a journey. Kristian Nye didn't return to the one-room school that winter, and it was the first Christmas that his mother didn't sing in the Evangelical Lutheran choir in town. . . .

A sudden deceleration slapped the neck rest against Kristian's nodding head and thrust him erect on the bus seat. He blinked stupidly at the late

sun streaming through the dusty window. Some of the passengers were getting out; the driver was already gone. The man who had moved his seat when Kristian's talk bored him thumped him familiarly on the shoulder.

"Time for chow, my friend."

Kristian got up, followed him with long stiff strides into a smoky room where a jukebox blared. He ordered bacon and eggs and coffee, but he declined the soggy pie that the girl offered him. The bus driver leaned over the counter and talked intimately between gulps to the perspiring waitress, whose blouse was too tight, Kristian thought. Now she giggled at something the driver said; now, half mocking, half encouraging, she caroled: "Oh, no, you don't!"

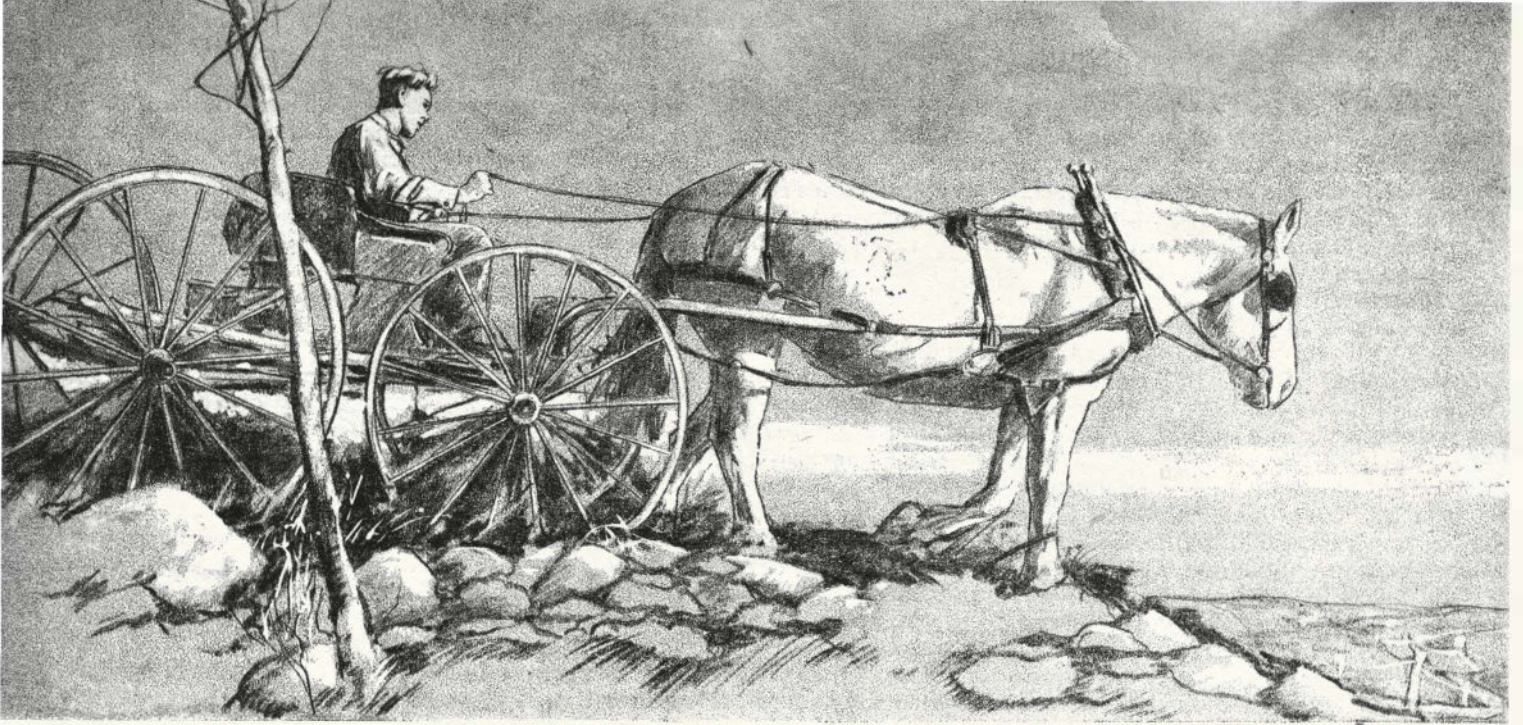
She'd be a pretty little thing, Kristian decided, if her mouth wasn't painted so red. The bus driver's weren't the only eyes to follow the practised swing of her haunches. She could draw coffee and wash dishes all day, then dance five hours more in some drafty barn, night after night, till she got married. Kristian paid his check and she didn't look at him as she chirped thanks because she was nodding to the bus driver's invitation: "Next Saturday night, kitten. How about it?"

The bus door shut, the engine growled, and the heavy tires crunched back onto the highway. Kristian, who sat directly behind the driver, saw the girl wave in the window, saw the olive-jacketed shoulders ahead hunch impatiently as the driver gripped his wheel, steering the bus toward the ocean.

ABIGAIL couldn't have been much older than the waitress when Kristian met her.

He was going on twenty-one, hard as a whiffletrec, his naturally swart skin darkened further by prairie sun and wind. Four winters, five summers since his father's death, and the books about the sea, and the shell, the unopened atlas, lay stored in the cellar, sealed over with netted cobwebs. His sister Ragna had married a potter-maker in Dickenson; Bjorn, who had a way with animals, purchased half ownership of a silver-black fox farm at Church's Ferry. When his mother died and left him the farm, after grieving three years for his father, Kristian packed the ripening Ingeborg off to school in Dickenson, paying board money to Ragna and her husband Knute.

He attacked his work with a stubborn energy born of loneliness. He sowed half his father's wheat acres with winter rye. He was the first farmer in Nelson County to introduce seed potatoes for out-of-State trade. Scarce old enough to vote, he lent a



Kristian drove light-heartedly to Grand Forks to put his farm up for sale.

respected voice at the Farmers' Union; and because he preferred to live singly, he excited inevitable gossip among mothers with marriageable daughters at the Ladies' Aid quilting parties.

Kristian's reason for living alone—he had only one—was utterly simple: alone, a man traveled faster.

One April morning when the spring wheat was in, and the flax flower bloomed, and the cottonwood shed its snowy down on his shoulders while he rode underneath, Kristian drove light-heartedly through yellow mustard and blowing silver-berries to Grand Forks. He drove directly to the Grand Forks *Herald* office, inserted an advertisement he'd composed on the way, putting his farm up for sale.

Returning to Fifth Avenue, he was stopped by his cousin Arne Oleson who talked him into going to the Norwegian Independence day picnic at Lincoln Park. Kristian, who had sedulously avoided picnics and parties and soials since his mother's death, gave a lame excuse; Arne, persisting, took his arm and steered him down Belmont Road.

Kristian came because it was April.

At the picnic Kristian danced the schottische with a lively girl whose father had brought her down for the day from Grafton. She was touching seventeen; her braided coronet shimmered yellow as virgin flax, her eyes were mischievous and long-lashed as they regarded him over the wedge of blueberry pie they shared from her lunch basket. She told him that her name was Abigail. Leaning close, her head against his shoulder, Kristian could smell the pie's doughy sweetness on her breath. A meadowlark sang; the voices of old settlers droned from beyond the horseshoe pit; and her lips

were crimsoned with the berries when Kristian kissed her. . . .

After they had said a dozen lingering good-by's, and Kristian had shaken hands with Per Gustafsson her father, he walked with big strides back into town and removed his ad from the paper. He rode home abstracted, letting the bay horse set its own pace. The sun sank, gilding the spring wheat with molten flame; the tiny purple flax flowers closed like babies' fists, the cottonwood down sprinkled Kristian's straight black hair as he drove underneath, not seeing it. The first stars were out when his barn and outbuildings cropped up, silhouetted against the moon-flooded prairie. The lonesomeness with which he always viewed night had gone. As he lay disturbed in his bed, waiting for the balm of sleep, he remembered the warm breathing of Abigail against his breast, and the blood ran in his thighs to have her beside him always.

And far in the distance, farther from Kristian Nye than the still clear stars, a snail-shaped conch shell murmured its unheard song.

HE and Abigail were married after the fall harvest festival. Their eldest son Konrad was born eleven months after. All that first year of discovery Kristian never ceased congratulating himself on finding Gail. She had grace and ready laughter; she rejoiced in dancing, her energy seemed inexhaustible. Kristian wondered that she could favor a clumsy, taciturn farmer like himself. But to his wonder, as to his dream, he gave no voice.

They waited another four years until William came, four years in which Kristian hoped for a daughter. Years during which the young men of Dakota left their plows and their wheat-

fields and groveled in the muck of Chateau-Thierry and hid in the charred Wood of Belleau. Kristian tried to enlist, was refused on account of his family. "We need wheat, Nye," the Pembina recruiting office told him; "you do your bit by growing us more of it." So Kristian hugged his disappointment to himself till Gail, who was carrying Gustav then, discovered it.

The farm work, the cooking and washing, the increase of her family had slowly eroded Gail's physical response. Her imagination was busied with sewing and hanging curtains and hearing the children's lessons and binding up their hurts of body and spirit. She saw no further than the knifelike northern horizon where Kristian's wheat acres waved against the cold sky.

But Kristian saw beyond; Kristian still saw the ocean.

Now his desire to travel resolved itself into a compulsion, a lust, feeding on its own denial. After his exhausting eighteen-hour day the children's demands irritated him; he wished they wouldn't badger him with their questions, their games. And Gail's repetitive gossip became a gadfly, till his answers dropped first to monosyllables then finally to curt nods. The magnitude of the ocean meant power; its awful silences meant peace; and Kristian knew that he would have neither till his dream was consummated.

Hoping to be sent across the ocean, he went into Pembina one Saturday to enlist. He came back home enervated, defeated. Abigail asked where he had been; Kristian told her. When Gail demanded why any sane man would want to run off to a war not of his making, Kristian blurted out to her all about the shell. He told her about

Grandfather Peder Oleson and the sword, told her reproachfully that he had been about to sell this farm when he met her, that he had sacrificed his one dream for her sake. Bewilderment contested with the soft lines of her face. "You've never talked like this before, Kristian. Aren't you happy here, with me and the children?"

And Kristian knew, with the slow shock of realization, that he could never share his dream with his wife. He put an arm clumsily about her and kissed her hot forehead. "I just guess I'm tired, dear," he lied.

Next week, rummaging for William's old crib in back of the store-room (for Gail's time was eight months gone) Kristian came across the crated, musty books. He brushed the cobwebs off his atlas, turned its mildewed leaves, saw the pink and yellow and green countries. He brought the storybooks upstairs and stood them on the mantel alongside the mail-order catalogue and Gail's black leather hymnal.

"Perhaps William would like to look at these," he said sheepishly.

Their third son they christened Gustav. When the infant died of bronchial pneumonia in the severe 1924 winter, Kristian vowed he would have no more children. Six years he kept his vow, six years of attrition from tumbleweed and blizzards, six years of shipping wheat to the grain elevators, of enduring the frozen-in winters, of watching for the first gray-blue pasque flower that promised another spring.

DOROTHY also was born of the promise of spring. Kristian and Gail picked her name from the back of the hymn book. It meant "gift of God."

A windy March night when Kristian had been gone late hours to a Farmers' Coöperative meeting, and Gail waited up, her pink flannel robe snug about her, dreading the endless prairies beyond the rattling kitchen window, shivering at the distant coyotes' howling, knowing some of her husband's desire to be gone from this bleak land—anywhere. Near eleven o'clock she had a premonition of his death; feared, as the china clock over the drain-board ticked on, that he had been struck down by one of the overnight freight trucks that hurtle along State Highway. She knew his habit of walking alone, abstracted, looking neither right nor left, only looking ahead—looking at something that she could never see.

When he came she cried in spite of herself; she had meant to scold. He carried her tenderly, in his strong arms, to the stained oak four-poster and when he put her down Gail laughed in sudden release, thinking how impudently he had first kissed her under the cottonwood thirty years gone and she tried to slap him but he

pinned her hands fast and she knew that he would kiss her again and that she would marry him. . . .

Dorothy had come in the winter of 1930. The Great Drought had started in '29; a bad year for a child's birth. In the quiet of their own dust-choked hearths, some of the neighbors gossiped at Kristian's folly. But at Kristian and Gail Nye's hearth laughter rang, even during the worst of the seven dry years.

THE bus tires whined, hauling their burden up the steep grade outside Lafayette. Shadows from the planed shale walls clung purple athwart the highway. At the top of the pass, the sun burst full in Kristian's eyes, concentrating its glow like a thousand prairie fires on San Francisco bay. Nodding passengers stirred, blinked dumbly, took in the panoramic view of Oakland's foothills, the broad shining bay, and beyond, the towered hills of the city.

"How much longer?" Kristian said. "When do we get in?"

"About forty minutes," the driver replied, shifting. "Some view, isn't it?"

"Yes," Kristian breathed, straining northward to see the tiny bridge cables webbing the Golden Gate. "Yes, it's some view, all right."

The Golden Gate; and beyond, the ocean. Kristian's heart raced exultantly as the bus pulled over the summit and caromed downhill, into the light. . . .

It had always seemed a miracle to Kristian Nye that, when the land was parched and barren, his wife should be fruitful.

He remembered how he had taught Dorothy her alphabet, sitting with the child on his knee and tracing her small fingers over headlines in the Grand Forks *Herald*. Though a stanch Republican, Kristian always encouraged Dorothy to think about foreign problems. His constant desire now was to send her to college if he could get enough money by, so that she would have the education to amount to something, leave the stark prairies, travel. All his pent-up desire for travel he sublimated in her. And Dorothy, a golden child as had been her mother and her aunt Ingeborg, responded with understanding love.

Long before she could read, she listened with glowing eyes to Kristian's tales of foreign lands, he reading aloud from the books he loved.

Abigail quietly counteracted her husband's spoiling the child by instructing her in cooking, sewing, home-making. She saw that Dorothy attended public school, at first in the one-room Petersburg schoolhouse and later at the consolidated high-school at Lakota, ten miles on the packed jouncing school bus.

Seldom was Dorothy alone; from the first she drew others' lives to her, quickening them with the abundance of her joy. In grammar school she was head of the Camp Fire Girls. In her teens she was a screeching tomboy, competing in all the games farm boys and girls played: skating, tobogganing, sleighing. At fourteen, with a woman's grace burgeoning in her high breasts and long slender limbs, she was an accomplished figure skater; and by sixteen, a young lady disdain-ing softball and ice hockey, she kept Kristian tossing awake, waiting for her return from Saturday night dates.

Abigail was hospitable to the horde of boys that followed Dorothy home after dances and sleigh rides. Kristian tried to be, until the night she introduced Stephen.

It was after a moonlight sleigh ride. Dorothy pulled off her blue knit cap with its saucy pompon and the bright hair tumbled over her sweated shoulders like winter wheat. When Kristian glanced at Stephen, whose mackinaw Abigail had taken, he saw the boy's eyes shining as they followed his daughter's least movement. The rest of that evening Kristian was deliberately perverse. He replied in gruff monotonous to the boy's deferential questions; he disagreed hotly with his opinions on scientific farming.

When Stephen completed his post-graduate work at Grand Forks, he said, he wanted to buy a piece of land for himself, raise a family. Here he winked up at Dorothy, who was serving his coffee in the rose-painted china that Abigail reserved for special guests, and Dorothy colored and laughed. She spilled some coffee in the saucer, setting it down; started to remove it. Stephen's brown hand touched the slender shaft of her wrist. "Please don't, honey," he said; and Kristian, glowering across the linen tablecloth, suddenly wanted to wrench that sinewy hand off, to dissever it with an axe, to cast it beneath the compost heap in his south pasture.

ABIGAIL also watched shrewdly, studying the man whom her last-born had chosen; but Abigail kept her thoughts to herself.

When, late abed that night, Kristian confided his plan to send Dorothy to the University for her teacher's degree, Abigail rolled toward the wall and said in an odd stifled monotone: "What of your trip, Kristian?"

"My trip can wait. I want my daughter to meet other boys, before—She is such a child, that one. Not eighteen, is it?"

"I was seventeen when I married you. Even four months was hard waiting."

"Times were different then."

"People were not different." Gail paused and Kristian could hear her

labored breathing, and he thought: *She is tired from making coffee and pastries for Dorothy's friends. She needs a good rest. . . .*

Gail faced him, and the icy moon beyond her net-curtained window was cupped tinily in each of her eyes.

"You try to give her your dreams, Kristian. You love her more than your sons because she understands you." Gail's words choked with repressed intensity. "For the love of God, why don't you let the girl dream the dreams she wants?"

Kristian lay numb and still, till the moon slid below the prairie, leaving only the twinkling stars. There was an unaccountable throbbing inside his forehead, rising, falling, like the echo of waves crashing on some mythological shore. It seemed to Kristian that he had barely gone to sleep before the rooster crowed. After its third scran-nel cry he arose and dressed. Gail had already left his side; Kristian could hear her, noisily occupied, in the kitchen downstairs.

At breakfast Dorothy was first surprised, then delighted when Kristian broached his idea. She flung to him, rubbed her cheek gratefully on his bald spot.

"I've always wanted to teach, Daddy, sort of. But I knew—oh, the farm, and expenses, and things. Besides, you and Mother need me around here—"

Kristian blanched at her unspoken words, the implied recognition that he and Abigail were aging. He marked the change daily in Abigail; her tensions and irritabilities, her sudden rages and more sudden calms. But it shocked him to read it in himself through his daughter's eyes.

He patted her clumsily on the head. She had cut her long blonde hair and the leather bob she now wore was to please Stephen. Kristian withdrew his hand, conscious that Abigail was watching him.

"We can afford it, small one," he said, hoping she would not detect his lie. "If you'd like to go. It's your happiness we are thinking of."

Abigail let the jam spoon fall into the cut-glass jar.

"Please, Mother,"—Dorothy slipped to her mother's side—"you do want me to go? Steve's told me all about it, he's taking his p.g. course there now. It's a wonderful place, honestly."

Gail wiped up the spilled jam. With the faintest glimmer of triumph she smiled across at her husband.

"If you will be happy, child," she acquiesced; adding, "Your father wants you to be."

Now the bus took its place on the crowded bridge ramp, nosing ahead of delivery wagons and trucks, eager like Kristian to be at its journey's goal. Electric trains vaulted past on the

tracks outside Kristian's window; far below, the glossy green bay was feathered by a smoking ferry-boat. The last of the close valley air had wafted out the bus airvents. Gusts of moist cool breeze eddied against Kristian's leathery cheeks and forced him to draw his mail-order suit coat tighter about him. Halfway across, the bridge dipped through an island tunnel; then the bus plunged out into blinding sunlight, and Kristian's spine knew an intense tingling as he beheld the gray hills and skyscrapers of San Francisco.

If the insurance policy hadn't matured that month, he wouldn't be here, he reckoned. He'd be back on the farm, enduring Abigail's petulant silences, scolding William about a thousand farm details which he was loath to entrust to another man, even to his son.

Dorothy's leaving for college was only part of the emptiness. Kristian and Abigail had begun to pick one another's nerve strings long before then; the scene that night had been but a spoken cumulation of many silences.

WHEN Gail read Dorothy's weekly letters from college out loud, Kristian saw the campus, the buildings and the professors through his daughter's alert eyes. Davis Hall, where her sorority was, and its hilarious pajama parties. The imitation Sioux war-cry, shrilled at football and hockey games in Memorial Stadium. Amateur theatricals at Bankside Theater, its stage embraced by the rippling elbow of English Coulee. . . . Experiences Kristian had never known. He lived them vicariously, now, with his daughter.

Sometimes Gail paused and snatched off her thick reading-glasses and Kristian would offer to read to her. But Gail would say: "No, Papa, you listen then." And Kristian listened, by the radiant heat of the stove that long winter, by the meadowlark's whistle when the prairies turned green that spring. Kristian listened, resigned, to all her letters, and never thought it strange that his daughter did not once mention Stephen.

Then late in June, before Dorothy's summer vacation, the letter came from the insurance people in Omaha. Gail's fingers trembled so that she let the envelope slip into the trash burner, along with the ads for spring tonic and mange removers for hogs.

"Listen to this, Kristian!"

She fumbled with the typewritten page, while she found her glasses atop her sewing basket. "That policy of mine, it is matured. See, a check! For almost two hundred dollars!"

There was the check, sure enough; on green ribbed paper, payable to the Farmer's and Merchant's Bank at Bismarck. Gail hugged Kristian, she danced an impromptu schottische

around on the kitchen linoleum. Poor thing, Kristian thought, she had not had too many surprises; he had given her little enough.

Always some urgency had devoured the money he wrested from the land. When he was a young man, his widowed mother, and later the board for his sister Ingeborg. Later, the farm refinancing, and the years of monthly payments to the bank over in Pembina. Doctor bills at each child's birth, more bills at baby Gustav's death. The desperate deep-well boring for water throughout the long drought. Rising post-war costs for cattle and poultry feed; higher taxes, to pay for a war that his son William had fought in, William who cared nothing for distant soils and was glad to be home, he declared, on good Dakota dirtland. Last of all, Dorothy's schooling. Once Einas Johnson had said, as though he pitied Kristian for having a daughter to burden him those drought years: "But is she not an expense, Kristian Nye?" And Kristian gave one of his slow infrequent smiles, shaking his grizzled head: "Is joy an expense?"

Reproaching himself for having given so little joy to his wife these thirty-one years, Kristian rejoiced belatedly now.

"What will you do with the money, dear? It is yours, every penny."

He let her down, stout and panting, into the rung-backed kitchen chair; Abigail whose feet had wings when he'd whirled her close at the long-ago strawstack parties.

She lowered her lashes. She tucked up a wisp of faded hair into its bun. "You still want to go on that trip of yours, Kristian?" she asked, archly.

FOR answer he kissed her, and the lips that once were crimsoned with juice now were unresponsive and dry. Suddenly Kristian Nye felt foolish, and old; and he knew that if he delayed going now, he would never have courage to go. Gail's check was a sign from Providence, beckoning Kristian toward his dream of fulfillment. Thus, in his elation, he interpreted it.

William drove his father to the bus depot in his rattletrap car. Hot rod, he called it, in the slang that was always perplexing Kristian, to whom a rod was precisely five and a half paces. William sped past horse teams carrying sweet-scented hay; past Johnson's neat wire-fenced farm; he dodged prairie gophers skittering across the highway. Kristian remembered another trip when the road, unpaved, unwidened, was heaped with white drifts, and he drove silently alongside old Anton Verbar, blinking back the tears, to hunt a doctor for his father. . . . There were the last-minute injunctions about stock feeding

and watering, fence mending, a thousand other farm chores that popped into Kristian's head while they waited in the dim notion-store depot for his bus. When the bus came, William handed his father's grip to the driver; winked as though to say, "It's Father's first trip—keep an eye on him!"

Gail, drawn and still, reminded him now in a burst of garrulity about the extra socks in his grip, and the cool summers, then her tongue worked against the roof of her mouth when the driver yelled "'Board," and she hugged Kristian fiercely and tucked a fresh linen hanky in his breast pocket. As the bus exhaust coughed, Kristian gazed overwhelmed out the window and waved. William waved back with his left hand; his other circled his mother's waist, and she had Kristian's old handkerchief shaken out and pressed to her face.

His first night in the city was a kaleidoscopic jumble, after his bus rolled up to a big concrete building with an inlaid stone floor. Its gray and white marquetry made Kristian think of his kitchen linoleum at home. He stalked around self-consciously. Red-capped taxi drivers sped in and out. Brisk business-suited passengers with airplane luggage consulted the white celluloid time schedule set up in a black easel. Clerks rubber-stamped long tickets; Kristian hardly believed there were so many places to go, or people to go there. After he'd worked some of the travel kinks out of his lank legs, he went to the men's washroom. The gleaming vitreous basins made him blink. Coming out, he compared his watch with the electric clock on the end wall. Floods of people boiled past him unseeing. His ears roared with the noise of shoes clattering on the stone floors, the hum of voices, the loud-speaker bawling out bus departures. With a start he realized he was actually in the city. The ocean was no more than a city's length away!

Gripping his suitcase tightly, he pushed a glass door under a yellow neon sign: TAXICABS.

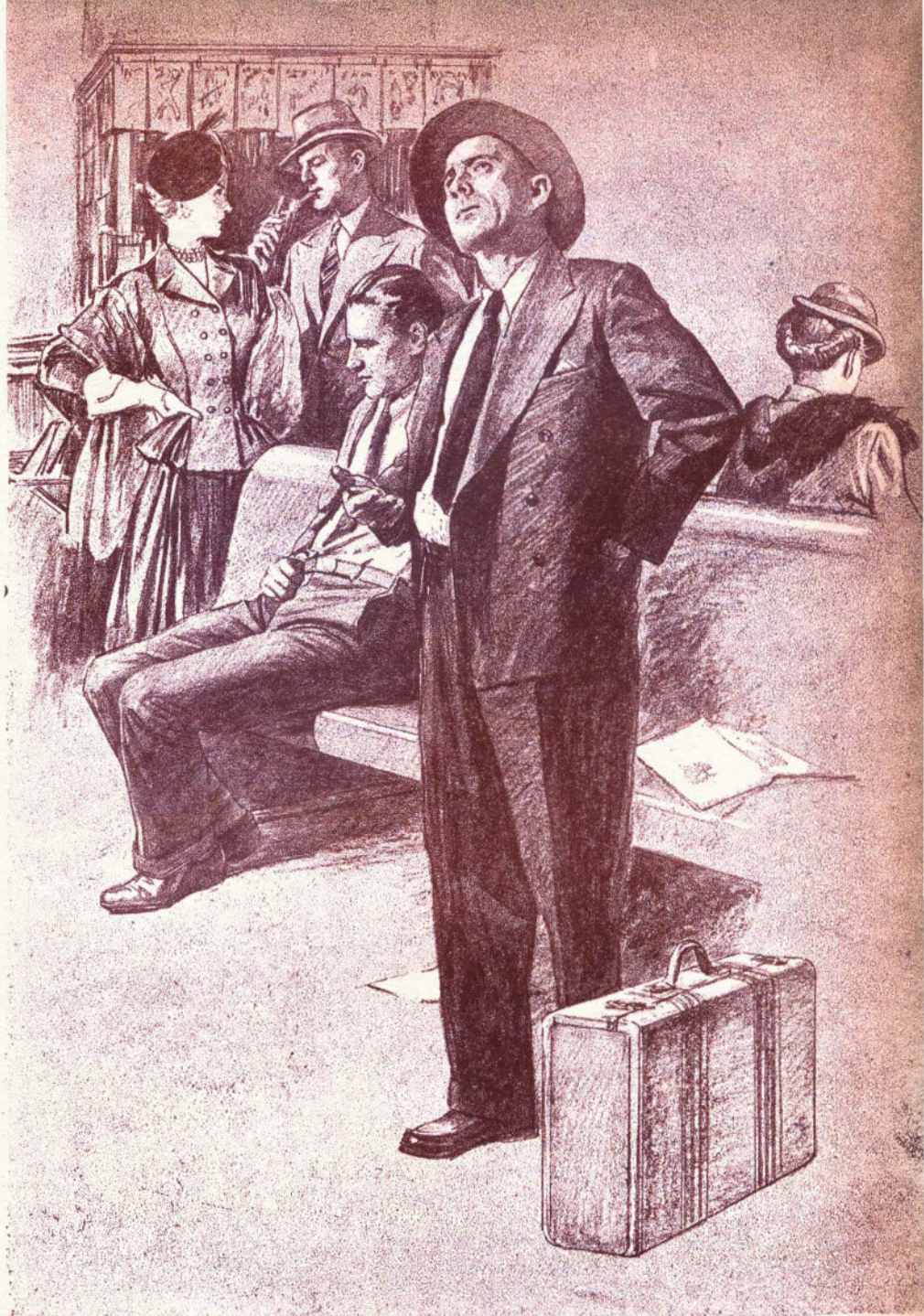
A girl in a watermelon-colored blouse flicked impersonal eyes over him. "Where to, Mister?"

"I—I want to get to the beach," Kristian said fervently.

"The beach? Whereabouts at the beach?"

Impudent, Kristian thought. If she was my youngster I'd take a slipper to her bottom. Right here in this big cement barn. But he'd never lifted so much as a finger to Dorothy, not even the time she poured kerosene in his cream separator.

Kristian felt his Adam's apple rise against his wilting saw-edge of collar. "Anywheres. I want to see the ocean, miss. The Pacific Ocean!"



Kristian compared his watch with the electric clock on the end wall.

"I'm very sorry, sir. We couldn't have a cab for you in less than an hour. Seven's our busiest time. If you wanted a hotel or restaurant, though—"

Kristian snapped, "No, thanks," picked up his grip and stalked out through a doorway that flushed him onto a wide traffic-churning street.

He fell into a stream of people plunging toward the corner; gray building cornices loomed on either side; then he stood on the Market Street curb, watching the blood-orange western skies dissolve against a tattered vanguard of fog. Shivering, he asked a policeman which streetcars went to the ocean. The policeman told him, sized up his thin worsted suit and turned-up collar and added: "It's

about an hour's ride. Pretty foggy out there come night."

"Whereabouts would this hotel be, then?" Kristian showed the address on his reservation envelope. "I'm a stranger in town."

"Just five blocks up Market," the policeman said. "You could walk it."

Of course I can walk it, Kristian thought indignantly, in the press of faces, shoulders, shoes, arms, in the fragmentary babble of voices he intercepted. *Spent most of my grown life on my feet. A body'd think I was an old settler. . . .*

In the unfamiliar hotel bed that night Kristian dreamed of the prairies thronging with approaching people who looked at him but didn't seem to

see him and didn't return his nod of greeting, or returned it with diffident stares. The grinding of streetcars seven stories below broke in cacophonously; tortured neon reflections leaped on and off his walls, reminding him of a prairie fire during the drought. Once, thinking he was home, he wakened terrified, till the sense of strangeness fled his consciousness. He had pressed his cold feet against Gail's calves to warm them: now they protruded like withered corn stalks beyond the bedsheets. Kristian drew his feet in; he jack-knifed his body against the emptiness of the unshared bed. Across the street in a bar a jukebox wailed maudlin love ballads. Then again sleep came, and again Gail seemed to lie warm alongside him.

THE maid was dusting out the hotel dining-room when Kristian came down for breakfast, at half-past five.

"Grill service doesn't start till six, sir." She steered her mop around his high, unpressed trouser-cuffs, saying: "You can wait in the lobby."

"Figure I'll walk a piece," Kristian said, tipping his old felt hat; and he pushed through the rotating side door. The moist ammoniac air set him coughing. A street-sweeper in shirt-sleeved denim glanced at him with indulgent pity, thinking no doubt he was a Howard Street derelict just ejected from a warm-lobby snooze.

Kristian scanned the wide idle street, bewildered at the contradictory impression he'd received last night. In the pallor of daylight it hardly seemed the same city, with the frenetic electric signs out, and the river of people that had flooded its now deserted pavements. He stood shivering at a coach stop, nervously dragging out his watch and comparing it with a jeweler's chronometer in a window across McAllister. Faint city sounds drifted to him, muted by the fog batting: A woman's squeal of laughter, and the opening and slamming of a cab door, and the street-sweeper's cart, scraping alongside the curb two blocks away. At five to six, many church bells clanged. One was deep, from a gray tower not a block away; others were plaintive, with a curious unearthly timbre that Kristian attributed to the fog. Awakened by the tintinnabulation, a dog bayed resentfully in some apartment house window. The sound took Kristian back to a copse of poplars by the Red River's fork, with gun metal in his sweating hand and the beating of pheasants' wings against the dawn. This brief image of home vanished as a coach snorted to a stop at the curb.

Though it was time for breakfast, Kristian suddenly was not hungry. His stomach muscles stretched taut. He clambered aboard the coach and the pneumatic door clapped shut.

"You go out to the ocean?" Kristian asked, eagerly.

The driver twirled the fare-box crank. This was his first run and he resented leaving his warm bed and his sleeping wife so early on a Sunday morning. After an aggravating pause while he checked his coin changer, he yawned: "Yeah. What street, Pop?"

"No partic'lar street. The ocean," Kristian protested as the driver shifted gears and the bus cut around a corner. "I want to see the ocean."

"Hell of a thing to see on a foggy morning," the driver shrugged, pulling out Golden Gate Avenue. "We go to the end of Fulton. That's practically on the sand dunes."

And now, now he was on the last mile of his journey, and the long years of waiting compressed themselves in Kristian's mind, losing perspective like telegraph poles seen from a crop-dusting plane. Kristian saw once again his Grandmother Oleson's mantelpiece. With a child's innocence of vision he was drawn to the rusty officer's scabbard, the iridescent whorl of shell. . . .

The fog grew heavier as they neared the sea, misting the windshield, glazing the black asphalt street. All the houses facing this street huddled together, sepulchral and white, like Einas Johnson's bee hives. Blinds were drawn, and Kristian wondered about the people sleeping beyond the blinds, and he wondered about Abigail at home, and his children, and wished he had Dorothy on his shoulder, with her chubby fists digging into his neck, so that he could point out to her the mighty ocean. Then as the coach decelerated he sat forward, shielding his eyes, because the carpet of park had all unrolled and the bee-hive houses vanished, and he discerned only flat white dimensionless space. Now he laughed at himself for thinking Dorothy would want to perch on his shoulder. "A big girl, that one. Going on eighteen. . . . I think I must have been asleep."

The coach nosed into a yellow zone and stopped.

"This is it, Pop," the driver announced.

They had stopped by an amusement park and the joy-coaster looped crazily overhead. None of the concessions ran this early, but halfway down the block a man was unlocking the door of a coffee shop. Kristian turned his back tartly on this commonplace intrusion. He stamped across the Great Highway, crossed the spit of walk to the seawall, his coat tails flapping. The rank iodine fume of seaweed drenched his nostrils; the chill fog air dug to his marrow. Heart racing like a power saw, he gazed with desire on the naked ocean, the leaden turbulent sea, pressed and tamped and embraced by a lusterless dead-white sky. Froth spewed onto its flank of dun-colored

beach and was sucked back out of sight by the lips of succeeding waves.

Kristian gazed, stricken; the orgasm passed; anticipation consumed itself like spent rapture. Here, by the dank concrete seawall, his lifelong dream died ignominiously. He had not known precisely what joy to expect of the sea; but he had not reckoned on desolation. His mind groped unevenly for some reassurance, some salvage from the wreck. He leaned against the seawall, pressing trembling hands to his eyes. His eyes covered, his hearing became acute as a doc's. Now for the first time, he grew aware of the ocean's voice: tumultuary, solemn as the bass note of the Pembina church organ; fading, increasing, burdened with all the restlessness of the world.

"Oh, best-mother Oleson," Kristian sobbed, "why didn't you keep the song stopped up in your shell? Why didn't you give me the sword, then?"

Swept by an irrational desire to flee into the waves, Kristian stumbled down the four stone steps onto the beach. His numb feet dug a trail of pockmarks in the shifting dunes as he wandered, skirting the waves along the shore. Right at the dividing line, where the sand lay sleek and smooth before the next comber dissolved it to slush, he paused and stared terrified at the sucking waters. A lone gull flapped by, clear of the spray, mewing plaintively; no doubt it took Kristian for a fisherman and planned a dive foray on his bait. It reminded Kristian of the crows that had plundered his new-sown corn last spring; he longed for a shotgun to cure its rapacity. The waters swirled about his high-shoed ankles, receded, drained off underfoot. Kristian watched, fascinated. Then he saw tiny nipples form and dissolve. Craftily, as though at any moment he might be detected, he scooped up a handful of the wet sand from under one of the nipples. He dropped it quickly when a grotesque pink sand flea squirmed to the surface. How precious life was, even to this animalcule that lived in constant dread of death under the gross weight of water.

KRISTIAN began shuddering uncontrollably. Fleeing back to the dryer shell of the beach, he caught one foot in a mess of slimy green seaweed. As he kicked it free, he remembered his shock at coming on a nest of baby garter snakes in a dark corner of his barn. His fear at the moist obscene tangle commuted itself to rage, and he had stamped them to death, cleaning his boots on the straw so that Abigail wouldn't ask what had soiled them. . . .

He walked on until the shuddering stopped, until thought and time stopped. Downbeach he walked with the loose strides of an habitual walker

until he drew opposite a great windmill across in Golden Gate Park. Looking back, he was astonished to find the Cliff House, hung on its promontory behind him, no bigger than a salt lick.

I must have trudged upwards of a mile, Kristian decided; and he wheeled about.

In a kind of shelter in the cliff, he found beer bottles strewn on the sand, and a torn playing-card, a Queen of Hearts whose one eye stared enigmatically up at him from the rubbish. Paper book-matches and cigarette stubs ringed with lipstick; the charred remnants of driftwood. Kristian turned in disgust from the picnic débris when, hard by the bank, under a file of protecting sedge, he spied something shiny. He wandered over and picked up a child's sand bucket, painted on the outside with dancing blue clowns. Brown rust droplets were forming on the inside, so that its owner could not have abandoned it too remotely.

ABOUT ten paces away, Kristian found the tin shovel, stuck in a heap of sand that had once been a castle. Kristian felt a sudden unaccountable pathos for the child who had been snatched so abruptly from his play; the pinched burning face of Gustav appeared before him; and he squatted down on his heels and reshaped, crudely, the battered castle. Walls and turrets done, he scooped the moat; but as fast as he dug out the cold viscid sand, water seeped into the trough and obliterated his efforts. A child would have gone right on rebuilding. A child has infinite time.

"But I have no time," Kristian uttered with a start.

Stiffly he made to get up. He let out a sharp cry when something in the sand struck his knuckles. He sucked the thin red gash, drawing clean blood. Clawing the object out, he found a fluted white fan shell, abandoned by the marine creature it had housed. As he knocked the sand out of the shell, he thought of his first argument with Stephen, that night in the front room. Dorothy was pointing out the family treasures: the picture of baby Gustav over her father's rocker; the file tablecloth her mother and she had crocheted; Konrad's wedding picture on the radio. "This is Daddy's shell," she laughed, taking it reverently from the mantel and pressing it to Stephen's ear. "Listen to the music." Stephen had smiled indulgently. He laid a hand over hers, clasped hand and shell together. "The sound is just an amplification, Dolly. The echo is in your own ear," he said; and Kristian knew he was right and resented his rightness. . . .

Without conscious premeditation, he lifted this shell to his own ear. The music came, faint, remote. He

cupped it tighter; he stopped his other ear with a thumb. Now Kristian Nye came erect, listening raptly—listening with desire to the sound of wind in his wheat fields.

In that moment Kristian Nye knew his emptiness; and the knowledge smote him like a sword. He no longer saw the littered dunes, the dimensionless ocean. He saw, as through the big end of a fieldglass, the prairies on a winter's night, aglow with the aurora's unearthly flame. He saw them in summer, warmed by the tonic sun, quickened by fertile rains. He saw them foreshadowing the golden bounty of autumn, their carpeted flowers spread as for a bride. All his life Kristian Nye had dwelt in the midst of beauty without seeing it; dreamed of far-off adventure when every spear of grass breaking the topsoil declared the consummate wonder of life. For his life *had* been filled with every adventure that a man can know: dawn and work, love, marriage, the blessing of children. Every adventure but death, and the calm sunset preceding it. The shell-song was a siren song, Kristian knew, withdrawing the fan shell from his hot ear. It sang the song that its hearer wanted it to sing; to Grandmother Oleson it sang of her betrothed's love, to Kristian it sang of his boyhood quest for adventure, to Stephen it sang of Dorothy's secret laughter.

Kristian flung the shell down and buried it in the sand.

"I have to get back," he said aloud, straightening up abruptly.



The music came, faint, remote. Kristian stopped his other ear.

Wiping his hands on his trousers, he hurried up the beach. The cut finger continued to bleed, printing little red blots on the sand behind him. As day increased, the fog wore thin and a watery sun poked through. Kristian perspired. He was very tired, and his finger throbbled. Finally he stopped, shook out his handkerchief, compressed it to a bandage. A small linen envelope dropped from its geometrical folds and glistened against the brown sand. Kristian retrieved it, puzzled. Probably some money Abigail had slipped him. He remembered her fixing that hanky, taking his old soiled one, the last thing as he got on the bus Wednesday morning.

HE sat on a bench under the seawall and ripped the envelope open. His eyes contested the words; he read them twice before he let the card fall to the pavement. Abigail wrote:

Dear Kristian, I couldn't tell you to come home and maybe spoil your trip. But Dolly and Steve are getting married this week end over at Grand Forks. That's why she could not get to see you off, Kristian. I hope you don't mind my fib about that Insurance money. Willy got the paper last time he was through Omaha. Dorothy typewrote it like I asked her. She always wanted you to have your trip Kristian and she give me her college money for same. She is a good girl and she made me promise cross my heart not to tell you. So I wrote you instead. Don't say nothing to her will you. Love, Gail.

P.S. Don't forget to put on your heavy sweater if its cold there. Willy says Frisco gets awful damp summers.
A. N.

The fog litted its siege, freeing the prisoned winds. They scalloped whitecaps on the curving green waves, blew a fine stream of sand against Kristian's cheek, wafted the scent of frying bacon across the highway. They snatched up Gail's dropped card, pressed it momentarily to a gap in the seawall, then spun it merrily out of sight to join the debris littering the shore.

Shielding his hawk-black eyes from the burning sun, Kristian crossed the highway and went in the restaurant for a cup of coffee.

There weren't any other customers yet. Kristian Nye perched on a stool and checked his watch with the electric clock over the hot-plate. It was a minute or two fast, but he figured he'd lose a couple of hours on the bus ride home. Time zones were foolish things; a man hardly knew whether he was coming or going. But Kristian knew.

The rank black coffee warmed him some, but it couldn't hold a candle to Abigail's.

HOT CARGO

IT HAD SEEMED LIKE A GOOD BUSINESS—FREIGHTING IN THE CARIBBEAN WITH A SMALL WAR-SURPLUS VESSEL. BUT COMPETITION WAS TOUGH, AND THE STRANGE SUSPICIOUS OFFER WAS TEMPTING.

THE black goings-on at Pier 5 had almost nothing to do with young Rob Scott when they started. The bowline of his small ship was made fast to the same bollard as the stern line of the ship ahead. That was all. But that was too much.

Rob tied a lanyard to the handle of a tin bucket, heaved it overside and brought it up brimming with Biscayne Bay water. He sluiced the water over his bare feet, waited a moment with closed eyes for the coolness to sink in, and then repeated the process.

Whitey Barnett, Rob's engineer, squatting with his skinny back against the deckhouse, watched the water gurgle around his skipper's toes with sympathetic attention. The liquid caught a flash of white fire from the high moon overhead and rippled across the wooden deck back into the bay.

"A hot town," Whitey said, jerking one shoulder aft toward Miami. "Them sidewalks! An' what do we do if you don't catch some cargo or a charter tomorrow?"

"Try on Thursday," Rob Scott said. "Then Friday." Hastily he reached for the bucket. "Man!" he said as the water gurgled.

"Yeah, but there's a limit," Whitey said uneasily. He glanced forward at the stubby cargo derricks and stacks of the many Diesel craft that lined Pier 5 solidly. It was a bad time for the shoestring fleet that had lugged freight in small drafts between tiny Caribbean ports and Miami during and after the war. The trouble was that the big ships of the regular lines had come back strong. Besides, American dollars were scarce south of Key West.

"Any day now that U. S. marshal will be along to stick a plaster on the wheelhouse windows," Whitey said. "It ain't a big overhaul bill, but shipyards get itchy."

Rob Scott was silent. The toes of one foot rubbed an inch or two along the planking of this hundred-and-ten-foot sub-chaser that he had converted to carry cargo—cargo which no longer seemed to exist. Back of him the glow of Miami, celebrating a big tour-

ist season, leaped skyward like the Northern lights on a toot. Across the Bay, Collins Avenue in Miami Beach was saying it with neons, too. But the little ships lying along the pier in paralyzed poverty were dark, saving a pint of fuel oil.

On the after deck of the ship ahead of the *Venture* two men suddenly jumped to their feet, facing each other. Their voices intermingled in a few terse words. Then they were flailing at each other.

"Ain't they the partners in that scow?" Whitey remarked languidly. "Act like it, anyhow."

The moon lighted a dingdong fight, too full of action to be scientific, and too dirty to be professional. One brawler grabbed a piece of heavy gear off the deck. The other flung something lighter into his face and closed with him.

Whitey took a cigarette from behind his ear and put it in his mouth. From a pack in his shirt pocket he tucked another cigarette behind his ear.

The men broke apart. The taller went staggering back, as if hurt. The shorter rushed in at him. Instantly the tall man dropped sidewise to the deck. His charging enemy stumbled over his outstretched leg and pitched forward. He hit the low coaming of the open hatch. For a moment the squat man's hands clawed at it. His body slued around, but his grip tore loose and he fell through the hatch. The tall man jumped for the ladder and clattered down after him.

Rob Scott set down the bucket.

"Too close to murder," he said, and jumped across onto the pier. Whitey tailed behind.

The moon was so nearly overhead that the hold at the bottom of the hatchway was a square of white light.

by RICHARD
HOWELLS
WATKINS

Illustrated by James Ernst

Rob recognized both fighters. On his knees, with one leg unpleasantly twisted, was squat Red Hess. He clutched a sheath knife in his hand and waited. Leaning against the ladder listening to him curse was his massive partner, Sam Fain, master of this ex-yacht.

Red Hess jerked his head up as the shadows of the men from the *Venture* showed below. At once he switched from last-ditch defense to bold attack. He flung the knife with furious power at Sam Fain.

Fain wrenched his heavy body aside. The knife thudded into the side of the ship.

Sam Fain lunged toward his huddled partner, but Rob jumped from the ladder and spoiled his kick.

"A fair fight!" Whitey Barnett cried. He landed almost on Rob's shoulders. "They're both playin' it dirty."

Rob Scott looked down at Red Hess' twisted leg.

"Broken," he said. "Call an ambulance, Whitey."

FAIN took a quick step toward Rob. He had two inches on the master of the *Venture*. "Who asked you aboard, kid?" he asked. His belligerence was slightly alcoholic.

"Ambulance coming up!" Whitey cried from the top of the ladder. "I'll tell 'em to get it insured."

"And a cop, Whitey," Rob added, facing Sam Fain squarely. "Think you're on the high seas, Captain? Or still over in Jerry's back room?"

"Never mind a cop!" Red Hess called. "I'm not stinkin' up any jail with this slob. But we're splitting up, here and now, you tricky son!"

"Damn' right!" said Captain Fain. He turned away from Rob to scowl down at Red Hess. "The ship and her debts, or the twelve thousand cash—which'll you take, Red? Speak up!"

Hess' face was twisted up with pain and thought.

"An' I'll throw in my share o' the tin, limpy," Sam Fain added, grinning. "Maybe it'll buy you a wooden leg. Make up your mind!"

"Shut your—" Warily Hess glanced up at Rob Scott's calm face, and smothered sudden fury.

"You'll hand over the money," he said to Sam Fain. "The ship's as full o' rot as her master."

"We'll do it now," Fain said, "while we got a witness to the transaction."

Rob Scott started toward the ladder. "The witness passes," he said.

"No! No!" Red Hess screamed at him. "Don't leave me down here alone with him, Scott—Cap'n Scott! He'd— Don't treat a fellow-seaman like that, Cap'n Scott!"

In the moonlight his face was more than ghastly, with sudden sweat beads dropping off his forehead.

"Cap'n Scott!" Sam Fain repeated derisively. "Cap'n, hey? The kid that owns the football is cap'n of the team. And the man that owns that oversize skiff is Cap'n Scott!" He laughed loudly; then he scowled. "It takes more than a ticket to make a master, kid."

Rob ignored him. "I'll stand by till the ambulance gets here," he said to Red Hess. "You can do your business with Fain in the hospital or the jail."

"There ain't going to be any jail," Sam Fain said positively. "My tin-horn partner loves me in spite o' my little faults. He knows damn well I'd spill his littlè pipedream to the—"

"You shut your mouth," Red Hess said, almost in a whisper, through gritting teeth, "or I'll do some spillin', Sammy. And it won't be to the newspapers; it'll be to the Feds."

Fain tried again for a kick, but Rob stepped in.

"He means he'll squawk about those aliens you two have been smuggling from Cuba to the keys, Cap'n Fain," Rob said without emphasis.

Sam Fain looked from one to the other of them, and Red Hess kept quiet.

"Miami River scuttlebutt!" Fain said loudly. "Some people will believe anything—"

"Anything but that you earned the twelve thousand you're yapping about in this freight market," Rob said.

"What twelve thousand is that, Cap'n?" Red Hess asked quickly. "You been hearing things, son."

"Sure!" said Sam Fain hastily. "Who's got twelve thousand?"

ROB SCOTT stuck his hands in his pockets and stood waiting with bare feet spread slightly apart.

"Maybe we'd all better shut up," he said mildly. "I've a hunch that after that fast switch, I won't be hearing anything but unconvincing lies from both of you."

The man on the floor and the man at the foot of the ladder stared at him. Then Sam Fain smiled broadly, a fine rugged old barnacle's honest smile. He was a lot smoother and more formidable, now that his liquor was dying out.



"It's the Cuban," Whitey said. "Prob'ly took a header down that ladder."

"You're right, boy; you're right!" he said heartily. "How about it, Red? A little silence all round, huh?"

Red Hess said something under his breath. Then he nodded curtly.

A moment later Whitey Barnett stuck his head into sight.

"On the way," he reported. "Come on, Skipper—we'll be seeing Red in the hospital in the morning when we bring him an armful of flowers."

"Go ahead," said Red Hess sourly to Rob. He jerked a hand, wincing in pain. "Go on, make knots!" he snarled. "We've got business to talk over."

"Sorry!" said Rob Scott. Grinning, he climbed the ladder.

"What I like about that Hess babe is his manners," Whitey said as they walked back to the *Venture*. "We save his life; but if we met him tomorrow, he wouldn't look at us."

There was no chance to test Red Hess' gratitude tomorrow. Right after they'd set and fixed his leg at the hospital that night, Red Hess parted brass rags with Sam Fain, demanded

a taxi, was carried to it and pulled out of Miami—maybe out of the country, according to the grapevine that wound back to Pier 5.

Rob Scott, hearing the news during his round of shipping offices, wasn't interested in the chatter. More pressing matters, such as stretching nickels, gripped his attention.

A week later, when the fighting ex-partners' old ship made a sneak dive to the bottom under the waning moon, Rob was still too immersed in desperate cargo-hunting to join the discussion groups on Pier 5. Nobody had been aboard when she hit bottom.

The boys were attempting to determine by pure reason whether the vanished Red Hess had sunk the *Sun Seeker* by remote control of some sort, or whether Sam Fain himself was collecting insurance money. Then came the not too astonishing news that the underwriters hadn't been risking any money on the old *Seeker* staying afloat. After that, one dull, unimaginative man suggested the sinking might have been an accident.

"Some other guy's hard luck, particularly a guy like Sam Fain, is sort of refreshing when you're in the barrel yourself," Whitey said the day after the ship ahead made her shallow dive. "What d'you say put her under, Skipper? Hess squaring things, or some teredos overeating in her garboard strakes?"

Rob lifted his head from the job of sorting excess gear that could be sold. "Take a look at Sam Fain," he said.

Fain, on the dock, was not staring at the top hamper of his ship, which still lifted above the bay. His flaming eyes were pointed in the general direction of Cuba; his leather face had gone almost black; and his twisted lips emitted no audible sound.

Whitey Barnett whistled. "A man doesn't get that hot and sour about natural causes," he said. "My two dollars is on some lad hired by Hess."

Chapter Two

A WEEK after Sam Fain had had the *Sun Seeker* jerked to the surface, dried out and fixed up, things on the *Venture* hit the crisis stage. Rob Scott and Whitey Barnett were hungry; and Epifanio, the compact little Cuban cook, was sad. The shipyard had delivered a third "Or Else" on the overdue bill. Within twenty-four hours, Rob Scott reckoned, they'd grab her.

Either Biscayne Bay was warming up, or Rob's feet were past cooling off. He'd raked the whole southern end of Florida for cargo, he was sure. That night his feet, in a fever past curing, went prowling this way and that on top of the boxlike structure of five-ply wood that enclosed the deck of the *Venture*. Rob hadn't built that house for a promenade; most ironically, it was designed to double her cargo-carrying capacity.

Whitey Barnett peered out at his dimly seen skipper from the wheelhouse window, asking no questions. Even the moon had quit them.

"There was a Cuban along here about dusk, askin' to talk to the Captain," Whitey said drearily. "I told him we didn't want no deckhands, no cooks, no postcards, no nothing; but he hung around. With some guys optimism is a disease."

Rob stopped.

"No, he didn't have any cargo," Whitey said. "All he had was a shirt and pants and a little excitement."

He glanced forward at Sam Fain's *Sun Seeker* in the berth ahead of them. "I could use some excitement, even Sam Fain bouncing another guy into the hold," he said. "It would take my mind off steak."

"Fain's cleared for Cuba," Rob said. "He was supposed to sail tonight."

"That I don't get." Whitey massaged his ear below the parked cigarette. "He and his boat are still too hot to smuggle in any more aliens."

Rob Scott grunted.

"I been doing contests," Whitey confessed suddenly. "You know, telling in twenty-five words or less why some stuff you never heard of is hot merchandise. But the lice want box-tops and like that before they make with the prizes."

"It's time for you to leave her," Rob said. "And Epifanio too. Plenty of season jobs on the beach."

"Yeah," said Whitey. He peered curiously at Rob. "I'm a fugitive from a machine shop," he said. "What're you running to sea from, Skipper?"

"A desk," said Rob. "You'd better get back to that lathe, Whitey."

Whitey grunted. "Later," he said. He felt behind his ear for the cigarette, homemade and losing its makings out of both ends.

Rob dropped off the house and continued his pacing down under on the main deck. He glanced down into the engine-room and brought up short.

At the foot of the steel ladder a man was lying flattened out on the plates. The kerosene lantern Whitey was using for purposes of economy was dim, but not dim enough to conceal the certainty that this man was dead.

Rob called Whitey, and they looked him over. A dark, flat-nosed man with no lobes to his ears, in his late twenties, with calluses on his hands.

"It's the Cuban I told you about," Whitey said. "Prob'ly he sneaked aboard and was mooching around to find something worth stealing. It's easy to hook your toe and do a header down that ladder."

Rob squatted to examine the Cuban's crushed skull. The dent on the side of the head between ear and eye hardly looked like what would happen from a dive to a smooth floor. His hands didn't smell of Diesel oil, which has an authoritative stench, so he hadn't tried to break his fall with them.

"The last man who went down a hatchway around here had help in making the dive," Rob said. "And at that, Red Hess managed to twist around and land on one leg. Well, all that's for the cops."

THE cops and the doctor were calm about it.

"Know why he wanted to see you?" the sergeant asked Rob after the examination.

Rob shook his head. The cop ran a hand through the man's possessions—matches, brown cigarette paper, tobacco sack, a few dollars, a pocket-knife rather long in the blade, and no identifying papers at all. A new-look-

ing clipping had stuck to one side of the sack holding the makings. The sergeant scowled at the cutting and glanced again at the cheap dungarees and dirty shirt in which the body was clad.

"What's this?" he grumbled. "Is the guy a financier in disguise?"

The newspaper clipping was headed "METALS," and it listed in English the prices of a list of metals.

Rob squinted attentively at an item that was underlined:

"*Tin, Straits, lb.—\$1.03.*"

HE touched it with his finger and relaxed. "That's why he wanted to see me, Sergeant," he said. "Tin! He was working the old *Madura's* tin gag."

"Sure; that's it!" said Whitey, laughing. "I told you he was an optimist."

"Huh? What's that?" the policeman demanded.

"Tin's a synonym for cheap, but it's worth \$1.03 a pound," Rob said.

"Don't educate me, bud," the cop said. "Just spill me his racket."

"In World War I, a U-boat put a torpedo into the steamship *Madura*, carrying a cargo of Bolivian tin through the Caribbean to the States. She sank in shoal water. The stuff's been salvaged, stolen, buried, hijacked and so forth ever since, according to Cuban yarns. Relays of seagoing crooks have played tag and hide and seek with her cargo. A few beach-combers are still making a living claiming to know where the tin finally wound up."

"You heard about the pot of gold at the foot of a rainbow, Officer?" Whitey said. "Well, that's hard money in a good bank compared to the *Madura's* cargo. Mostly these moochers work yachtsmen for a few bucks, an' supply a chart with a cross on it."

The sergeant stretched. "Take it along, boys," he said to his men. He shook his head reprovingly at the corpse. "I wish these stiffs would carry their names on them. It makes an officer dumb, not knowin' who his customer is."

After the Cuban had been carried off to the wagon, Rob walked with the sergeant to the gangway.

"No chance he was murdered?" Rob asked.

"Not unless you feel a confession coming on," said the cop. He raised a hand and departed. Rob stood still.

The *Sun Seeker*, ahead, was running her Diesel generator, and her house blazed extravagantly with lights. Somebody was singing, and the interjections of a crap game drifted to his ears.

Up on her bridge the sudden, increasingly vivid glow of a cigar end showed as a smoker took a drag. Though the stars were bright, it was

too dark here alongside the pier to make out who the man was. Rob pulled out his two-dollar watch and slowly tied a bowline with the bight of the braided cotton line that secured it.

Whitey materialized beside him.

"Sam Fain sails; we rot here," Whitey muttered. "Maybe he's switching to running dope, huh, Skipper?"

"Maybe," said Rob Scott. "But he doesn't seem to be sailing tonight, as planned. Why?"

"Well, now, that's a bad question," Whitey said. "A grade-A stinker."

Rob took a turn—two steps and back. "If he knew, somehow, that a man had been found dead in this ship, he wouldn't have sailed, just in case his departure might arouse the curiosity of the police."

"Want me to slide an ear over his rail?" Whitey asked promptly.

"No. The wider berth we give Fain's affairs, the better off we'll be."

"And we ain't so awful well off, at that," Whitey said. He coughed. "I sure hate to see you lose her, Skipper."

Rob Scott didn't say anything.

Chapter Three

NEXT morning early the U. S. marshal, a fat man with pop eyes, came down the pier with his thick legs churning. He wasn't quite running. He had papers in his hand.

Whitey's eyes caromed off Rob Scott's stiffening face to the plump man advancing down the pier. He groaned and jerked fretfully at his ear, as other men pull at their caps.

"Well, it's been a lovely clambake, Skipper," he said. "I can get you a job in a yard up the river, where I'm going to overhaul motors for 'em."

Rob Scott squared his shoulders and his jaw. Epifanio, the compact little Cuban cook, darted out onto the foredeck, saw the marshal and looked to the wheelhouse for orders for great violence. Rob shook his head. Epifanio's soft brown eyes darkened with sadness.

The marshal approached the opening in the *Venture's* homemade deckhouse. He didn't even look at it. He kept on waddling. He went right past the ship.

"Ah, baby!" gasped Whitey Barnett. "Keep going, you!"

The marshal reached the *Sun Seeker*. A man standing by her bowline saw him suddenly, and hailed the wheelhouse. The marshal stepped cautiously across the narrow plank. Sam Fain came striding to meet him. The marshal got busy with the papers.

"Well, what do you know; what do you know!" Whitey crowed. "It's Sammy the Fain that's gettin' the plas-



For a moment only the squat man's hands clawed at the coaming.

ter! It'll be a libel for not payin' the bill for raisin' her."

He prodded his slowly relaxing skipper in the ribs.

"Didn't I tell you honesty pays?" he demanded. "Some, I mean. We still got a ship. But, like you said, why didn't Fain sail last night? He must ha' knowed it was risky to stay."

The marshal was gluing the libel to the wheelhouse window. It was just language from the District Court, but the power of the U. S. up to and including Coast Guard and Navy, lay behind it. The *Sun Seeker* was there, no more movable than the pier. Plastered! . . .

A quarter hour later Rob watched Sam Fain walking up the pier, his leathery face set in grim lines, his hard black eyes staring ahead. He was a different man from the dirty fighter in the ship's hold, a different man from the black-browed fury who had looked down at his sunken ship. This man was following a plan in cold intensity.

And Sam Fain was still following the plan when he came back from the shore, only now he had a fixed smile on his face. He hailed Rob and came aboard the *Venture* on the heels of his words. He put his hand in the

pocket of his short pants and brought out a wad of bills. He made a fan of the bills. There were five of them, and they were all one-hundred-dollar bills.

"Nice-looking lettuce," said Whitey.

"I've lost my ship, Captain," Fain said briskly to Rob Scott. "That blasted salvage outfit got together with other creditors. They won't lift the plaster for less than two thousand. So now I want to charter your vessel."

"What do we do—stick up a liner?" Whitey asked.

Sam Fain looked at him and stretched his smile. An old knife cut at the corner of his mouth nearly split open again, but he held that benevolent smile.

Slowly Rob Scott lifted his eyes from five bills. Past them he saw release of his ship from the shipyard's grip, wages for the two men who'd stuck with him, Diesel oil, food, the lift of blue seas under his feet, the tang and sting of a breeze on his cheek.

"Get forward, Whitey," he said.

"O.K.; I was just askin'," Whitey muttered. He moved. On the foredeck he wrapped his skinny arms around the anchor davit and waited, watching out of the corners of his



It was just language, but the power of the Navy was behind it.

active brown eyes. He looked like a snub-nosed kid, but Rob knew he saw himself as a tough, spray-drenched bozo with lube oil in his veins.

"A ten-day charter, Captain," Sam Fain said. "Five hundred down, and I'll put up five hundred more with your own agent, payable to you when we return to Miami."

Rob looked at him and waited, as Fain fingered the bills. Fain knew what that five hundred meant to a busted owner and master. He wanted to let them do his arguing for him. Finally he spoke again:

"No dope or—passengers. A perfectly straight but highly confidential mission. I'll give you the details after we drop our lines."

"Why *this* ship?" Rob asked.

"Why not?" Fain nodded his head. "At my own expense I'll supply three men from my crew to handle your wheel watches. I'll need them."

He glanced up the pier, as if he expected to see another marshal. "I hate to think of a smart little vessel like this lifted out from under her master's feet," he said. "What say, Captain?"

Rob reached. He grasped the bills firmly and drew them from the quickly relaxing grip of Sam Fain.

"You know how I'm fixed," he said.

"Certainly," said Sam Fain calmly. "Kicking me off your ship is a luxury you can't afford."

A touch of flattery, that. Also a very sour note of humility. This massive man with his hard black eyes wasn't figuring on being kicked off any man's ship. He had come to Rob because Rob was the least experienced

shipmaster alongside the pier, and therefore, as Fain saw it, the softest and the easiest to be kidded.

Rob shoved the bills into his pocket. "Nothing illegal, Fain, or I cancel and put you on the beach." His tone was crisp.

"Sure!" said Sam Fain. "I know that's what you'd do, Captain."

Rob winced. Every time Fain said "Captain," for all his smoothness, he couldn't keep an overtone of mockery out of his voice.

"I'm telling you, Fain," Rob said.

Fain nodded and pointed a thick finger forward. "That kid with the noisy mouth," he said. "He's out."

"As an engineer he's just about fair," Rob said with no warmth. He scowled most unhappily. "But I've got to keep him. Owe him too much to fire him."

"O.K.," Sam Fain said slowly. "You have a cook, too? How's he?"

"Epifanio? A good-enough cook, but he's got some grudge against me. A surly, no-good hand. I'll fire him, and the engineer too, if you'll raise the ante a lit—"

"Keep 'em," said Sam Fain, and Rob breathed easier.

"You'll clear for a Cuban port, Captain—say Caibarien—in ballast. Sign us on this afternoon. You can sail tomorrow morning?"

Rob's nod sent Fain along the pier to his own ship. Rob headed for the galley, at the forward end of the deckhouse. Whitey followed him in, and Epifanio, peering earnestly into a saucepan, looked up.

"It won't be crooked," Rob told them. "But it may be dangerous as blazes to keep Fain straight. I wouldn't recommend staying in her, now I've got the cash to pay you off."

"You're reaching with your neck for small potatoes," Whitey growled. He transferred the cigarette from behind his ear to his mouth and thoughtfully fumbled for a match. He parked another cigarette behind his ear.

"Seen any big potatoes around Pier Five?" Rob Scott asked. "What this amounts to is I may have to fight Fain for my ship. That's better than waiting for some bird with a paper to take her without a fight."

"A risk but a chance," said Whitey.

EPIFANIO, who had worked in the cane-fields, slipped his hand into a locker and pulled out a gleaming machete. He flicked it about with an agile wrist, jeopardizing the six ears in the galley. For once he was happy.

Rob viewed the bloodthirsty display without enthusiasm.

"Look, Epifanio, I'm going to be busy enough watching Fain without having to sit on your head to stop murder," he said.

Epifanio put a finger on his chest. "I fix," he promised.

"I guess I got to pamper my curiosity," Whitey said. "I'll stay."

Rob grinned at them. "You surprise me!" he remarked. He peered through the forward port. "Whitey, you boil out of that door," he commanded briskly. "I'll be on your heels. Epifanio, I want you to chase us—but just with a paring-knife. You want your pay, see, and you don't like me."

"Huh?" Whitey looked uneasy.

"I don't want Fain to get the notion we're a united family—or a brave one. Wait, Epif—"

Epifanio had already caught up a knife. His lunge at Rob was a premature masterpiece of ferocity. Engineer and master piled out in real earnest with Epifanio's knife stabbing the air inches away from their vitals.

On the foredeck Rob, backing away, flagged the fiery cook down with a sight of Fain's money, making loud and nervous promises. Then Whitey started sounding off. The quarrel became three-cornered.

THAT night Rob came to wonder just how well the act had gone across. From dusk on, he stood by his ship, maintaining a sharp but unobtrusive watch. He could not forget the Cuban with the lobeless ears who had died violently in her the night before. Neither could he ignore the fact that somebody had sunk the other ship in which Sam Fain had intended to go to sea. . . .

Whitey Barnett came strolling aboard rather late and very pleased with himself. He nearly pulled his ear off, and snickered loudly as he draped himself against the wheel.

"Fain don't believe we're too blame harmless, Skipper," Whitey reported. "One o' his three mugs that we signed on this afternoon—Geiger, the chunky sailor that just happens to have engine-room grease embedded in the lines of his hands—tailed me to Jerry's place. He talked injectors awhile, and then slipped a pill into my beer."

Rob waited out Whitey's dramatic pause.

"I gave Jerry the office to switch the beers for me," Whitey said. "This Geiger—sailor, my eye!—was watching too close for me to shuffle 'em myself."

"A Mickey Finn?" Rob asked.

Whitey shook his head emphatically. "Nothing as temporary as that. That pill must ha' been Mickey's older brother, Socker Finn, judging by how Geiger went out."

"What did you do with him?"

"Nothing," said Whitey. "Another o' Fain's stooges—Bronson, the big bony one—was right there. When Geiger hit the floor, he stepped in, looking puzzled."

Whitey straightened up and swayed complacently on his toes.

"They're scairt to have me aboard," he said. "They were figgering Geiger'd be below handling the air to kick my Diesels into action in the morn-ing."

"Turn in," Rob said. "I'll be wak-ing you at three to stand a watch." Whitey's jaw dropped.

"Watch for what, Skipper?"

"I don't know," Rob said. "The thousand's going to be the toughest money I ever touched. We've got to be set to start putting out for it from tonight on in."

Chapter Four

BEFORE Rob's uneventful watch in the wheelhouse was over, Sam Fain came aboard. Quietly he turned in a ham-mock aft of the galley on the main deck.

Muttering, Whitey took over at three. About four, Rob roused and lifted himself to an elbow in his cramped quarters aft of the tiny chart-room. Fain's three sailors were coming aboard. Rob got up and had a look.

Geiger was being half carried aboard by the other two—Bronson, the tall Swede, and Hall, a muddy-skinned fellow with eyes that switched around continuously in his narrow head. Both were steady on their feet.

"There's—phony kid they call an engineer on this ratty little bucket," Geiger said thickly. "Scairt to turn in—that's him."

"Well, sink me deep, if it ain't the prohibitionist!" Whitey said joyously. "Howya, boy? Sorry I didn't know one beer would put you out. I should ha' give you a teeny sip—"

Rob moved fast, but the other two had Whitey down on the deck before he got there. He caught a glimpse of Sam Fain silently watching the scrimmage from well forward. At once Rob swerved, came up behind Fain and jammed his right arm up behind his back.

"Call off your dogs, or I'll break your arm!" Rob said crisply.

Fain didn't argue. Rob's voice held the rasp of confident authority.

Slowly Bronson and Hall got up off Whitey.

Rob released Fain's arm and walked aft.

"Hold it, Whitey!" he commanded. "You men, turn in! Move!"

They moved, reluctant, watchful, while Whitey sprayed them with words. He wasn't hurt.

Fain came aft. "What's the idea of attacking me?" he snapped at Rob. "Can't you handle your crew?"

"Not as fast as you can—yet," Rob said. "I need this engineer, Mister."

"Geig—" Fain stopped, and walked back to his hammock.

In the dark Rob poked Whitey re-assuringly in the ribs, bawled him out crisply for brawling, and went back to his bunk. A little later Whitey came sneaking in through the chart-room.

"That big swab will grab your ship," Whitey muttered. "They'll jump us at sea and drop us overside."

"No. Fain's not that stupid. He's in some smoother game, with more to gain than this small ship. He was just cutting down the opposition by trying to leave you ashore with a busted head."

Whitey grunted. "Don't get the idear I'm backin' away from them," he said.

"That five hundred deposited with my agent will give us enough of a stake to hunt down charters all over the Caribbean," Rob said. "We still sail at dawn. But I may have to change my tactics after this rough stuff, Whitey."

"It'll be fun," Whitey said. . . .

Two hours later, with Whitey's well-groomed Diesels muttering, Rob took his ship out Government Cut and sank Miami Beach's towering hotels in the sea astern. Across the hurrying Gulf Stream he headed at a steady eleven knots, and stood his watch on the wheelhouse top with no regret over his decision.

She slid easily among steep blue seas kicked up by current against wind. Rob sank the salt air deep in his lungs. This was where he lived. Worth fighting for! He caught Sam Fain's eye, plainly enough contemptuous now, and dropped down into the wheelhouse to get Geiger back on the course.

"Whyn't you take her yourself if you don't like how I handle her, kid?" Geiger snarled.

"I will," Rob said. He grabbed the wheel and swung his shoulder hard against this alleged sailor's body. Caught off balance, Geiger went tumbling through the port door down three feet onto the deck.

"Why, you—" He leaped to his feet and whipped a wrench from his pocket.

"B'lay that!" Sam Fain roared at him. Sullenly Geiger stood still.

ROB beckoned to Fain. "Since that's the kind of undertaker's auntie you've stuck me with, you'll have to stand a wheel trick yourself, Mister," he said. "Come on!"

Fain's face darkened, and the muscles of his thick arms bunched. Then, with a slowly broadening smile, he stepped toward the wheel. "Aye, aye, Captain," he said.

Geiger snickered queerly. "Aye, aye, Captain!" he parroted softly. "Just wait, you!"

Rob gave Sam Fain a course that squared her away, down the edge of

the Great Bahama Bank for the north coast of Cuba. . . .

Whitey joined Rob on the wheel-house top as the sun slid down into the blue-black Stream. Whitey's eyes widened at the sight of Fain, just below, steering the ship. Then he got Rob's signal.

"What's that hooley Fain handed you?" he asked in a loud and incredulous voice.

Fain glanced up through the scuttle. Bronson, the tall Swede, squatting on the house with vacant blue eyes on the sunset, turned around.

"Ex-Captain Fain tells me he's been retained secretly as an expert in some insurance litigation to collect data for the defense," Rob said. "We'll be taking soundings and studying the force and direction of the current in a position off the mess of keys and islands along the north Cuba coast."

Whitey spat overside. "The mug's insulting us, not working up a better lie than that," he said. "Huh, Skipper?"

"That's right," Rob said most cheerily. Bronson was leaning forward to hear, his broad face wrinkled with effort. "It's worse than an insult, Mr. Fain's feeble yarn," Rob went on. "It means the ex-captain down there, doesn't believe we can even dent his racket."

FAIN gave a spoke, and his eyes flicked upward at them.

"Is this comedy?" he asked with an edge of anger in his smooth voice.

"Comedy!" Whitey yelled with laughter. "Wait'll we turn loose Operation Blooley on you an' these three dimwits. It'll kill you."

"That's enough, Whitey!" Rob said curtly.

Epifanio came out of the galley onto the foredeck and pointed to his mouth.

"Get your supper, Whitey," Rob said. "You're taking over at eight."

"I'm coming, Epifanio!" Whitey bawled. "Be sure you gimme the right plate!" He grinned at the sailor Bronson's intent face. "We don't want no accidental poisonings to go wrong around here." He dropped down the ladder into the wheelhouse.

"Stow the bluff!" Fain snapped up at Rob. Then abruptly he shut his mouth, swallowing more words.

Bronson was still looking thoughtful.

Rob examined the flaring sunset with a professional air and paced the two steps permitted by the cramped confines of the top. Later he called Hall to relieve Fain at the wheel.

Every half-hour as evening became black night, Rob ducked down into the engine-room. The two Diesels, eight-cylinder, six-hundred-horse jobs, turning nine hundred and forty revs, were shoving her along at an eco-

nomical eleven knots. Rob ran his eye over the gauges, lube-oil temperature and pressure, fuel-oil pressure, fresh-water temperature and the rest. He listened to the thump of one engine, then the other. Hitting evenly.

Once as he started toward the steel ladder, the crumpled shape of the dead Cuban with the deformed ears came to his mind.

Queer the man hadn't been able to break his fall, somehow. It wasn't much of a drop. He must have been a persistent fellow, to sneak aboard like that just to wait to unload the old yarn of the *Madura's* tin on a skipper likely to have heard it a dozen times. But why else should he have wanted to see a shipmaster? He had the clipping: "*Tin, Straits, lb.—\$1.03.*" And there was no sign that he had tried to steal anything. Tin. Tin? He'd heard somebody mention tin just recently.

WHITEY relieved, and Rob slept till midnight. Then he came out into a velvety black night, leaned on the railing around the top and made out, just above the cloudless southern horizon, several dim stars of the Southern Cross. Epifanio was crouched on top of the house, doubled up over the harmonica he played so softly.

"I been tryin' to make him speak up on that thing," Whitey said. "He keeps his music to himself."

Epifanio stood up. "It is not that I am selfish," he said sadly. "It's that I am kind." He went below.

About three A.M. Rob dropped down the ladder for a look at the chart.

In the darkness of the pilothouse, Bronson, the helmsman, began coughing hard. Rob turned into the chartroom. Somebody shoved past him. Rob dodged the worst of a swipe at his head with something mighty hard. Groggy, he fell over the open door of the low steel locker that served as ship's safe. He started to pursue but stopped. It was too late. He groped for the flashlight in his pants pocket.

The beam showed him somebody had picked the padlock on the locker with a wire. His .45 automatic, the ship's only armament, was gone. The ship's papers hadn't been disturbed. Just the gun had been taken. The little that was left of Sam Fain's five hundred was in a money belt around Rob's middle.

Rob knelt by the steel locker. The fellow he'd surprised had tried to get away, not attack. He could easily have knocked out Rob with the pistol butt. Either Fain had wanted to disarm the ship for some future moment, or one of his thugs had been on a private thieving job. You could get rum for pistols in Cuba. One thug? No, two. Bronson, at the wheel, had given warning by that phony cough.

Rob walked out into the wheelhouse.

Bronson was dimly discernible, standing straight and stiff, braced for questions and a fast lie. Rob passed him and stepped down onto the covered deck.

He headed for Fain's hammock, slung aft of the galley.

Try to find that pistol now!

Rob flashed his light, grabbed Sam Fain by the shoulder and pulled him up. The man started, and peered out of eyes almost shut.

"That automatic isn't my ace in the hole, Fain," Rob said loudly. "Don't count on it, or on any other guns you've got."

Ignoring Fain's awakening act, he climbed back atop the wheelhouse.

His ship's bow unceasingly divided the blackness of the sea into two hissing streaks of gray. The thump of her Diesels was as steady and untroubled as the mechanism of the universe, above his head.

When Whitey Barnett turned out, Rob told him what had happened, listened to his unhelpful profanity, and waited until the light green of the bank's edge emerged in the growing light. Then he dropped down onto his bunk behind the chartroom.

If Fain had intended to seize the ship, he'd had a good opportunity in the black night. That wasn't Fain's objective. Too crude, too dangerous, too unprofitable. The big move was still ahead.

Rob Scott rolled over and went to sleep.

Chapter Five

AT the shallow port of Caibarien, twelve hours later, Sam Fain tackled Rob as soon as he had pratique.

"You've seemed a bit jittery, Captain," Fain said, with his widest smile. "Going to try to cancel? It'll cost you that second five hundred, and I'll tie you up here in the courts for a few months, anyhow."

Only a few feet behind him, Bronson, Geiger and Hall, bunched together, strained their ears.

"Cancel? Me?" said Rob. "I'm just beginning to enjoy this little cruise. Let's get on with our oceanographic studies as soon as I enter her." He stared down at the eavesdropping seamen. "Your experts are eager to get to work. No doubt they use .45 automatics for echo sounding."

"Right!" said Fain. "When your paper work's done, we'll probably be getting out of here in a hurry."

Rob lugged his briefcase full of ship's papers ashore. Returning to the *Venture* after completing the Cuban formalities, he was met on the wharf by Whitey. Smothering excite-

ment, Whitey flicked an eyebrow toward the ship.

"Fain's aboard again, and in a sweat to get under way," he reported. "When he went ashore, I put Epifanio on his tail, like you told me. Epifanio says Fain made for a dirty little workboat that had just run in. He hung around out of sight till some American guy in her went ashore. Then he talked to the other fellow in her for about one minute."

He paused impressively. "And you know who I figure the guy he talked to might be?" he asked. "Epifanio gave a good description. I think it's Skelly Ebert—you know, Skeleton Ebert, they call him, that six-foot-sixer with no meat on him, and a purple burn on his neck, that used to run a junk-boat in Biscayne Bay. There couldn't be two like that in the world."

Rob rubbed his jaw.

SKELLY showed Sam Fain some place on a folded chart—a dirty new one, not one of those ancient Spanish numbers you hear about."

"Then what?"

"Fain came hustling back to the *Venture*, an' he's been pawin' the deck to get going ever since." Whitey screwed up one eye. "He's been keepin' out of sight from the wharf."

"Where's that workboat?"

Whitey pointed. Rob handed him his bag of ship's papers.

"I've been shopping," he said. "There's an old .38 in among the papers. Couldn't get two, but I'm not counting much on guns."

"They're comforting, anyhow."

"Hide the gun in your engine-room. I'll be back."

He strolled down the wharf.

There was no doubt about it. The thin man in the oil-blackened launch, sitting doubled-up like a carpenter's rule in the cockpit, was Skelly Ebert. He had a cigarette hidden in his cupped, clawlike hand, and he'd take a drag at it, with great secrecy, about every fifteen seconds. A Skelly habit.

Rob got behind some crated stuff and studied the dirty boat. A tarpaulin was lashed over a formless piece of machinery mounted in the cockpit.

"An air pump?" Rob asked himself. "A one-lunger air pump like they use in shallow-water diving?"

His gaze shifted to a man limping toward the boat with a carton of groceries in his arms. Under his sweat-stained white-peaked officer's cap, his untidy hair showed rust-colored.

The limp was new to Rob, but the hair was familiar enough. Red Hess, Sam Fain's ex-partner, was in the picture.

At the boat, Skelly Ebert straightened up to take the carton of grub

from Red Hess, but deadpanned him. The emaciated ex-junkboat man had not one word to report to his skipper about his recent reunion with Sam Fain.

The old launch got under way. Rob noted that Skelly swung wide of the *Venture* on his course to the channel leading out between Cayo Boca Chico and Cayos Cobos. He kept pointing the other way, keeping Hess' attention diverted from the pier.

Rob hurried back to the *Venture*. Sam Fain was waiting, in plain sight now, at the ship end of the gang-plank. He tried to clamp a friendly, massive hand on Rob's arm, but Rob dodged it.

"Papers all set?" Sam Fain asked. "Good! Then, Captain, we'll get her going. If these conditions hold, we'll be able to get some observations made before dark."

He sounded very pleased with himself. Rob opened his mouth and then shut it again. Reticence was best!

Under Sam Fain's polite pilotage the *Venture* turned to the eastward. Fain swung to the top of the short signal mast with a pair of binoculars. The ship ran along in deep water, though close to the indescribable mess of keys, reefs, mangroves and shoal water that forms a fringe fifteen miles wide off that part of the Cuban north coast. Fain's glasses were probing among the keys to southward. The chart told Rob no freighter of normal draft could navigate there.

Soon Sam Fain climbed down, flipped a hand at the lowering sun and shook his head.

"Too late," he said. "We'll have to lie in under the western shore of that largest key there for the night. Tomorrow we can make an early start."

Rob looked toward the mangrove-crowned islet Fain indicated.

"To get in there, I'll need one of your experts to work the lead. Bronson seems to be the best of the lot."

"Bronson by all means, Captain," Fain said with his widest smile. "You could carry nine feet in there blind—but use a leadman by all means."

Rob was already on his way to the deck locker to get the leadline. He watched Bronson's every cast as *Venture* closed the land, creeping along dead slow. There was no doubt about Fain's knowing the water. Ten feet was the shallowest spot found by the lead. Rob hunted twenty before he let go his anchor.

Epifanio performed in the galley. Rob, returning his plate, noticed that the cook had his machete handy on top of a food locker, nestling beside his harmonica. Epifanio's brown eyes beamed expectantly at him.

The cook's hunch was right. An air of tension hung over the *Venture*



Rob moved fast, but the other two had reached Whitey.

now, just at the time when she should be settling down for the night. There was a telltale bulge in the hip pocket of Bronson's dirty khaki pants. Rob didn't doubt the others were heeled too.

Sam Fain's hammock had no attractions for him. He was up on the wheelhouse top, and even up on the stumpy signal mast, as the stars pushed through the darkening velvet of the sky. He appraised the land breeze with particular intensity as it fanned in from the south.

Rob visited the engine-room. "I'll take it," he said.

Whitey produced the ancient revolver from Caibarien.

"Here's a hunk of copper tubing with a plug of lead in one end," Whitey said. "Wins any argument without chatter."

"Fain is keyed up," Rob said, as he stowed gun and pipe in his pockets. Succinctly he told about seeing Red Hess ashore.

"We're getting close to it," Whitey said. "That guy Hall's twitchy eyes are on the prance."

Rob nodded. "There's something juicy around here."

He gripped the ladder. "Get some sleep now, but with your ears open," he said and ascended to the black deck.

When he reached the wheelhouse top, Sam Fain talked amiably for a moment.

"It's hot under the house," he said. "Believe I'll sleep on the foredeck tonight."

Rob grunted. He included the foredeck in his watch. Once, an hour after Fain had settled down, the riding light at the masthead struck a glint from something shiny.

Rob crept forward on top of the deckhouse and had a closer look. Fain was using night glasses on the islands to southward.

When Rob returned to the wheelhouse top, Whitey poked his uneasy head up the scuttle.

"Take a look at those mugs down in their hammocks," Rob said softly. "I want to know whether they're asleep or faking."

"Faking," murmured Whitey. "Epifanio slipped aft to tell me none of 'em is calking off. Wants to know if it's time to start swinging his machete."

Rob stared around the black night. Small waves, driven by the land breeze, were lapping incessantly against the hull.

"Something's due, Whitey," he decided. "Go below and fix your Diesels so nobody else but you can start 'em."

"Not even Geiger," Whitey whispered. His head vanished.

A moment or two later Rob followed him to the main deck. His rope-soled slippers made no sound. He glanced down into the engine-room, where Whitey was at work;



"Don't let that thing come alongside, Skipper!" Whitey said urgently.

then stood by, beyond the square column of dim light rising from the hatch. Whitey worked with little noise, but once his foot shifted a tool on the plates.

A man came creeping aft along the alleyway between ship's side and pilothouse. His head thrust cautiously into the light from below. It was Geiger. He peered intently down at the working engineer and eased a foot toward the iron ladder.

Rob took a quick step forward and clipped him on the skull with the butt of his gun. He caught Geiger before he could topple forward.

Whitey spun around and leaped at the ladder. Rob showed his face, gesturing for silence. Whitey came up and had a look at Geiger. They pulled a revolver from one pocket; a wrench from another.

"Get some wire or cord," Rob whispered. "I want him out of action for the night."

Whitey stuffed cotton waste in Geiger's mouth with a generous hand. They bound him and stowed him down in the after hold.

Epifanio turned up beside them and helped slide on the hatch-cover.

"Finish your job on the motors," Rob told Whitey. "Epifanio, stand by in case Bronson or Hall comes aft before Whitey's through."

Epifanio lifted his machete. "I cut in two pieces," he promised amiably.

"Park that," Rob growled. "I want these men in the brig for carrying weapons against my orders—but alive. That's all."

He hastened noiselessly back to the wheelhouse top and peered down at the fore deck.

Sam Fain, he made out, was standing up. The ship was lying to the land breeze and Fain was facing forward, staring as always toward the mangrove keys of the coast.

Rob stared that way, too, and ran a forearm across his eyes. Surely there was a blur in the night, though perhaps it was a mere illusion called up by his strained vision.

Slowly the blur became a triangular blotting of the stars on the horizon.

Gripping the rail, he watched tautly for a full minute. Out of the southward something was coming—out of the mess of scattered islets.

Chapter Six

ROB moved silently to the black shape of the searchlight mounted on the rail, aimed its dark lens and stood still.

From Sam Fain on the foredeck came no sound or movement.

The peaked shadow lifted higher. Without doubt it was a sail, sliding silently, very slowly, through the night toward the *Venture's* riding-lights.

Rob flicked on the searchlight. A disk of harsh light bored the darkness. The black triangle became a scrap of tarpaulin hoisted to serve as a jury sail on a stumpy mast. This makeshift sail was inching downwind a sizable, deep-laden lighter.

Forward on the lighter stood the emaciated figure of Skelly Ebert. Aft, a fat, muscled young Cuban strained at a long steering-sweep. No sign of Red Hess.

Blinking in the light, Skelly Ebert hailed at once:

"Ship ho! We're adrift—no anchor—not enough sail for steerage. Pass a line, will you?"

Even as he spoke, he was letting go a halyard. The tarpaulin dropped in a heap at the foot of the mast. The lighter began to lose some of her slow way.

From the forward deck of the *Venture* Sam Fain lifted a powerful voice:

"Sure! Rob Scott! You on deck? Here's a craft in distress."

Rob sat that one out. This was what Sam Fain had been waiting for; Rob let the play go on while he assembled facts. The big lighter had a

heavy cargo in her under those tarps. Call it a hundred tons of freight. And two men showing.

"Where'd you break loose?" Sam Fain called.

Like the question, the answer was too prompt:

"Longside a ship in Cayo Frances anchorage. Too far off to hail her when we woke up. Bear a hand, will you?"

Rob glanced sidewise, away from the barge in the glare of light, and found that Whitey and Epifanio were at his shoulders.

"Don't let that thing come alongside, Skipper!" Whitey said urgently.

"There can be two handles to this jug," Rob replied. "Stand by!"

Sam Fain hailed from the foredeck, moving aft. "On the top there, Captain!" The contempt in his voice was like a whiplash. "Give us a word!"

Abruptly he climbed up on the house and walked toward the group on the top by the searchlight. After him came Bronson and Hall.

WHITEY whistled a couple of low notes. "This is it," he murmured.

Fain waved a hand at the lighter, drifting slowly toward the ship under the push of the wind.

"Here's a chance to make some cash on the side," he said to Rob. "There'll be a bit of salvage for us in towing that thing back to Cayo Frances. How about breaking out a towline?"

Rob laughed. "How dumb do I have to be to suit your plans?" he asked.

"What d'you mean?"

"A scrap of sail like that could only bring a laden barge down from about dead to windward," Rob said. "She's not from Cayo Frances; she came from some spot in that wild mess of islands to southward of us, and you knew she was coming. What's your game, Fain?"

Then he cupped his hands around his mouth.

"On the barge!" he hailed. "Keep clear, you!"

Fain shook his head. He laughed. "You're too damn' smart for me, Captain!" he said smoothly. "I've got to explain. This is more than a few dollars' salvage for picking up a barge. It's your whack of a fortune, laid right in your lap. It's—"

"She's getting close, Skipper," Whitey interrupted, looking sidewise. The Cuban, straining on the oar, was changing the barge's course a few feet, bringing her in toward the *Venture's* stern. Skelly Ebert, line in one hand, stood on the square bow, shielding his eyes from the searchlight's glare.

"I can't tell you everything now," Fain said rapidly. On the main house

he was only a couple of feet lower than the wheelhouse top, and he laid a hand on the pipe railing around it. "But don't let your fear start trouble. As soon as we're squared away with the barge in tow— Come aboard, boys!"

As he shouted that command, Fain's hand thrust toward the electric cord of the searchlight and ripped it away.

The light died. Whitey kicked out at Fain's hand.

Rob jerked out his souvenir from Caibarien.

"Aft!" Rob cried to his two supporters. "Shove that barge clear! Keep 'em off!"

He said to Fain: "Stay right where you are. You too, Bronson and Hall! Move, and you're up for mutiny—if you live."

They hesitated. Fain was talking, talking for time to allow the others to board, talking to avoid outright violence.

Rob ducked through the railings and jumped down onto the after end of the house, following Whitey and Epifanio in the rush to the stern.

From the barge Skelly Ebert's grotesquely tall figure leaped the gap to the *Venture's* house. With Fain still shouting arguments, he and Bronson and Hall came charging aft. Rob slid to a stop and fired into the air.

"Stop!" he warned.

From almost behind Fain the muddy-faced Hall fired point-blank. A spurt of orange fire lanced past Rob. Epifanio crumpled. His machete, raised over his head, whirled from his limp hand as he dropped.

The heavy cane-knife cracked against Whitey's head. Whitey reeled, hardly conscious. He tottered to the edge of the house. Mustering his wits, he changed his fall overside into a staggering leap for the barge. He fell short and thudded against the side. His arms got a hold on the deck. He dangled there, feet scraping feebly in an effort to climb aboard.

The Cuban, dropping his steering oar, was running forward. Already the barge was drifting astern. Rob met the jumping Cuban with a straight-arm shove, out beyond the rail. The flat of his hand caught the chunky islander square on his Adam's apple. His head jerked back. He plunged into the water between the two craft.

"Drop the gun, Scott!" Fain shouted at Rob. "Grab him, boys!"

Somebody's hand clamped on Rob's revolver. Hall's second bullet burned past his head. Then they were all around him. Only darkness and the confusion of numbers was postponing his finish.

Anyone Rob hit was an enemy. He swung his elbow violently. It cracked against bone. Pain spurted up his arm, but somebody yelped.

Rob's gun was wrenched from his fingers. He spun, ripping away from a hand on his throat and for the moment broke clear of the ring. He took a free step and with all his power launched himself at the barge, a long gap distant in the darkness.

His foot hit the solid deck. He thumped to his knees, hooked hands under Whitey's armpits and dragged him aboard. Whitey's throat rasped. He squirmed around, and with Geiger's captured gun pumped shots at the vague figures on the *Venture's* deck. One man dropped; the others scattered, and then bullets screamed back. Rob jerked Whitey in behind the thick butt of the derrick. The gap was far too great now for a man to jump.

"Hold it, if you've got any left," Rob said. Distance, though slight, had destroyed almost all chance of scoring a hit in such blackness.

Fain was shouting orders. The guns ceased fire. The Cuban in the water squalled for a line.

"Geiger!" Fain cried. "Start her up! Where is that sneaking son?"

"What a sock!" Whitey muttered, feeling his head. "What is it? What a sock!"

Rob was looking toward the ship he had deserted—his command. Grimly he shook emotions out of his skull. A dead captain commands only a coffin.

"I'll be back!" he whispered. He groped for the halliard and hoisted the bit of tarpaulin that was the lighter's only motive power. At no more than a knot, his new vessel fell sluggishly away downwind, toward open water.

Whitey was recovering. He was talking.

Chapter Seven

"IT'S now about five to two," Rob cut in. "You hit one, and he didn't yell. Epifanio was game, but his luck was out. A good man, that little guy."

"No great whiz of a cook, but he put his back into it," Whitey muttered.

Rob tested his wrenched wrist. It seemed to work.

"Wait'll they try to start those motors!" Whitey said savagely. "And they got to find Geiger, first. They'll never catch us."

Rob trimmed the sail to squeeze a bit faster drift out of this lumbering craft. His eyes were downwind, examining dark blobs on the water that were the few keys between them and deep water. He walked aft, and manned the cumbersome steering-oar.

Whitey followed him. "What the hell," he said as Rob experimented. "We'll miss those keys easy enough."



With all his power, Rob launched himself at the barge.

"We don't want to miss that one ahead," Rob said. "Fain's got our rowboat. It will make five times the speed of this thing."

Whitey grunted. "Yeah," he said. He investigated. "I got one cartridge left."

"Pull off a corner of the tarp," Rob said. "I think I know our cargo, but we'll check."

Whitey obeyed. He muttered to himself, and lit and carefully shielded a match. "Pigs," he said. "Bars o' metal, some of it crusted with barnacles and weed. Pigs of—would it be lead? It's sort of light for—"

"Tin," Rob said. "The *Madura's* tin. Come to light again after years of God knows what rough stuff."

"The *Madura's* tin?" Whitey was jolted. "You kidding?"

"Something over a hundred tons of it, by her depth," Rob said. "At a dollar and three cents a pound, we're marooned on a quarter million dollars worth of tin."

Whitey reached for the cigarette behind his ear that had escaped Epifanio's flying machete. He put it in his mouth, found none in his pocket to replace it, muttered angrily and put it back behind his ear.

"The *Madura's* tin?" he repeated. "You're guessing, Skipper."

Rob gauged the distance of the *Venture's* riding-lights.

"Sure. But what other tin with barnacles on it will you find along the Cuban north coast? Remember the night we barged in on Fain's scrap

with Red Hess? Well, when they were splitting up, Fain said to Hess: 'I'll throw in my share of the tin, limpy. Maybe it'll buy you a wooden leg.'"

Whitey rubbed his ear. "Then Hess went to Cuba for a whirl at the tin, game leg and all. Also, he sunk Fain's ship, just in case. Then Red found the tin or got showed by some crooked friend where it had been bunked; and Fain—how'd he know—"

"Because Skelly Ebert was playing on both sides," Rob said. "That's why we put in at Caibarien, to contact Ebert and find out when Ebert figured he could deliver this barge."

"I'd trade the quarter million for the *Venture*, right now," Whitey said. "This tin just makes us a target worth hitting by those five guys."

Rob examined the tarps on the cargo. It was old stuff, too far gone to be rigged as additional sail. The barge's slow progress was hard to take.

"I suppose we're worth murdering for all this tin," Whitey said. "But Fain's not such a smooth operator, after all."

"I'm sure he thought he could talk us into the job for a share. Once we towed his tin to some spot where he'd arranged to sell it through connections he'd have, we'd be left holding an empty bag. I couldn't even squawk without risk of having my ship confiscated."

Quickly Rob turned from his watch astern, and threw his weight on the heavy sweep.

"Bear a hand," he said. "Fain's launching the boat. I saw a flashlight hit it as they lowered."

Whitey wrapped himself around the oar and they strained together. To steer that ungainly bulk at all was like shoving an elephant around, but the tiny key Rob aimed for was almost dead downwind.

Rob lined up the north star. "We passed to westward of that one coming in here and found deep water close to," he said aloud. "We've got to work this scow to westward—close—but to westward of it." They buckled down to the struggle.

The black blur on the dark water widened and became an islet. They slid by close to the western shore. Rob let go the oar and went overside with Skelly Ebert's long line. He swam and floundered shoreward, and as the barge drifted close by the southern side, he threw a couple of turns of the line around an arching mangrove root and gradually snubbed the barge to a stop.

Whitey checked the security of the line on the bitts, went overside and swam ashore.

"What'll this get us?" he asked as soon as he took his gun out of his mouth.

"They may mistake the barge for part of the island," Rob said. "Then we hang on here till they quit the search, or row far enough away to give us a slim chance to drift seaward from them. We take our chances on being picked up."

He kicked at a mangrove root. "We keep running like hell—away from my ship," he said harshly.

"O.K.," mumbled Whitey awkwardly. "We might last longer here on the key if they do spot the barge."

He clapped a hand to his ear and cursed. "That's me," he said. "I hoard my last cigarette, and then the sea gets it! Where you going?"

The mangroves, in the blackness of the night, were an impassable tangle, but Rob was leading the way in shoal water back to the southern side of the island. Here the shore ran out like a spear in a coral reef.

THEY stopped. The riding-lights of the *Venture* were close. They picked up the sound of voices even closer.

Rob strained eyes and ears and shook his head.

"Fain isn't missing any tricks," he whispered. "The men in that rowboat are letting the wind set the boat's course and shoving her ahead when they're sure they're on the line. That means they'll be coming close."

"They'll spot the lighter, sure," Whitey said. "An' then—Operation *Blooie!*—on us."

Rob ran his eye out along the reef as far as starlight would let him see.

"We're too weak for defense," he said. "We've got to attack."

"Sounds swell, but how—"

Whitey shut his mouth and followed as Rob started out along the reef. Soon gaps dropped them into the water, and then only a few isolated coral heads showed as the water deepened. They swam from rock to rock, swearing softly when hand or knee hit the cutting sharpness of coral. A big fish swirled close, fin clipping the surface.

"Fish food!" Whitey gasped.

In the blackness of the farthest visible head, Rob stopped.

"Can you swim under water?" he asked.

"Sure, sure," said Whitey hopefully.

The rowboat was close enough to be seen, now. One man was rowing; the unmistakable tall shaftlike body of Skelly Ebert occupied the stern-sheets.

"What d'you know—only two!" Whitey breathed. "Skelly and the Cuban. Why d'you suppose Fain only sent—"

"Because Red Hess is somewhere up to windward," Rob murmured. He studied the rowboat's course. Already it was edging to westward, as if Skelly had made out the line of coral boulders.

Rob pulled from his pocket the short length of weighted copper tubing Whitey had given him.

"Never mind the boat till we've settled the men," he said, lips close to Whitey's ear. "I'll take Skelly."

He shut his teeth on the tubing, pushed off and swam noiselessly, submerged to the eyes, toward the boat. Whitey kept within reach of his arm.

Skelly Ebert stood up. His narrow body seemed to reach skyward like a mast. He curved his hand around his eyes.

"Retard, José," he said. "Coral. No lighter's grounded against that shore. Just a bunch of mangroves there."

The Cuban stared over his shoulder at the black key, trailing his oars.

Rob didn't duck under. He poked Whitey and stroked on, slightly behind the drifting boat, arms under water. Alongside, his fingers came out and fastened on the starboard gunwale. With all his might he rocked it downward, lifting himself up half out of the water with his effort.

Chapter Eight

SKELLY EBERT went tumbling over Rob's head. The man's startled curse was cut short as he splashed under.

Rob whirled and went for him. When Skelly's head broke the surface, Rob's fingers clamped on his skinny

throat. With the lead-weighted end of the tubing, he tapped Skelly on the head. Skelly went under and came up gasping for breath.

"Quiet, or I'll dent you!" Rob growled.

Skelly kicked feebly to keep himself afloat, and his throat pulsed. There wasn't enough fight left in him to justify a knockout. No pistol on him.

"My baby's asleep!" Whitey called softly. Rob turned. The boat had shipped water, but was still floating upright. The Cuban lay sprawled across the rowing thwart.

Though Whitey's gun had become wet during his swim, Rob borrowed it and swam behind Ebert, urging him on. Ebert cooperated sluggishly in the job of shoving the boat to the nearest sizable rocks of the reef. There, with a piece of the boat's painter, Whitey tied up the Cuban. He was a captive before he came to. They found a pistol, still dry, and a flashlight in the boat.

Whitey went to work on Ebert with his line. "Wait," Rob said. "Bail the boat, Skelly."

"Sure," said Skelly. He groped for the bailer and started throwing water out.

"Them pipes are real handy for their size," Whitey said modestly. "I wonder if some mug has patented the idear?"

Rob's eyes were on his ship. The odds were three to two now.

"We leave this *marinero* on the ledge," he said, tapping the tense Cuban. "If he struggles too hard to get free, he's apt to get wet."

"That's fair," said Whitey. "And how about stringbean, here?"

"He rows us to the *Venture*," Rob said with grim certainty. "He answers hails from her and behaves himself or the barracuda will have some lean meat to chew on."

Skelly Ebert paused in his bailing.

"Nobody knows better than me that I'm on your side now, where it's healthier," he said in his high thin voice. "If it looks better on Sam Fain's side later, that's where I'll be."

"Having already sold out Red Hess, hey?" Whitey said. He was going over the motionless Cuban's bonds.

"Check," said Skelly. "Are Hess an' Fain worrying about how I get along? Am I stupid?"

Whitey cupped his hands around the flashlight and sprayed a momentary beam on the Cuban's face to see if he were conscious. He whistled suddenly.

"Have a look, Skipper," he said, and winked on the light again.

José, the *marinero*, had no lobes to his ears. None at all.

"Just like the babe that nose-dived down my ladder back in Miami," Whitey said.

Rob nodded. "Sometimes it runs in families." He swung around on Skelly Ebert.

"Did you send this man's brother to Miami?" he asked.

Skelly hesitated, then spoke hastily as Rob reached for his copper tubing: "Sure; I had to get word to Fain that Red Hess had found the *Madura's* tin cached in two fathom. I sent Felipe' over on the steamer from Havana. It was these two brothers that tipped off Red about the tin in the first place. But it seems Felipe didn't like Fain, and in Miami he got idears about doing better business on his own with some other skipper. Sam Fain found out. He didn't like it."

"Fain killed him?"

"All Fain said was he didn't like it," Skelly said sullenly. "That was in Caibarien. We didn't have much time to talk. He said he didn't like it."

He jackknifed his body and went on bailing.

TEN minutes later the boat was on its way back to the *Venture*. Skelly, bent in a curve, rowed erratically, with long unskillful arms. Rob lay flat in the bow; Whitey was curled on the bottom in the stern.

"When Fain hails," Rob said softly to the unhappy Skelly, "you answer: 'We found the lighter. She's fast to the mangroves on a key. Nobody aboard.' Then you say: 'I left the Cuban aboard to watch her. When you getting the motors started?' Got that, Skelly?"

"I got it," Skelly said. "Am I stupid? What chance— God!"

His oars stopped. The man was frozen. Rob heard it too, the distant bark of an outboard motor.

"Red Hess?" Rob asked.

Skelly's breath whistled through his teeth. "That's Red—and them divers o' his are rough," he said. His thin voice shook. "He spotted that sub-chaser hull as we were leaving Caibarien, and he'll recognize it even in the dark. We don't want no part of this fight. I thought—José told me he put enough dope in the coffee to keep all hands asleep for a week. We got to blow—I'm telling you!"

"That's my ship up to windward," Rob said. He lifted his new pistol. "Give way, Skelly. Bend your back!"

"Let me sock him," Whitey said. "I'm nearer."

Skelly was rowing again, most unwillingly. "That Red don't care what he does when he's sore," he protested. "He's like a crazy bull."

From across the water Sam Fain hailed strongly.

"Row boat! Skelly!"

"Answer!" Rob muttered.

"Yeah!" Skelly cried feebly.

"Get here, Skelly! Get here fast!"

Skelly kept on rowing. The outboard's exhaust sounded closer rapid-



Skelly Ebert went tumbling over Rob's head. The man's startled curse was cut short as he splashed under.

ly; Red Hess, too, was following the land breeze to locate his barge.

"Hall's dead," Skelly muttered feverishly. "You got him. That leaves only Fain, Bronson an' Geiger. Red's got two divers an' two helpers—tough hombres. I put the launch out o' the running, but I couldn't get to that outboard—Red had it in his tent. An'—"

"Shut up and row!" Rob growled, eyes on the dark silhouette of the *Venture*.

The outboard, coming from southward, was approaching the *Venture's* bow; the rowboat was closing her stern. Suddenly to their ears came Sam Fain's voice, hailing the outboard, smooth and confident.

Gunfire burst from the outboard, as if the mere sound of Fain's voice made the *Venture* a target.

"That's Red!" Skelly wailed. "He shoots first. He don't trust Fain; that's why he paid two hundred bucks to some old rummy pal o' his to sink Fain's ship after the bust-up. I tell you we better—"

Rob jabbed Skelly in the spine with the muzzle of his pistol. Skeleton Ebert quit like a shattered phonograph record. The boat lurched on toward the silent stern of the *Venture*. In the bow of the vessel Sam Fain and his two men were firing at the outboard.

Rob stood up and grabbed his ship's rail. He hauled himself aboard. Whitey prodded Skelly over the rail

and followed. For a moment they stood still.

The outboard had swung and was hammering off on the *Venture's* port bow. Three men fighting behind the partial shelter of the ship's higher bow had been hard nuts for Red Hess to crack.

"Now he'll get smart!" Skelly muttered. "He's worse when he's—"

"Skelly!" It was Fain's voice, calling from forward.

Chapter Nine

ROB and Whitey dropped to the deck. Rob's ears strained for footsteps. "Talk right," he warned softly.

Skelly, with Rob's gun on him, uttered a noncommittal yelp.

"Stand by aft," Fain commanded. His voice was cautious. "Watch! We beat Red off, but Bronson's down."

"Down? Another?" Skelly moaned.

"Red'll be coming back. I know that fellow. Watch for tricks, Skelly. And none of your own. Red paid for that cockeyed charge. I'm still on top here."

"I'll watch!" Skelly quavered.

"I'm sending Geiger below to try again to get a motor turning. The anchor chain's set to slip. I'll beat Red yet."

His voice increased suddenly in volume. "Red! Red Hess!"

The outboard's barking dropped to a mutter.

Fain hailed again.

"We're cutting our own throats, Red!" Fain shouted. "How about a deal? You'll never set hand on that tin unless—"

Rob reached out and drew Whitey's head close to his.

"We'll take care of Geiger, below, first," he whispered. "Then I want power—fast!"

Fain was still shouting arguments at the outboard. No answer came. The boat was circling the *Venture* just beyond visibility.

Rob and Whitey shoved Skelly ahead, through the tunneled blackness of the covered deck, past the after hatch, to the light streaming up from the engine-room companion.

Abruptly Whitey stepped forward, as if sight of his home ground was too much for him.

"Geiger!" he whispered urgently.

From the silent port Diesel, Geiger lifted a face contorted with frustration and smeared with grease.

"Hello, baby!" Whitey murmured, and launched himself like a diving beauty. His flying body hit Geiger and smacked him to the plates. When Whitey stood up, Geiger lay still. Whitey picked up a piece of waste from his workbench and kneaded it absently in his hands, looking with masterful eyes at the Diesels.

"I'll have one turning in three minutes," he muttered.

Rob prodded Skelly toward the iron ladder.

"Fine, Whitey, but take care of this one for me," Rob said. "Tie him up."

Skelly twisted his tall body. "No! If Red Hess—"

Rob's left hand clapped across his mouth; his right sank his gun muzzle between Skelly's protruding ribs.

"Shut up!" Rob said and listened a moment. Fain was still shouting at Red Hess, making too much noise to have heard Skelly's yelp. And now Skelly stood still, whimpering.

Whitey leaped up the ladder with a coil of bell wire in his hand. "This stuff sure is handy this trip," he muttered, and shoved the cotton waste into Skelly's mouth. Together they did a fast trussing job on the skeletonesque frame. Whitey skidded him down the ladder and stowed him under his workbench.

"Now secure Geiger again, just for luck, and start a motor," Rob said. He turned and slipped forward, passing a body, a mere man-shaped blur, lying along the scuppers.

SAM FAIN's massive figure was framed in the shelter of the forward entrance to the alleyway. He was motionless, facing outward. His raised arms indicated he was listening with hands making ear trumpets, to a hot argument going on in Red Hess' boat, somewhere off the starboard bow. That much response, at least, his shouted promise had got him.

A man listening with hands assisting ears could hold no gun. Rob stopped close behind him.

Red Hess' voice, sullen, unwilling, came suddenly from the boat:

"This tin is hot, Fain. How do I know you won't grab it for the underwriters? You can squawk on us to the Cuban police and claim salvage."

"This ship is hot," Fain called back. "I'm in as deep as killing—like you. How can I squawk—or you either? I've got a buyer, Red, a guy that has no mouth. He'll take the barge—and all the tin you can bring up—smooth as silk."

Again the discussion broke out in muttered voices that came faintly across the water. Fain stiffened to listen.

Rob cocked an ear aft to the clink of metal in the engine-room. Whitey was on the job. Most unexpectedly Fain sensed danger and leaped out onto the fore deck.

Rob sprang after him, gun raised waist high.

"Up!" he said softly.

Fain's hands shot above his head. He backed a step or two and stopped. He stretched his arms even higher to indicate his peacefulness.

Against the house lay another body. This would be Bronson.

Sam Fain was already speaking, soft-voiced, eager:

"Well, Captain! I'm glad you're back, Rob, boy! That scrap wasn't my doing; I tried to stop it. Is Whitey with you? I'm all for a fair split and no violence."

He pointed toward the dark blur of Red Hess' boat, dropping his arm only a trifle to do so. His voice, as phony as a radio announcer's, sank even lower, murmuringly confidential:

"We can beat Red yet, though he's got four killing mugs, all heeled, with him in that boat. For God's sake, get Whitey down in the engine-room! Start 'em up! The anchor chain's all set to slip."

For only an instant did he wait for an answer from Rob.

"Man!" he said. "Do you think Hess will let you live any longer'n he will me? We got to get together, Rob!"

Red Hess called out, voice hard with suspicion:

"What's goin' on there, Fain?"

Fain answered instantly:

"Make up your mind, Red! I'm waiting!"

He made a slashing gesture toward Red with his arm and whispered:

"What say, Rob? Is it a deal? Fifty-fifty?"

"You're through with making deals, Fain," Rob said. "Keep your hands up and walk into the alleyway."

From close behind Rob a weak voice spoke:

"Drop that gun or I'll below a hole in you!"

Bronson! Not dead; wounded. But strong enough to threaten; maybe strong enough to pull a trigger. Rob turned.

Sam Fain leaped in on Rob, both hands knocking down Rob's pistol, all his weight dragging down on Rob's arm.

Rob's tense finger fired the gun. The bullet thudded into the deck close to his feet.

"Shoot high, Bronson!" Fain yelled. On his knees, his massive arms were whipping around Rob's middle, forcing Rob's pistol flat against Rob's leg, holding Rob motionless to make an easy target.

Rob doubled up. A bullet sang over his bent body; then Fain and he toppled over sidewise onto the deck, kicking, slugging, fighting for Rob's pistol.

Bronson's gun was darting fire in the darkness, blasting with deafening violence.

Fain's teeth fastened abruptly on Rob's wrist, paralyzing the fingers that still held the pistol. Fain's hands began wrenching the gun from him with frantic, furious strength. Rob hammered down with his other fist at Fain's two hands and suddenly the gun thumped to the deck.

Fain's teeth released his wrist. On their knees they crashed together over

the gun, straining for it, shoving each other, scrabbling for it with their knees. The pistol slid suddenly away across the deck. Fain's right hand shot toward his side pocket.

Rob grabbed at him, sensing that in an instant Fain would be the one with a gun. They wrestled on the narrow black deck, rolling over, leaping to knees or feet. Always Rob kept in close to that massive body, giving Fain no instant's respite to snatch out his weapon.

Fleeting Rob realized Bronson's gun, after uncounted shots, was silent now. A lesser bark was sounding in the blackness: Red Hess' outboard was wide open and surging headlong toward the *Venture*. This fruitless fight could go on while Hess and his thugs swarmed aboard. The outboard quit; now the boat was sliding alongside.

Rob took a chance. He let Fain break free from him. Instantly Fain dived for his pocket. His weapon came glinting out.

Rob used that moment's respite. To miss now was to die. He didn't miss. His right fist, swinging hard as his body pivoted, cracked on Fain's chin.

Fain staggered, shaking his head. Rob took two risky steps to one side. He lined Fain up with the boat alongside and drove at him, both arms out, crouching to get his body down into a low, compact follow-through. Bullets from the boat roared over Rob's head.

His arms jolted into Fain's chest. His right shoulder, dropping, butted hard in an instant follow-up.

For all his weight Fain went toppling. His heel hooked against the low rail. His arms went out, clutching air; his body arched backward. He fell with a crash into the bow of Hess' boat.

Chapter Ten

DROPPING, Rob clawed at the rail to save himself from following Fain. He made it and went scrambling around on deck to find his gun. Fain's body had hit too far forward to sink the boat below; any instant now—

Footfalls sounded; Whitey's body loomed in the alley entrance.

"I got 'em turning—" he began. "What goes?"

"Longside!" Rob gasped. He rose up and stamped on a man's fingers on the rail. Whitey whooped and flung a tool in his hand. It smashed full in a face lifting from alongside and the face dropped.

Rob's toe hit the loose gun he hunted, and he caught it up.

Whitey whirled around after a quick look overside. He reached for the *Venture's* five-man life-raft on top

of the house, tore it loose and slid it off the side. Wood crackled below.

Rob, thrusting his head out, saw that the boat was settling to her gunwales. "Full ahead!" he snapped at Whitey.

Rob ran to the windlass, fumbled at the chain wrapped around the drum. It was ready for slipping; Sam Fain hadn't lied about that. He sent the chain rattling into the sea.

Whitey had vanished. Rob, on his knees, felt his ship was throbbing under the eager power of the idling Diesels. He leveled his gun at the starboard rail, crept toward it and waited, struggling for breath, ears yearning for the quickening pulse of the motors.

Like a man forgotten in another world Bronson spoke, thickly:

"I wasn't tryin'—to hit you. You know that—Cap'n,"

Rob checked a crazy impulse to roar with laughter. He had no breath for it. And there was a boatload of raging thugs alongside. But, for the moment, he was called captain again!

THE *Venture* stirred. She surged ahead. She pushed herself away from the dirty mess of blood and treachery that had surrounded her at that anchorage. Rob stuck his head over the rail and felt the hot breath of a bullet snarling past for his pains.

But he had made sure no black figure was scaling the cleanness of her starboard side. She was clear away, with only a few bullets from the half sunken outboard to bother her.

"Rob—Capt—" came Fain's voice. It cut off abruptly.

Rob rushed back past the dead man in the scuppers to relieve Whitey who had run up to the wheel.

Whitey was driving her with an engineer's confidence that all water was deep. He got up off the wheelhouse floor and pointed to a bullet-hole in the glass.

"By rights we ought to run down the lot of 'em," he said. "We got a swell chance—except that they're lousy with guns."

Rob slowed her down to a cautious crawl. "We must win a race without hanging up on any coral," he said. "That bunch will be drifting downwind to the key where the lighter's hidden."

"Two dollars on us," Whitey said fervently.

Rob turned eyes to compass and chart, and sent Whitey forward with a flashlight to look over Bronson.

Before the key was close abeam, Whitey was back.

"Bronson's dead," he said without sadness. "Funny thing; he tried to tell me something about Epifanio. I guess a man with that size hole in him shouldn't fire pistols an' talk. He went sudden."

Rob said nothing but pointed to starboard. His hand was shaking. To eyes that knew it was there the barge was taking vague shape at the leeward end of the island.

"See if you can repair that searchlight line," he said.

"Why not?" Whitey rejoined. He climbed to the top and got busy.

The *Venture* slid on.

"My knees are doin' jigs," Whitey called. "Is there malaria around here?"

Rob was facing the next gamble of the night—perhaps the last, win or lose. Shoal water!

"I'll put her bow in, dead slow," Rob called. "Remember, if I should run her hard aground we're outnumbered and outgunned."

Whitey stuck his head down the scuttle.

"Don't say it!" he cried shakily. "I'm sweating blood! Dead, dead slow, Skipper! I'll be through here in a minute. Take your time! Just put me within twenty feet and I'll fly to the scow. Or say the word and I'll swim with a line."

Rob shook his head. The ship was inching in toward the barge.

"These controls could go out on me with nobody in the engine-room," he said. "Move fast at the last minute; come back faster."

Whitey shoved the switch. The searchlight flared on.

The barge leaped into sight, vivid in every detail.

There was a man on her. José, the muscular Cuban who had been left tied up securely on the other end of the key, was standing at ease on the stern with a line in his hands. He flung up a hand to shield his eyes and promptly dropped out of sight.

"Skellee?" he called doubtfully. "Señor Fain?"

"Oh, baby!" Whitey breathed. He scrambled down into the wheelhouse. "Tell him to heave that line!"

Rob shouted, trying to match Fain's smooth deep tone.

Another voice spoke, a voice from below on the foredeck, shaky in tone but fluent in Spanish.

ROB went cold; his hand lay dead on the wheel.

Next to him, Whitey's breath caught in his throat.

Promptly the Cuban jumped up. He flung the rope. Though it was heavier than a heaving-line his powerful arm sent it uncoiling through the air. Its end snacked onto the brilliantly lighted foredeck.

A man came walking slowly out of the alleyway as if onto a stage. One look at the back of his round head jerked a cry from Whitey.

"Epifanio!"

It was the chunky little cook, walking like a dead man toward the rope

on the foredeck. He bent to pick it up.

The Cuban on the barge was staring, transfixed, at his compatriot who had been dead. Suddenly, with a shriek of horror, he spun around and fled across the tarpaulin-covered cargo. He hurled himself from the bow and splashed into shoal water. Surging on, he flung himself in among the arching roots of the mangroves and disappeared.

Epifanio had grasped the rope but the act of bending made him sag at the knees. He clung to the line, as if he knew a cook's duty when other hands were busy, but he looked aft appealingly. There was a red, scored line the length of a man's finger on his head behind and above his left eye.

"That's what Bronson was tryin' to tell me!" Whitey muttered. "It didn't kill him, the little geezer! That bullet bounced off his skull; and Bronson, who wasn't as tough as the others, stowed him inside. No wonder that Cuban blew. He's ghost-shy."

HE poked Rob joyfully in the ribs and dashed forward. He took the line from Epifanio, lowered the little man gently to the deck and threw a couple hitches on the windlass drum.

Rob reversed. Steadily the *Venture* pulled away from the key the barge laden with gray treasure. Rob kept his ship going astern, slowly making for the deep water where he could shift his lines for a towing job.

Whitey lugged Epifanio back to the foot of the pilothouse steps. Rob switched on the overhead light for an instant and Epifanio grinned feebly up at him.

"I'll stow him in his bunk with his harmonica under his pillow," Whitey said briskly. "Where we towing to, Skipper?"

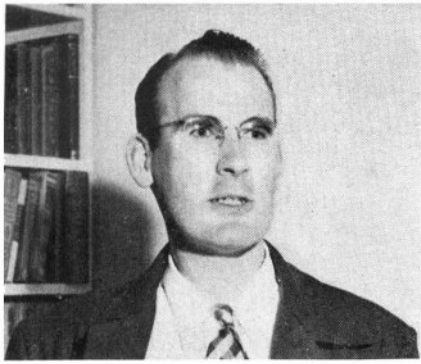
"Havana," said Rob. "This is underwriters' tin, you understand, but they'll pay up handsomely to the men who put it on the dock for them."

"Sure; we won't have to sue 'em, not when we're the guys that can give them a pretty fair tip on the location of the rest of the *Madura's* cargo," Whitey agreed. "Besides, we've got Skelly and Geiger on ice for them."

He tightened his grip on the cook. "Hear that, Epifanio? Havana! You'll wake up a rich man. Buy yourself a gold machete, but keep it clear o' our ears. You don't want to go laying out a couple o' big men in the Caribbean shipping business. Huh, Skipper?"

Rob didn't speak. He listened to the *Venture's* Diesels thumping gently and the ship, even when going astern, easing through the sea without any fuss. There'd be plenty of blue water ahead, plenty of little ports in which to hunt cargoes. And no desks.

WHO'S WHO IN THIS ISSUE



Edwin Hewelcke

I AM twenty-nine, a lifelong native of San Francisco. Live within sight of the sea; in sound of it, when the wind blows inland; and most of the summer, within smell of it too.

Attended a Jesuit high school. Random courses at University of California. Some correspondence study. Missed out on the war, owing to several years' illness. Free-lancing continuously since 1944, sporadically before that.

Interests: people, the West Coast, music, gardening, photography, fish, architecture, Thomist philosophy, light verse. I could extend the list, and probably shall. The point is, in tracking down stories I run across ever so many things I've never known—and find them all interesting. Writing is a process of continual education.

Robert Richards

HERE are some Beale Street jottings which you might find usable with "I Don't Want to Be a Hero."

Negro policemen have been working the street (actually an avenue) for almost eighteen months now, and people who live there or play there tell me that it has made a great difference. Nat Williams, a Negro high-school teacher, disk jockey and newspaper columnist told me:

"It used to be if you saw a man talking to The Law on Beale, he was either being arrested or he was a stool pigeon. Now it's different. We got our own Law and we're proud of it. I saw one of our Law the other night tell a man who was misbehaving: 'All right, boy, I got to come up the side of your head in a minute.' And he clipped the man that was misbehaving real hard. Nobody got sore. It was fair. The man was asking for it."

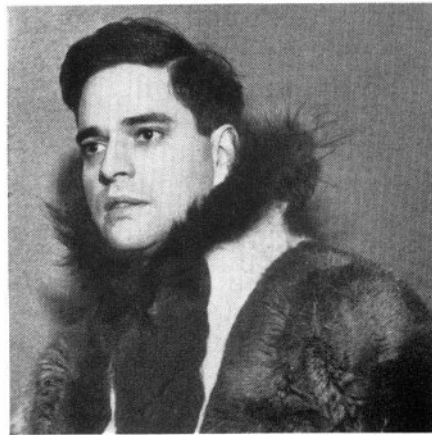
I was born Oct. 27, 1915, in Louisville, Ky. I started getting rejection slips at the age of fourteen and just kept on writing, not having sense enough to concede it's a rough way of life. In 1942 my first (and only) novel "I Can Lick Seven" was published by Atlantic-Little, Brown. I have been published in *Satevepost*, *Collier's*, *Esquire*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Country Gentleman*. During the war I worked in the UP's London Bureau until after

D-Day. Then I joined General Patton's Third Army and stuck with it until the end of the war.

After the war I did a daily feature out of New York for UP until 1948 when I returned to Memphis, where I had done most of my growing up. At present, I work for the *Press-Scimitar* in Memphis. I am married and have two children, Maury, 6, and Michael, 3. Maury seems pretty bright. Michael, I think, will be another writer. He asked me the other night: "What comes after B—seven?"



ROBERT RICHARDS



Charles Freeman

PRINCETON, '38, a fling at advertising, then *Newsweek's* reporter in Washington Bureau. After an Army nod in 1942, eventually an artillery Battalion S-2 with the 88th "Blue Devil" Division on the push through Rome.

While convalescing in Washington from a run-in with a Nazi *schu* mine which lopped off one foot, I set up as "an advertising man who knew how the editorial half lived" and went to Fairbanks, Alaska, to manage the *News-Miner*. America's farthest north daily.

From Ralph and Carl Lomen, I learned of the death of the \$2,500,000 reindeer industry which the Government took from them, and its epic swan song, the five-year drive from the Seward Peninsula to the Mackenzie.

The design and color of the caribou parka in the picture says "bachelor," but it's not so. I boast an eminently satisfactory wife and a three-year-old sourdough daughter, born in Fairbanks while the Northern Lights flickered and the mercury cringed at 58 below.

Robinson MacLean

ROBINSON MACLEAN, the author of "The Valley of Blinded Men" in this issue, has been mixed up with airplanes for twenty years, but neither MacLean nor the airplanes ever got anything out of it before.

Take the drizzling day at Edmon-

ton Airport, when Post and Gatty landed on their round-the-world flight and MacLean was the first reporter to reach the weary aces, lending Gatty his tweed overcoat as cover from the rain. He got a story, sure—but who got the overcoat?

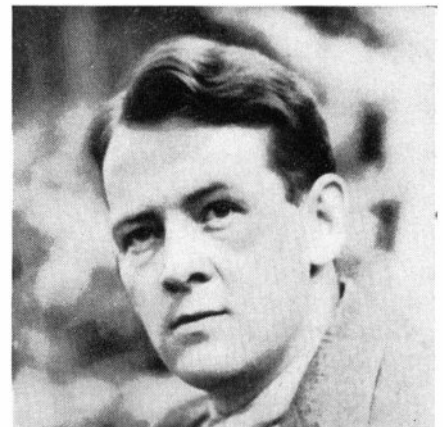
Or the dawn at the airport in Addis Ababa when MacLean was climbing into the Fokker that Haile Selassie had assigned to carry him to the bombed city of Adowa, to the north, so that he could parachute to earth, photograph the wounded, and trek back to Addis Ababa by mule. It would have been a wonderful story, except that the Italians had already captured Adowa.

MacLean got a commission as Lieutenant (jg) in the United States Navy Bureau of Aeronautics until he finally wangled an assignment as photo officer to Admiral Halsey of the Third Fleet. He was beside Air Control Aft, with a cameraman aiming at the gray clouds overhead, when the last Japanese plane shot down during the war broke through the clouds, wobbled between the *Missouri* and the carrier off her beam, exploded and disappeared. A nice shot—only the cameraman forgot to start his camera.

So MacLean went out to the edge of a barren cañon, on the north edge of Los Angeles, and settled down to write about airplanes and stuff without further research.

He still can't fly. His wife can.

ROBINSON MACLEAN



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